



Wirral Council

Hind Street Neighbourhood Framework

March 2021

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For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited

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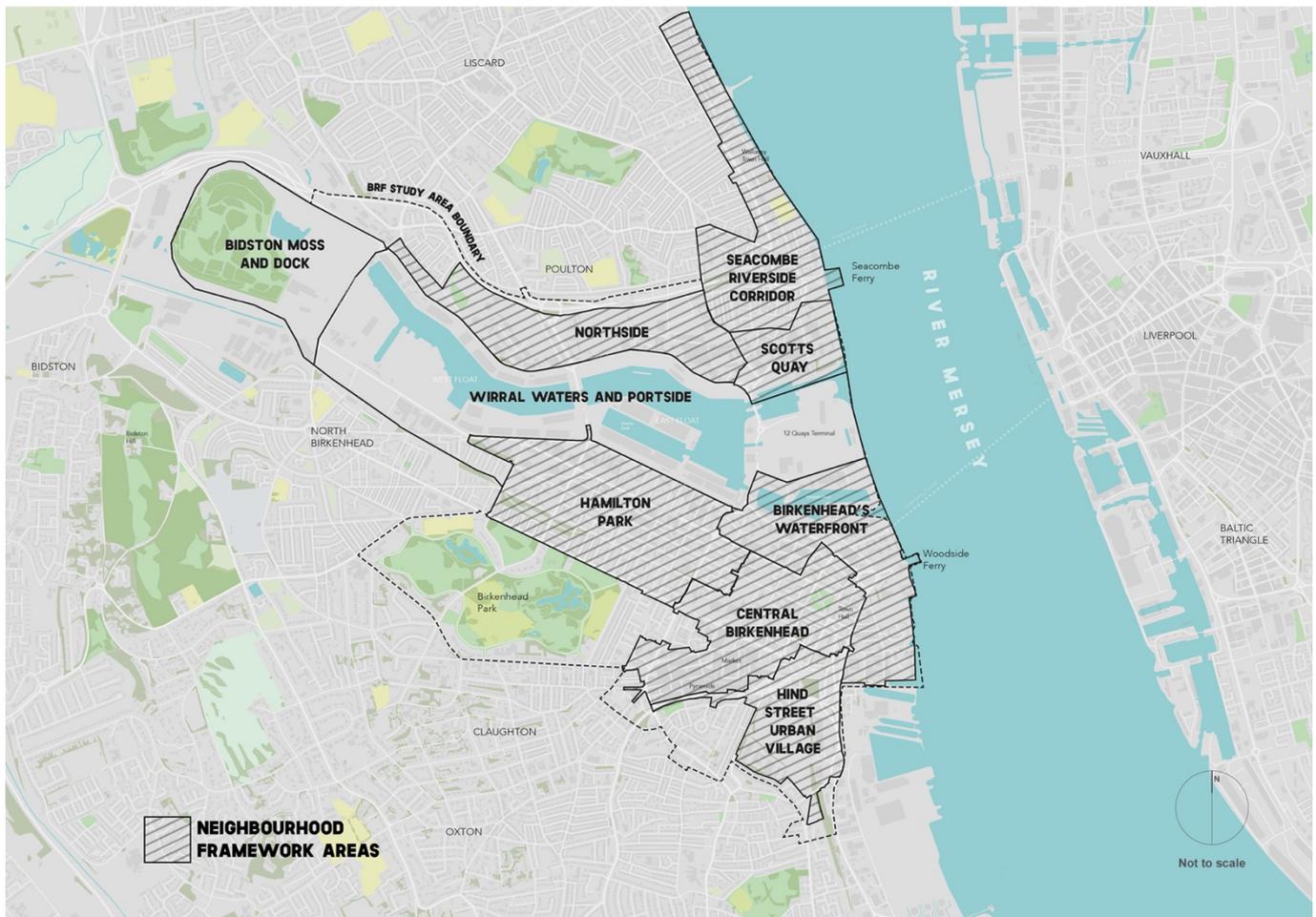
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Neighbourhood Framework (NF) for Hind Street has been produced by Avison Young on behalf of Wirral Borough Council and is one of a series to be prepared as part of the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework 2040 (the 'BRF'). The document has been produced to consider the strategic recommendations of the BRF in more detail at the neighbourhood level. Its preparation has enabled greater focus on the delivery strategy associated with the ambitions of the BRF, at the neighbourhood scale and below.
- 1.2 Alongside preparation of the NF the major landowners at Hind Street have been working collaboratively to support the comprehensive delivery of development in this important neighbourhood.
- 1.3 This NF document presents analysis and conceptual solutions for development and infrastructure delivery across the area – which will be tested further by the landowners. The NF concludes with key development and place principles to shape a comprehensive masterplan for the NF area to support future planning applications to be prepared by the major landowners.

Birkenhead 2040 Framework

- 1.4 This NF for Hind Street has been prepared in the context of the BRF. The BRF sets out an overarching strategy for the regeneration of the Birkenhead urban area. This includes the identification of nine neighbourhoods each with their own character and contribution to the programme. The BRF establishes a draft vision and high-level strategy for potential land use change, including scale of potential brownfield housing delivery, alongside supporting public realm and infrastructure requirements, all to be tested further through NF production as appropriate.
- 1.5 The BRF specifically recommends the preparation of NFs for seven of the nine neighbourhoods identified, illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Birkenhead 2040 Neighbourhoods

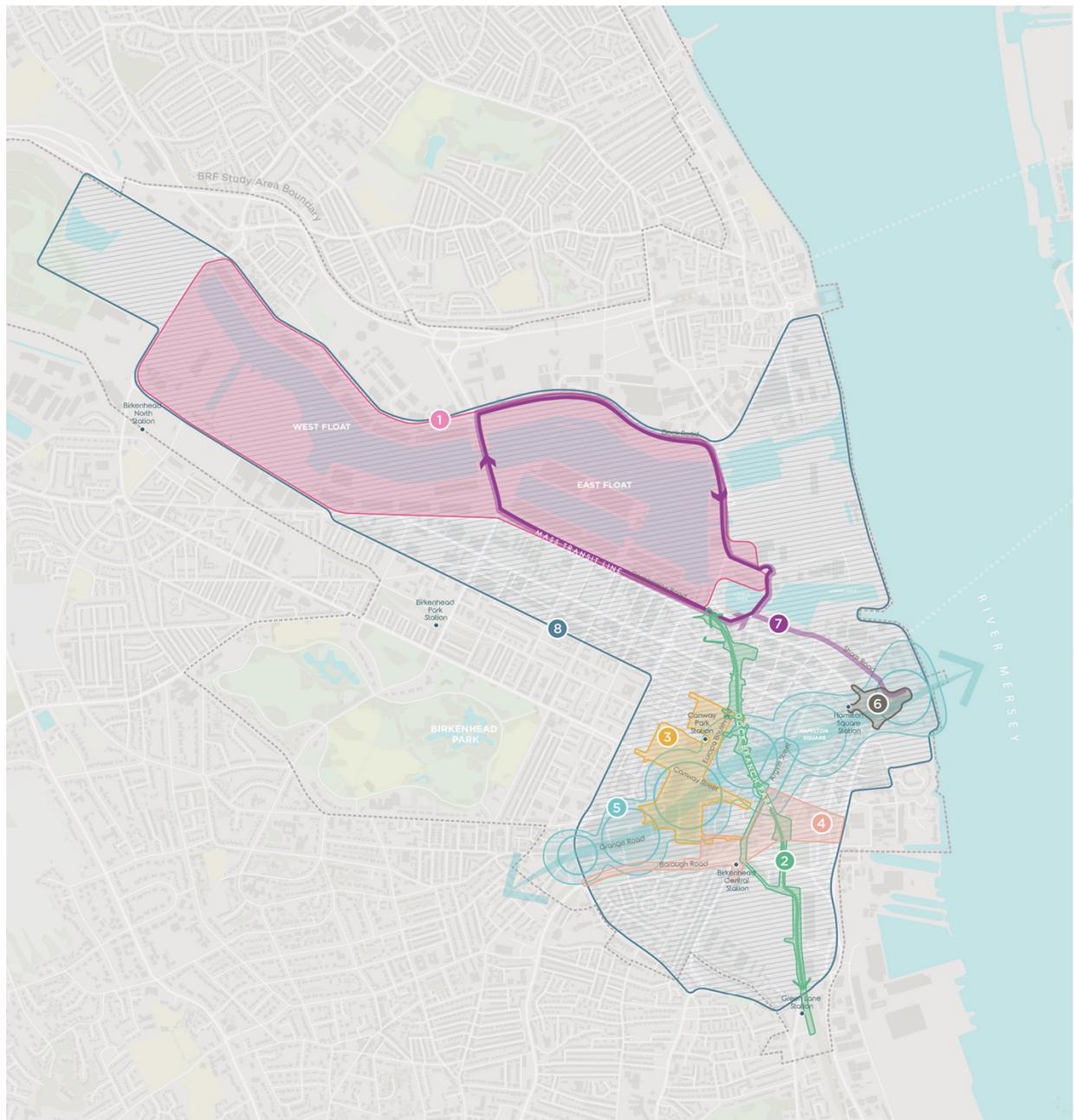


- 1.6 This NF has been developed having regard to the BRF Vision and Objectives. It has further had regard to the wider strategy of the BRF, including the prominent role of this particular neighbourhood within the wider strategy.
- 1.7 It recognises the Hind Street area as a rare opportunity to deliver a new exemplar low carbon urban village-type residential neighbourhood, at scale, within a sustainable location, at the core of an urban area, on a largely vacant brownfield site.
- 1.8 Given the location of the area adjacent to Central Birkenhead, located between two rail stations, progressed dialogue regarding intended removal of the flyovers, and potential for longer term implementation of future phases of Dock Branch Park through the site, the Framework identifies the potential to regenerate this highly accessible area, with the potential to completely transform both the image of and access along a key gateway to and from the south and to and from Liverpool.

Interface with Catalyst Projects

- 1.9 The BRF identifies a significant degree of underutilised and vacant brownfield land across Birkenhead on which development can and should be delivered in line with the principles and spatial priorities set out.
- 1.10 But it also recognises that there is a reason why these sites are not coming forward currently in this way as a result of the market failures that do exist across Birkenhead. There is no one factor preventing high quality development being delivered, but it is known that viability and market perception is having a material impact.
- 1.11 The Framework addresses this issue head on – through the identification of a number of catalyst projects, all of which are progressing, to address structural place or market issues, and ultimately create the right conditions for investment and value growth.
- 1.12 These catalyst projects, as shown in Figure 1.2 and summarised in the following text in no particular order, are strategically important for Wirral – underpinning the reconnection, reimagination, and rediscovery of Birkenhead.
- 1.13 Development within the NF area will benefit from these catalyst projects and will assist in their delivery by improving the physical and market environment surrounding them. In this way, mutual benefit can be achieved, particularly for the projects that are contained within the NF area – Birkenhead Landing and Dock Branch Park (phase 2).

Figure 1.2: Catalyst Projects



Key

- 1 Wirral Waters
- 2 Dock Branch Park
- 3 Birkenhead Commercial District
- 4 Birkenhead Landing
- 5 East-West Cultural Axis
- 6 Woodside Gyratory
- 7 Potential Phase 1 Route for Mass Transit
- 8 Birkenhead District Heating Demand Zone Boundary

Dock Branch Park

- 1.14 Dock Branch Park is a transformational project, running through the heart of Central Birkenhead in its first phase. The Phase 1 park, designed to bring back to life the disused railway cutting between Wirral Waters and Argyle Street, will be delivered to create a vibrant open space environment facilitating active travel and accommodating cultural and creative activities.
- 1.15 The design has been informed by the desire to not just deliver a new linear park within Birkenhead, but also to leverage wider regenerative impact – including ensuring connections to Hamilton Square, the Commercial District, and unlock development sites along its stretch. The nature of the park and associated development potential will have a material impact on Birkenhead more widely – creating a unique new community and fundamentally changing the character of the core of the town.
- 1.16 A masterplan has been produced for Phase 1 of Dock Branch Park, which has in turn informed the preparation of a landscape design approach, cost plan and planning strategy. Dock Branch Park has been included within the Birkenhead Town Deal programme.
- 1.17 If considered one-dimensionally, bringing the corridor into use will enhance pedestrian, cycling and potentially in the future public transport movement and connectivity through the area. But beyond being a route for enhanced movement, it has the potential to be a unique linear park and cultural corridor, bringing vibrancy and driving values within this new residential-led neighbourhood of Central Birkenhead. It also has the potential to be a key link from the NF area to both Birkenhead Town Centre and Wirral Waters and vice versa.
- 1.18 More detailed masterplanning and scheme design will be progressed for Dock Branch Park as part of the implementation of the BRF.

Birkenhead Commercial District and Mixed-Use Quarter

- 1.19 The Commercial District and Mixed-Use Quarter lies right at the heart of Central Birkenhead and is a critical project to kick-start the restructuring and diversification of the extensive and dysfunctional retail core of the area.
- 1.20 The direct physical change that will result from the delivery of the proposals being developed by Wirral Growth Company (WGC) will materially change the physical environment of the retail core, diversify land uses, directly improve footfall of office-based employees, and create new attractions and experiential offer in the centre of Birkenhead.
- 1.21 Phase 1 will see the delivery of the first two buildings of the Commercial District – including 150,000 sq. ft. of office space including a new home for Wirral Council employees alongside private sector occupiers. Early years delivery will see the demolition of the existing market building and temporary relocation of traders to St Werburghs Square, before they are permanently housed in a new market building within the core of the Commercial District.
- 1.22 Wider proposals include early year aspirations to deliver new homes at the north of Europa Boulevard on car parking land owned by the Council, and longer-term potential for mixed use delivery in key locations along Europa Boulevard and at Europa Square. Wider interventions include proposals for improvements to Europa Boulevard, Conway Street, and Birkenhead Bus Station.

Wirral Waters

- 1.23 Wirral Waters, which benefits from an outline planning permission, is a catalyst project for Birkenhead and Wirral, but with a reach beyond that of the BRF, this NF and the emerging Local Plan given its scale.
- 1.24 The BRF recognises key projects being progressed within the Wirral Waters that fundamental to this catalytic impact on the regeneration process. In combination they address significant portside decline and bringing valuable sites back into vibrant use, and developing embryonic markets including new high quality residential development of a mixed tenure nature in this unique waterside setting, alongside the establishment of new Grade 'A' Office accommodation on Tower Road Other projects include Northbank, MEA Park, Vittoria Studios, Marina View, Tower Road South (transformational public realm) and Four Bridges.
- 1.25 Delivery of development and investment at Wirral Waters will directly influence development potential across Birkenhead generally, including a need to have regard to ensuring a balanced mix of uses and housing tenures and types across the urban area across the outline planning permission and the 2040 Framework and NFs.
- 1.26 Early phase delivery across Wirral Waters will be key to delivering the full ambition and scale of development captured within the outline permission, but as importantly will underpin market development and drive private sector investor confidence in the wider Birkenhead urban area.

'Birkenhead Landing'

- 1.27 The BRF identifies the need and opportunity to bring down both flyovers that currently cut across Hind Street, severing this new neighbourhood from Central Birkenhead. The environment around the flyovers is heavily engineered and has a significant negative visual and physical impact. This is particularly pronounced in the area outside Birkenhead Central Station and on land north of Hind Street, where the town centre is severed from neighbourhoods to the south. Additionally, the flyover structures are surplus to requirements as there is capacity to use alternative routes to connect to Queensway Tunnel. In time they will also present a major maintenance liability.
- 1.28 The flyover removal programme will have a direct impact on wider infrastructure located between Birkenhead Central Station and the core of the Central Birkenhead neighbourhood, referred to as 'Birkenhead Landing' – removing infrastructure currently as wide as a motorway in parts severing the centre from the existing and future residential communities to the south.
- 1.29 This comprehensive approach is needed to unlock the key additional development opportunity for a new exemplar Urban Village at Hind Street. This is an essential project to address severance and the 'concrete collar' that sits around the Central Birkenhead core area and will enable the simplification of infrastructure across the area. The removal of the flyovers will also provide the opportunity to create a new public space outside of Birkenhead Central Station, which will enhance the attractiveness for and viability of a new residential neighbourhood connecting it to the adjoining St Werburgh's area.

The East-West Cultural Axis

- 1.30 Supporting and developing the continued expansion of the cultural and creative economy is fundamental to the BRF. Geographically this will focus on the Central Birkenhead and Waterfront areas – building on existing offer, business clustering, and the physical attributes of in particular the heritage assets at Hamilton Park, the Priory and the Waterfront – with the potential to run as a network of spaces and buildings as an axis connecting these two neighbourhoods.

- 1.31 The axis has at its heart the ambition to bring the core of Central Birkenhead closer to the newly imagined waterfront area. It will include the implementation of an activation strategy which will be fundamental to driving footfall within the retail core, and generally creating vibrancy and attract visitors to the centre. This experiential consideration of the core will be fundamental to the commercial success of Central Birkenhead, and in particular the sustainability of its retail, food and drink and leisure offer in the future.

Woodside Gyrotory

- 1.32 It is crucial that through the delivery of the regeneration programme that the right conditions are created for investment in Birkenhead – and it is clear that the separation (physical and psychological) between Central Birkenhead and the Waterfront is one of the key dysfunctions of the area currently. The presence of the Woodside gyrotory is one of the fundamental reasons for this separation – and its removal will be a key driver of the two key areas connecting and being continuous in terms of development, public realm, function and crucially feel.

Mass Transit System

- 1.33 A mass transit network for the Central Birkenhead and Wirral Waters areas of the Borough have been discussed for several years to complement the existing Merseyrail and bus networks. Through recent feasibility work undertaken on behalf of the Council, a wider mass transit network prospect has been identified, serving key regeneration zones such as Wirral Waters, Seacombe Riverside and the south of Central Birkenhead.
- 1.34 The mass transit network is needed due to the absence of ‘last mile’ high-quality public transport alternatives connecting to and between planned regeneration and the high quality Merseyrail system. In some cases, such as Wirral Waters, there is a need to overcome an existing impasse in which large-scale or high-density development on brownfield land is hindered by constrained public transport accessibility, but at the same time provision of public transport has not been previously considered feasible due to lack of demonstrable demand. This ‘Chicken & Egg’ paradigm is presently being examined through preparation of a Mass Transit Delivery Strategy and Business Case, which is being prepared to recommend ways in which this impasse can be overcome.

Birkenhead District Heat Network

- 1.35 Investment in Birkenhead must be future proof. New energy infrastructure is needed if development across the area is to contribute to achieving net-zero carbon emissions to help avert the climate crisis. During 2021 the Council will be working with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to develop a detailed business case for the implementation of a comprehensive heat network for Central Birkenhead and beyond if possible. The emerging Local Plan will include policies to safeguard key sites to facilitate the delivery of this project and require major developments to connect to the system where feasible.

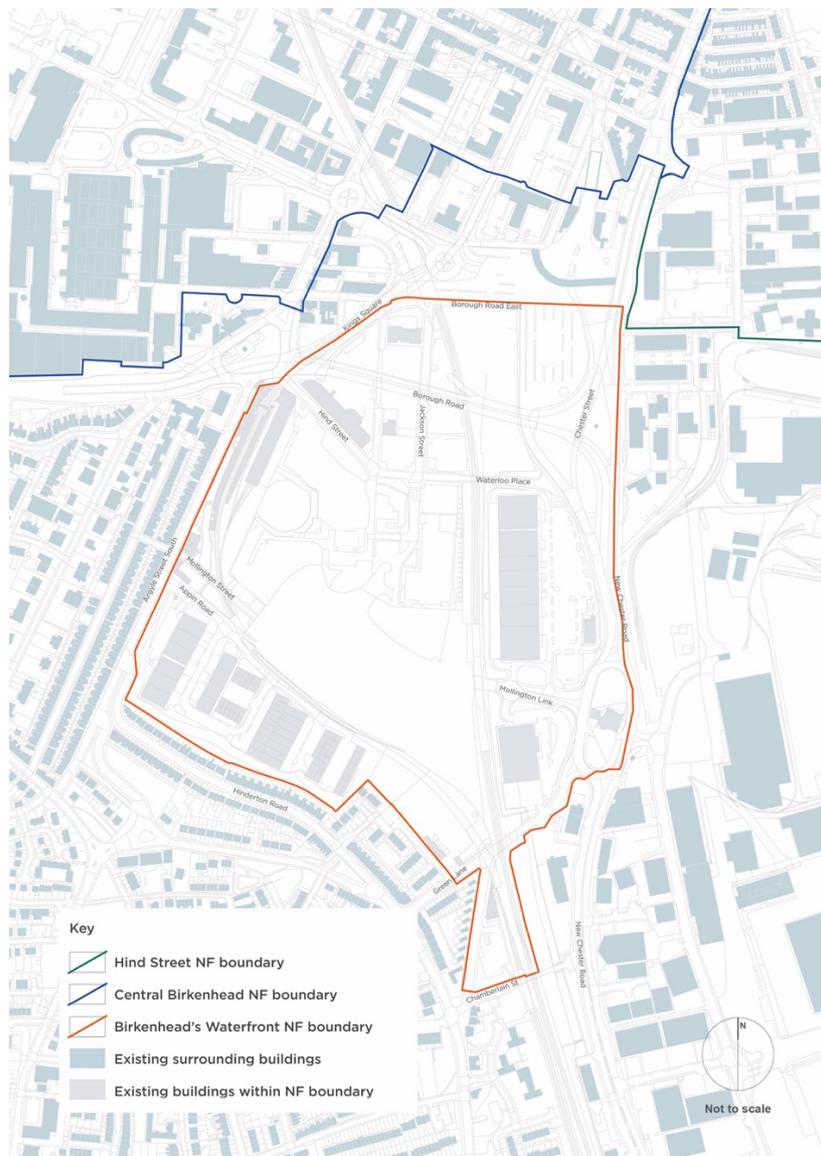
Document Structure

- 1.36 The remainder of the document is structured as follows.
- Section 2: Hind Street Context: Summary of baseline analysis to present snapshot of context for the NF within the Hind Street neighbourhood, including SWOT analysis summary;
 - Section 3: Vision and Objectives: Setting the vision and principles for the Hind Street NF in response to the context, drivers and opportunities identified;
 - Section 4: Hind Street Neighbourhood Framework: Proposed mix of land uses, and identification of key projects coming forwards as a result of the NF process; and
 - Section 5: NF Delivery Strategy and Next Steps: Including project action plan, phasing plan, consideration of funding, delivery vehicles and governance.
- 1.37 This Hind Street NF is supported by technical evidence informing the process undertaken including the production of a Place and Movement Baseline and Demographic and Market Baseline.

2. Hind Street Context

- 2.1 Central Birkenhead covers a significant and complex area, with its boundary shown at Figure 2.1. This section describes the key characteristics of the area and identifies the key issues and opportunities which the Neighbourhood Framework will need to address. It summarises more detailed analysis captured within the appendices included in support of this main report.
- 2.2 The Hind Street development area is located immediately to the south and east Birkenhead Central Station. Its character has historically been dominated by bad-neighbour-like land uses like the old town gas works and was formerly an extensive area railway of sidings, for Woodside, Cammell Lairds and the docks, including (now filled) tunnels under the A41.
- 2.3 The boundary of the Hind Street development area is shown at Figure 2.1. It is noted that through engagement with the landowner group and key stakeholders and in response to the emerging Birkenhead 2040 Framework, that the boundary may evolve.
- 2.4 The remnants of this past leave the area isolated and severed from its wider context. The delivery of the tunnel highway infrastructure to the north of the site further fuelled this severance – with extensive concrete space and flyovers creating a negative environment in the north of the area.
- 2.5 This large site in a highly accessible strategic gateway location is a key brownfield development opportunity with the potential to accommodate a market changing mixed use exemplar project.

Figure 2.1: Hind Street NF Boundary



- 2.6 Hind Street offers significant opportunity to deliver against the urban Garden Village concept at scale within a highly accessible and heavily underutilised area. Whilst there is a small business community within the area, it is a largely vacant and underutilised part of the urban area.
- 2.7 Baseline analysis of existing conditions is therefore distinct for this NF in comparison with the others – with less focus on existing demographic context, and more focus on understanding the on-site and wider drivers that will shape delivery within Hind Street.
- 2.8 The key drivers for change are summarised as:

Infrastructure Dominance

- 2.9 Both the character and the perception of Hind Street is dominated by infrastructure – and in particular the two flyovers that cut across the northern part of the neighbourhood. Those flyovers have historically been so instrumental to the movement of people to and through Birkenhead - connecting more widely via the A41 to the south, and to Liverpool to the east via the Queensway Tunnel – but they are not used as

intensively as they have been historically. The process has noted in particular the importance of the Kingsway Tunnel as the strategic route to and from Liverpool.

- 2.10 In February 2021 the LCRA confirmed conditional approval for an indicative allocation of £8.3m to support the removal of the flyovers. In this context we need to be considering Hind Street as an opportunity area in a time without the flyovers in place.

Current Uses and Land Ownership

- 2.11 There are a number of businesses that operate from the Hind Street neighbourhood area – including those located within the boundary – off Hind Street itself – and within the established business area to the south in the Argyle Industrial Estate. The most land hungry business located off Hind Street is Birkenhead Car and Van Hire (BVH) – with frontage to the road and significant land take to the rear associated with hard standing for vehicle parking and storage. BVH is a long-established family-run business, having been established for some 50 years plus. It has been confirmed through representations made by BVH through the Local Plan process that ION Developments have an option agreement in place to acquire BVH's assets in the area, which is understood to be based upon BVH relocating within the Hind Street NF Boundary. There are smaller, more incidental uses within the area, bound by Hind Street, Borough Road East, Blackpool Street, and Waterloo Place – including trade counter retail, and storage of a mixed quality including small containers and scrap metal.
- 2.12 Land ownership and uses to the south of the neighbourhood are generally identified to be more straightforward. National Grid own the former gas works site, with the Council owning the vacant land to the south between the National Grid land and Argyle Industrial Estate. Network Rail own the disused railway line.
- 2.13 Argyle Industrial Estate is owned by Northern Trust and is a largely occupied and vibrant business location. As of July 2020, less than 10% of the units across the estate are vacant and being marketed, with the let and vacant buildings generally observed to be of a high quality and within a well-managed estate.
- 2.14 Uses delivered to the south of Hind Street should recognise the importance of retaining and protecting this successful employment location – with proximity of residential development likely to be particularly sensitive in that context.
- 2.15 As noted in the introduction to this document, the major landowners are working collaboratively to progress development of a comprehensive masterplan for the Hind Street development area, with the intention to prepare and submit a single outline planning application for the area.

On-Site Legacy of Historic Uses

Need for Remediation

- 2.16 Extensive existing ground works investigations have taken place across much of the Hind Street development area owned by National Grid. The Mollington Sidings investigation borehole records are publicly available and have been utilised to provide indicative ground models for site. Some of the key highlights from the investigations are:
- There were 3 recorded incidents to controlled waters within 500m of the site, with all three occurring in the 1990s. All the incidents were minor with oil as the pollutant. In addition, there are 5 recorded historical or authorised landfills within 500m of the site.

- The site is located in a Very High-Risk area of encountering WWII German HE bombs, and consequently the site requires further action to reduce risk to ALARP if intrusive activities are carried out.
- Made Ground is present across the whole site at substantial depths (>2.50m) due to historic land uses including: Gas Works, Railway Sidings and areas of existing hardstanding. Made Ground poses a risk due to its highly variable geotechnical properties and should not be considered suitable strata for construction unless re-engineering proves a viable option.
- The central area of site is underlain by Tidal Flat Deposits comprising variable layers of soft clays and loose sands, with potential for peat deposits. These deposits possess low bearing resistance and consequently are susceptible to significant settlement.

2.17 Due to the presence of former Gas Tanks, buildings, railway lines and sidings across the site it is anticipated that there may be buried foundations or obstructions present. Buried features are a geotechnical risk if they are not identified; they pose a risk of being struck either during ground investigation works or during construction leading to health and safety risks and programme risk.

2.18 The potential for ground contamination at the site has been assessed and presented as a qualitative risk assessment as part of funding dialogue with the Combined Authority – specifically relating to the removal of the flyovers and investment in the A41. The risks for the site are considered moderate to high due to the presence of Made Ground and former land uses.

2.19 No pre-existing contamination information was available for the site or surrounding area – with a need for equivalent surveys to be undertaken across wider landownerships across the area to inform the extent of land remediation required.

2.20 National Grid have implemented a programme of partial remediation across the land that they own – to as deep as 6.5m in parts. Further site investigation work will be required to inform the extent of further land remediation requirements.

Remaining Gas Infrastructure

2.21 Although not visible at the site surface, there remains a significant gas infrastructure legacy buried across the land owned by National Grid including both medium and low-pressure gas pipes that have historically connected to the now removed Gas Holders on the site – and that still serve as energy infrastructure for the wider area via the pressure reduction system that remains right in the heart of the area – to the south and in line with Thomas Street.

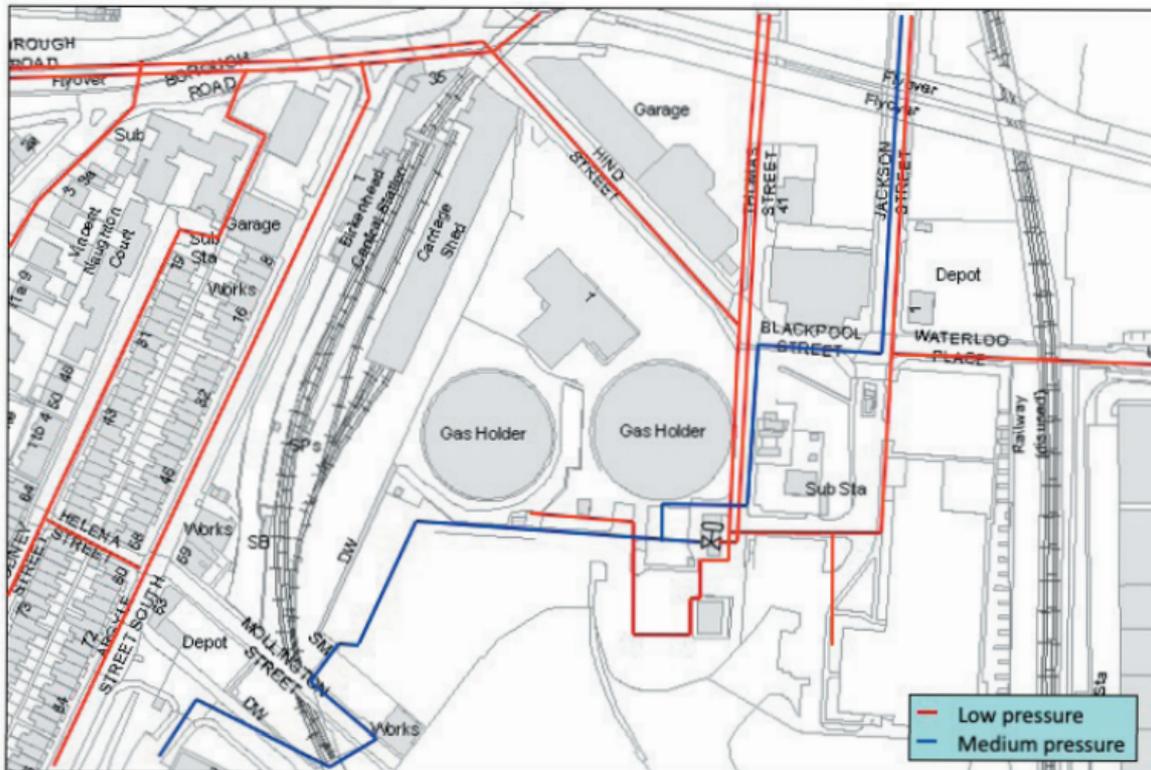
2.22 The presence of these pipes and pressure reduction system represents a material constraint for development across the site – with the need for easements for safety and maintenance purposes across the network.

2.23 Restrictions in association with the pipe network relate to development, the construction process itself, and even the planting of landscaping. Specifically:

- Mechanical excavators cannot be used within 0.5m of low or medium pressure pipes.
- The selection of any type of tree or shrub and its planting must be considered so that root damage to buried mains or services will be avoided and that damage to trees or shrubs will not be caused by any subsequent excavations for

repair and maintenance. Planting schemes should be submitted to National Grid for approval, with National Grid reserving the right to remove any tree/bush at any time in the future.

Figure 2.2: Remaining Gas Infrastructure



- 2.24 In order to realise value from the land they own, National Grid recognise and support the need to relocate and simplify the infrastructure across the area. There is a need to retain a degree of the infrastructure to ensure that there is no interruption to gas connectivity for the wider area – but National Grid have identified the potential to relocate the pressure reduction system to a location less intrusive to the development area (important for maintenance but also because there is a preference to not significantly screen or landscape the infrastructure for health and safety reasons), and in a location where the gas pipes can more easily be accommodated within the highways network – thereby ensuring easements are in place.
- 2.25 The NF process in identifying a preferred option for development across Hind Street must inform the most appropriate location for the pressure reduction system to be located in this context, to be tested further through the landowner masterplan process and ultimately outline application.

Housing Market Need and Opportunity

- 2.26 The Birkenhead 2040 Framework has identified housing market failure across the urban area – open market sales delivery (homes and apartments) is materially compromised by viability. Most new build delivery coming forward is underpinned by social housing delivery – and predominantly social rent, and/or modest in scale, innovation and design quality. Existing supply is dominated by social housing and private rent. Levels of home ownership within the centre and its 1-mile radius catchment is half that of the national average.
- 2.27 Whilst there is some residential development already planned within the core of the centre – these piecemeal developments will not address the evidenced housing market failure across the centre. Instead,

the Framework has identified the need for a comprehensive approach enabling housing delivery across a range of property types and tenures.

- 2.28 Hind Street sits within an interesting market context – influenced of course by this urban context, but also able to draw on the more vibrant housing market area to the south. The Rock Ferry / New Ferry / Bromborough market is far more established with national and regional housebuilders. Residential sales values in Bromborough are in the region of 20-30% higher than within the Birkenhead urban area. There is a significant opportunity through the redevelopment of Hind Street to bridge this market gap – and bring higher values into Birkenhead. To do so, the development must prioritise delivering the right mix of residential development in the right setting.
- 2.29 Material housing delivery is at the core of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework. We recognise the need to deliver homes within the urban area to meet housing need over the plan period. This includes new housing delivery and bringing vacant and underutilised houses back into positive use.
- 2.30 The Council's Local Plan evidence base emphasises that future population change will be driven by a significant increase in the number and proportion of older residents, with the population aged 65+ years expected to increase by 30% from 70,000 in 2019 to 91,900 in 2035, placing specific pressure on delivery of accommodation within sustainable locations with immediate and easy access to amenity and services.
- 2.31 Beyond meeting this specific need, there is evidence highlighting the importance of diversifying residential accommodation within Birkenhead more widely – including diversifying tenure (with current high levels of social housing provision), and diversifying type (including greater provision of homes alongside apartments, particularly important given the scale of apartment development permitted at Wirral Waters).

Topography

- 2.32 The level changes across Hind Street create a very challenging context for delivering a coherent development area which naturally grows out from Central Birkenhead.
- 2.33 The land generally slopes away north to south – but the more critical and apparent challenges exist in the northern part of the neighbourhood.
- 2.34 The land in the ownership of ION Developments, and the former railway line owned by Network Rail, sits about a storey below Jackson Street to the west. The site then slopes down to Waterloo Place (to about a storey above the lowest point of Waterloo Place as it passes under the former railway bridge). The wall to Waterloo Place appears to be a retaining wall in this context. It would appear that the land then falls away to the east Tunnel Road and the toll plaza continuing south and under the flyover.
- 2.35 The disused railway is in a cutting to the west of the ION Developments land, between it and Jackson Street to the west again. When operational the trains passed through a tunnel to connected to the stretch above Argyle Street to Woodside – with the tunnel still in place but bricked up at the northern boundary of the site.
- 2.36 Borough Road East sits above the ground level of the ION Development land, and of the disused railway line within the cutting – at the approximate level of Central Birkenhead to the north.
- 2.37 Addressing these level changes to create continuous and positive development form that addresses both Central Birkenhead and the balance of Hind Street to the south will be a critical challenge for future development to overcome, and again emphasises the importance of a comprehensive approach to the neighbourhood. Active frontages (which could include residential active frontages) will be important to

address both aspects – with the southern aspect in particular important given its gateway nature through new infrastructure delivery.

Figure 2.3: Railway Line Topography

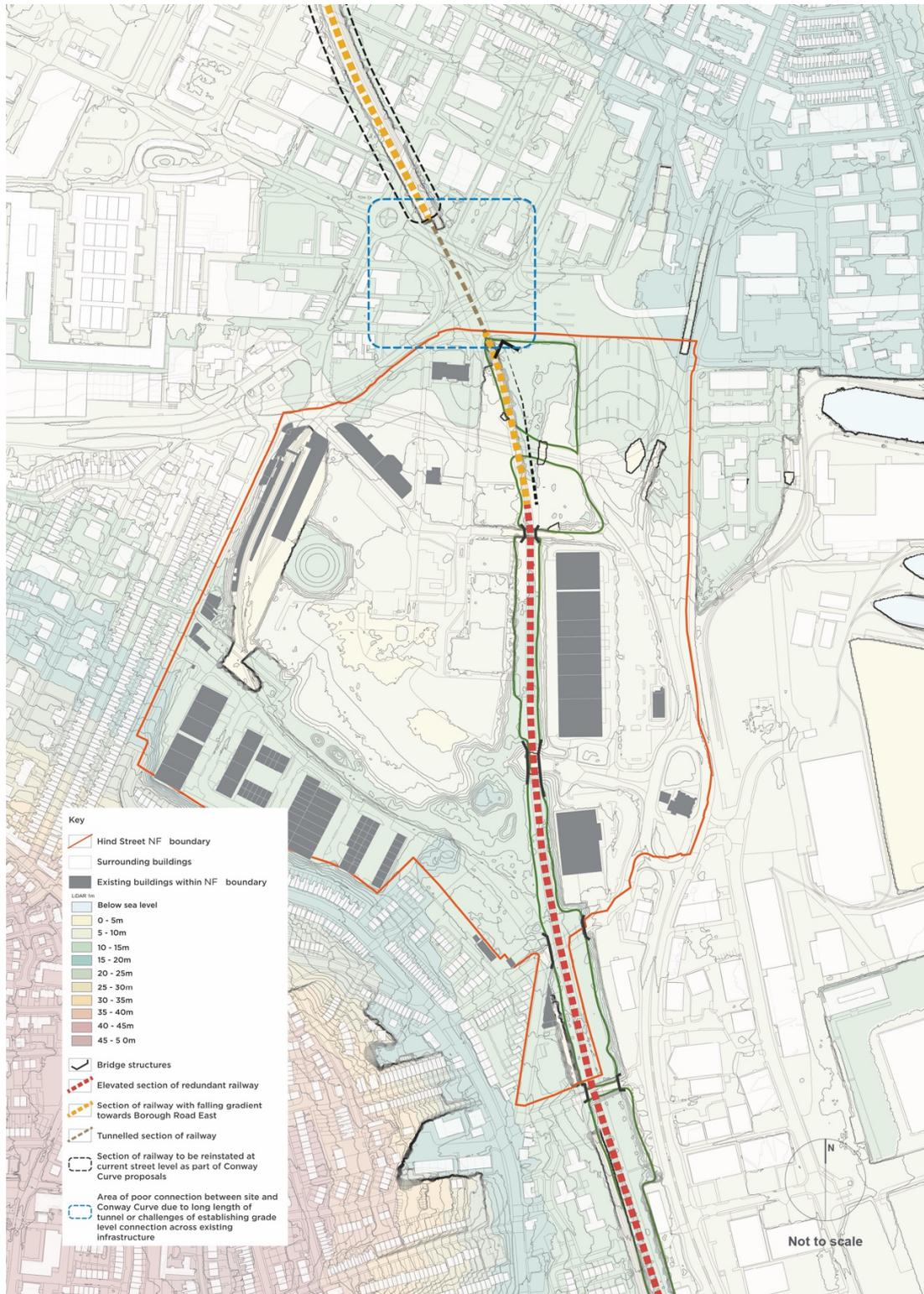
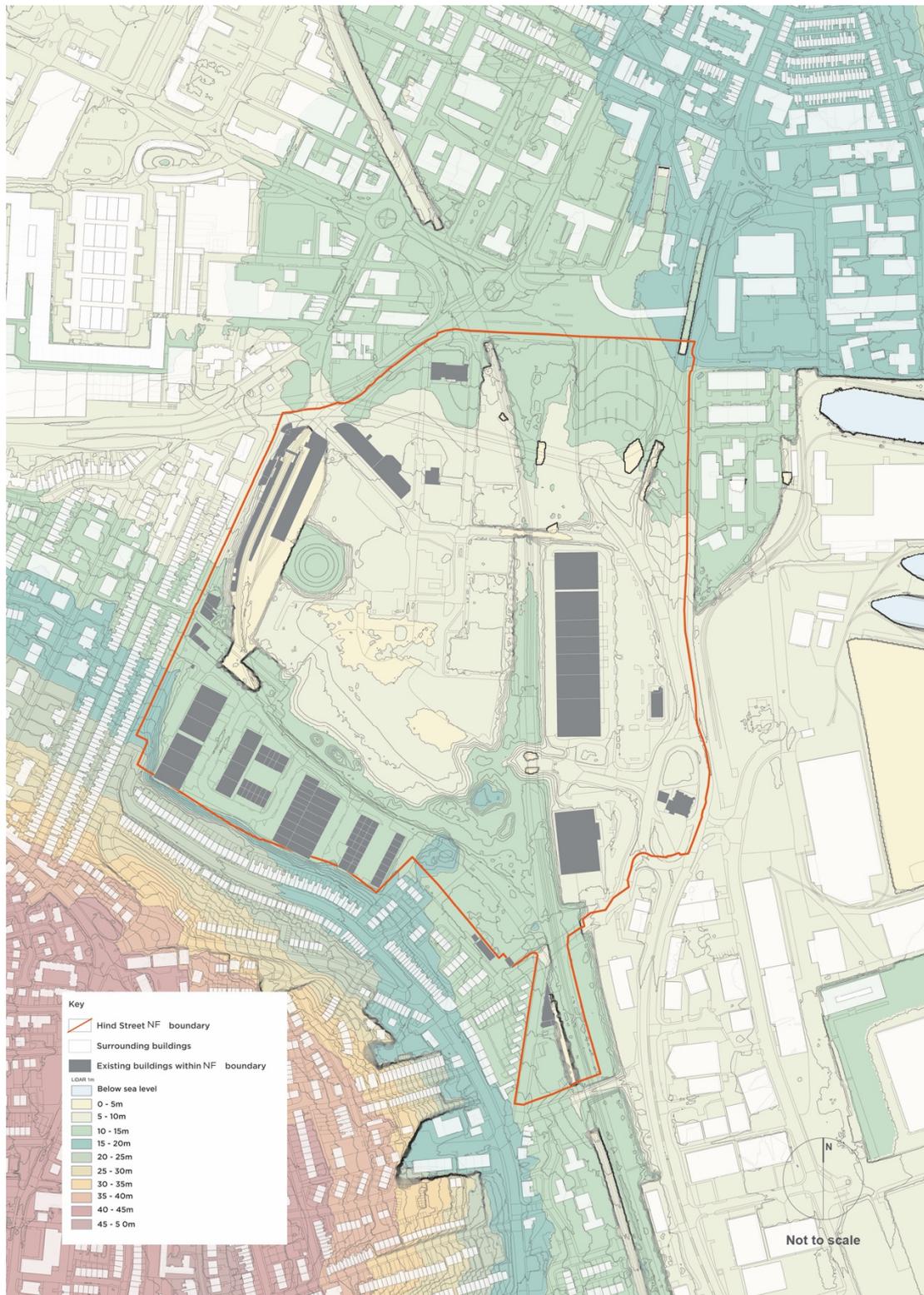


Figure 2.4: Hind Street Elevation Profile



Respecting Sightlines – Protecting our Heritage

2.38 Birkenhead has unique topographic characteristics. Higher ground lies to the north and south of the River Birket, which was reclaimed and repurposed for the extensive inner dock system: The Great Float.

- 2.39 Our 'heritage heart' remains clearly identifiable – formed by the cluster of Grade I listed Georgian buildings around the Hamilton Square conservation area. This cluster, including the Birkenhead Town Hall and Magistrates Court, is the largest concentration of Grade I listed buildings outside of Trafalgar Square in London. The remains of the Priory is one of our more underutilised but significant heritage assets – being the oldest standing building across Merseyside.
- 2.40 The baseline analysis has noted particular considerations which need to be factored into the NF option development and testing process relating to heritage and associated importance sightlines. Specifically, it has noted a need for the sensitive use of height in some key areas of neighbourhood – particularly to the north with views down from Hamilton Square (the Hamilton Street continuous sightline) and the west from the Priory towards St Werburghs, but also across the core of the sight from a high point to the south off Holt Hill Terrace towards Liverpool and its Graces.

Strategic and Local Connectivity

- 2.41 Hind Street is at the centre of an area that is extremely well connected with the presence of a range of transport infrastructure and assets, but patterns of strategic movement are generally noted to be around it or past it, not to it. In summary whilst it has a strategic location, it fails to take advantage of these assets in its current form.
- 2.42 Strategic road infrastructure connecting to Liverpool via the Queensway Tunnel originates in the central area – and sweeps past the neighbourhood via the flyovers in the north.
- 2.43 Hind Street is book-ended by two Merseyrail stations to its north and its south – Birkenhead Central and Green Lane connecting the area via the Chester and Ellesmere Port branch of the Wirral Line. It is also in close proximity to the Hamilton Square station to the northeast, with journey times to Central Liverpool being literally minutes and connectivity to the wider city region available through connections there.
- 2.44 This strategic positioning of public transport infrastructure is a key asset which should be exploited through the development of Hind Street – but the NF also recognises that Birkenhead Central Station currently turns its back on the development area.
- 2.45 The road connectivity of the neighbourhood will be significantly enhanced through the implementation of the A41 North Phase 1A – Connecting Wirral Waters / Birkenhead Central Gateway project – removing the first flyover and creating a new strategic road link from the A41 to Central Birkenhead via Hind Street.
- 2.46 Perhaps even more importantly to inform the character of this neighbourhood, the baseline analysis recognises the proximity of Hind Street to Central Birkenhead on foot or cycle – albeit further notes the issues with that taking that journey – in particular in crossing the Birkenhead Central gyratory and the severance that the vast expanses of vehicle only approach land to the tunnel entrance creates
- 2.47 The issues with crossing the gyratory are identified to include particular poor visibility for both drivers and pedestrians, poor crossing environment generally, lack of signage and lighting, and inconsistency and poor-quality public realm throughout the environment.

Figure 2.5: Strategic Connectivity Plan



SWOT Analysis

2.48 The baseline analysis undertaken as part of the NF process has fed into a SWOT analysis set out in Table 2.1, and Figures 2.6 and 2.7 overleaf.

Table 2.1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Uncertain outlook: Impact of COVID-19			
Birkenhead 2040 and Neighbourhood Framework process already underway at time of COVID-19. Early Council response through Economic Resilience group.	Existing decline within retail core exacerbated during the pandemic. Over-exposure to retail and public sector employment within the local economy.	Potential to address long term issues within town centre core including physical environment and extent of vacant stock.	Potential loss of confidence visiting the town centre across the catchment population. Uncertain outlook as to the length of lockdown, and future lockdowns / ongoing social distancing restrictions.
Urban Family Living			
Accessibility of existing service and amenity provision within the town centre, Waterfront and other NFs. Early delivery at Wirral Waters is creating market interest and improving local values.	Not an established private sector residential investment or development market. Poor quality environment across the town centre generally. Low values within the local area and dominance of social housing stock of varying quality.	Significant underutilised brownfield land with the potential to deliver new housing development.	Viability of early development phases. Poor quality design in early phases would undermine aspirations to develop a strong residential offer. If community provision is not delivered alongside residential including schools market demand and sustainability could be undermined.
Legacy Infrastructure			
Utilities connections in place.	Utilities connections linked to historic uses with complicated underground network and associated easements.	Potential to leverage investment to address infrastructure constraints. Potential to address other ground / site readiness investment at the same time.	Unknown cost of addressing infrastructure constraints. Need for collective decision making around relocation of infrastructure with potential for optimum location requiring third party land.
Multiple Ownerships			
Large individual ownership / options to acquire in place to drive change. Collaboration agreement in place across main landowners.	Potential for ransom issues associated with parties outside of main collaboration agreement.	Collaborative approach to delivery.	Differing views or conflicts across landowner group could undermine collaborative approach.
Connectivity			
Gateway location via Tunnel and A41, and railway stations, adjacency to town centre. Funding in place to enhance connectivity.	No positive connectivity through the site currently.	Unlock material development through infrastructure delivery, re-purposing and removal.	Delays or non-delivery of infrastructure which could result in funding being lost, and / or cost of such works.

Figure 2.6: Technical Constraints Summary

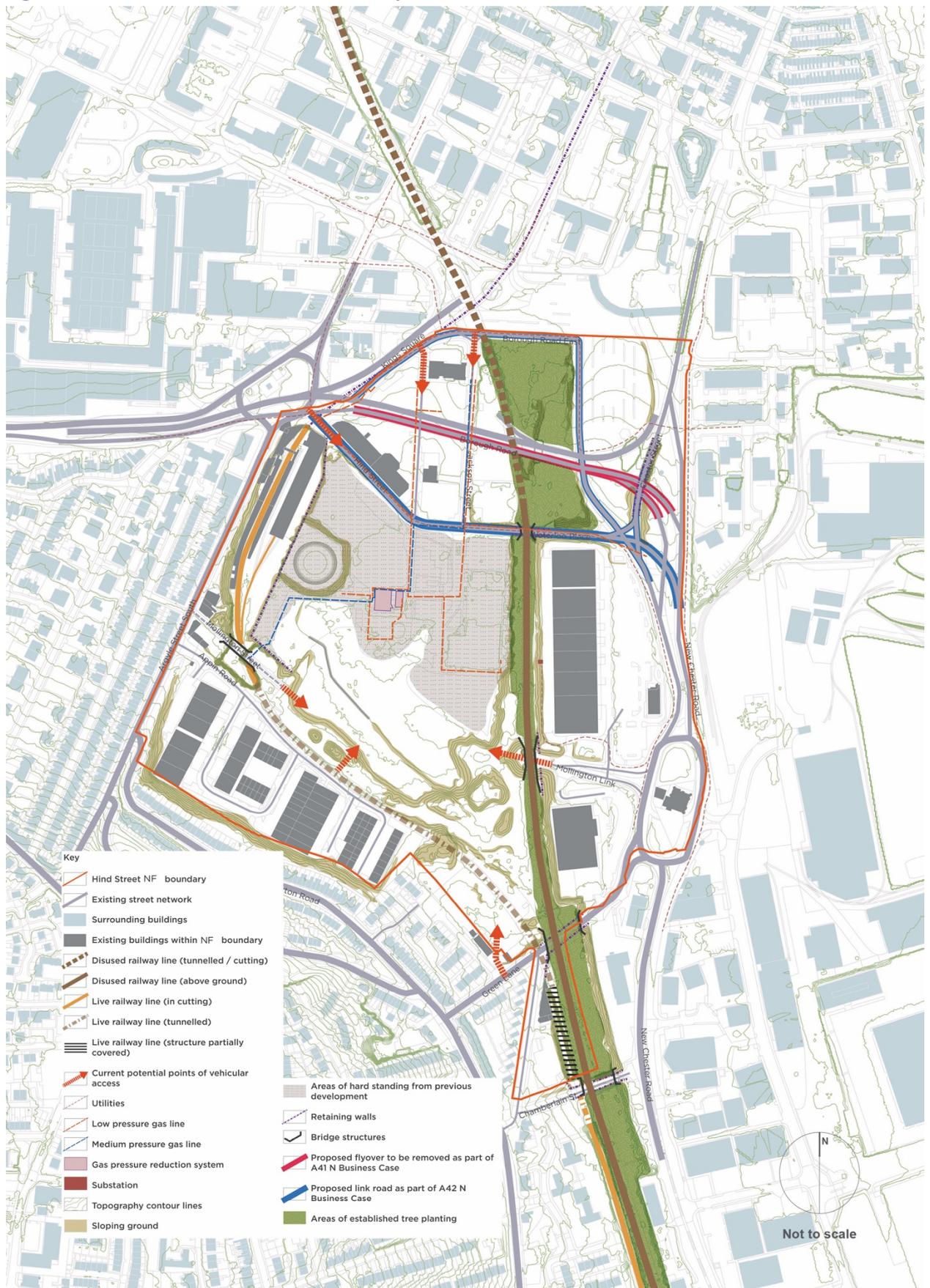
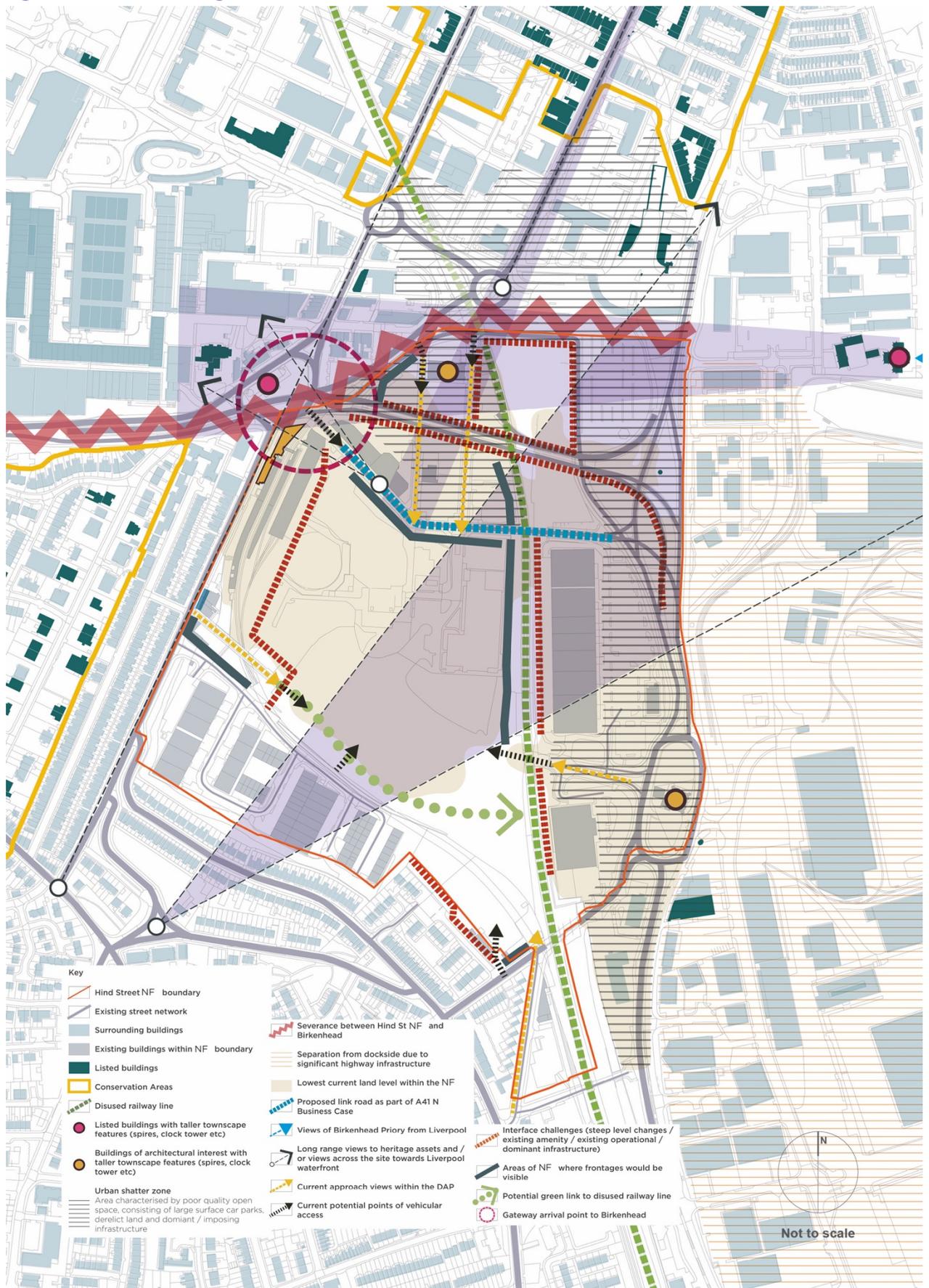


Figure 2.7: Placemaking Influences



3. Vision and Objectives

Vision

- 3.1 It is very rare within urban regeneration programmes that the opportunity exists to create a new neighbourhood within an established centre that has the potential of Hind Street. This potential is not just about scale of opportunity – but is perhaps more importantly about the type of place and the community that we can create through delivery within this area.
- 3.2 The Birkenhead 2040 Framework is all about realising the full potential of the urban area, and challenging ourselves to do things differently. At Hind Street we are able to deliver an urban residential offer that is exactly what the Birkenhead 2040 Framework is all about – urban, garden city, sustainable and inter-generation in character. City living, for families, in a green and vibrant setting.
- 3.3 The full ambition for Hind Street can only really be achieved if we also are able to deliver on the adjacent and inter-related catalyst projects – Birkenhead Landing and Dock Branch Park. Without these two catalyst projects being realised, our ambitions for a sustainable new community to our core urban area simply won't be a reality – it will be proximate but not part of a continuous city area. By delivering the catalysts, we are able to bring Hind Street into the centre – connecting it with St Werburgh's and Argyle Approach. As noted within the Central Birkenhead NF – these neighbourhoods will only create a stronger Birkenhead if they overlap and interface.
- 3.4 But we recognise the challenges that come with this ambition. In order to deliver this exciting scale and nature of change we must achieve the comprehensive development of the area, and we must create confidence in delivery, which in turn requires the considerable simplification of the constraints that we face. Without this confidence in delivery we will simply not be able to unlock the upfront enabling funding required to unlock Hind Street in the way that we want to.
- 3.5 On that basis, our proposed vision for Hind Street is:

The most sought-after address in Wirral, Hind Street will set the benchmark for Birkenhead. The urban village within the garden city; the most sustainable, innovative and green residential neighbourhood within the Liverpool City Region.

Objectives

- 3.6 Sitting beneath the vision are a number of objectives – identified to guide investment and change specifically in the context of the baseline conditions established, and a means against which to establish a robust monitoring framework to test the impact of implementation.
- 3.7 The Hind Street NF objectives, similarly to the vision, must capture the opportunity identified within area and its unique potential to create something new, setting the benchmark for Birkenhead's future residential offer.
- 3.8 In no particular order:
- Urban village feel within garden city context: We will not compromise on density or design quality across Hind Street, and we will ensure the right balance between private and public space to create a vibrant, mixed and interactive urban community.

- Delivery of Intergenerational homes to create genuine community: We will deliver a range of homes that meet the needs of a diverse community across all stages of life – from setting down roots to growing old, and all stages between. Our approach to housing and tenure mix will reflect our ambition for people to live in Hind Street throughout their lives – as individuals, through relationships and as families.
- Delivery of infrastructure to support our community: Hind Street will meet its own community needs and support the wider Birkenhead community through the delivery of an urban school on-site, and other amenity and services as required delivered innovatively within the residential form. We will plan this infrastructure in from the start, ensuring resilience in how the neighbourhood grows.
- Flexible accommodation that supports modern working lifestyles and demands: We will deliver as part of the residential form a variety of spaces that meet the demands of people’s modern working lifestyles – facilitating working from home, working remotely and working in co-working.
- Making healthy living part of everyday life: We will ensure that the green space delivered across Hind Street on the ground and on our roofs is not aesthetics but creates a healthy culture and way of life across the neighbourhood. We will deliver functional green space that encourages activities, we will integrate our school with our green space to create play spaces for children and young people to use throughout the day, we will create safe and welcoming walking, running and cycling loops and journeys, and we will deliver urban allotments to support healthy diets.
- Sustainable in every way: We will ensure this is a genuinely sustainable neighbourhood by embedding low carbon credentials in every element of the design and delivery process – from energy generation and storage to energy consumption and efficiency, and by encouraging a grow culture on site, we will innovate to create a culture of responsibility and sustainability across this community. It will be an accessible place, but not one where the private car dominates or dictates the way people live.
- A well-managed place: A consistent approach to place and neighbourhood management will be applied across Hind Street – across the residential uses, transport provision, public realm and landscape. Long term stewardship will be integral to the design process – ensuring well thought out buildings and spaces that are functional, beautiful and stand the test of time, with a strategy informed and owned by the local community.
- Creating the justification for structural change: We will ensure that the scale and nature of change, and the delivery strategy established to bring it to life, supports the wider structural change required across Birkenhead Landing.

4. Hind Street Neighbourhood Framework

Development Options

- 4.1 In response to the Birkenhead 2040 Framework, NF baseline analysis, vision, objectives and spatial framework established, alternative options for change and delivery within Hind Street have been identified and tested. Three alternative options have been captured within this process – with the testing to ultimately inform the preferred option for land use and change across Hind Street.
- 4.2 The three options developed test different approaches to density and open space provision across the neighbourhood; at this stage the options did not factor in the need for a school – with the intention instead to model and understand the impacts of alternative approaches to density across the area.
- 4.3 The approach to density was developed alongside and fed into the Wirral Density Guide, being produced by ARUP to feed into the Local Plan process. Through the optioneering we have tested a range of different densities across Hind Street exploring the best way to deliver against the objectives established.
- 4.4 We know that care should be taken with designing buildings over a certain height, to appreciate the character and context of each development. In this case, a considered approach to density and scale will be required to:
- carefully balance the delivery of significant new homes and residential accommodation whilst ensuring a viable and realistic mix of development;
 - create the right character across Hind Street, in line with the vision and objectives including the creation of a high quality, comfortable and human scaled environment; and
 - ensure a housing offer that is balanced with and support the strategy established within the Birkenhead 2040 Framework.
- 4.5 We have considered a range of densities through the optioneering process, drawing on appropriate comparable schemes from across the UK and Europe and based on our own typology development to model the implications of the different densities on unit mix and provision of private/public open space.

Table 4.1: Density Range Considered

50dph	Contemporary 2 storey 3 and 4 bed terraced family housing
85dph	2 and 3 story Contemporary terraced family housing and some apartments
135dph	Higher density 3 and 4 storey multigenerational housing with some ground floor garden space shared courtyard garden and 5 storey apartment block
180dph	Equal provision of higher density stacked housing with private outdoor space e.g patio or balcony and shared courtyard garden and 6 storey apartment block
240dph	6 and 4 storey apartment-led with some dual aspect ground floor apartments with outdoor space

Summary of Alternative Options

4.6 The three options considered are summarised as:

Infrastructure-led density

4.7 Within this option we have modelled density to reflect:

- Maximising proximity to sustainable train links – creating critical mass in these two key locations at Birkenhead Central and Green Lane;
- Enclosing and overlooking open space to create a vibrant and safe environment, and creating strong links between the two stations; and
- Lower density residential development within the surrounding context.

Responding to heritage:

4.8 Within this option we have modelled density to reflect:

- Respecting the setting and backdrop of the Priory spire, with low density development at the north of the site;
- Sensitive density enables strengthened view across the Mersey towards Birkenhead; and
- The clustering of density in the core of the neighbourhood reinforces new east-west connections from Birkenhead Central station to New Chester Road.

Framing green spaces and internal environments

4.9 Within this option we have modelled density to reflect:

- Clusters of density distributed across Hind Street;
- Link of taller buildings along the former railway line; and
- Open space framed by various forms of density and views screened from east to create family and community focused internal greenspace.

Option Testing

4.10 Having established alternative options for Hind Street, all three have been tested through consideration of:

- Contribution to strategic objectives and the framework vision, including the ambition to deliver delivering a higher density but high-quality liveable environment;
- Leverage of private sector investment, i.e. the extent to which the options will enable and attract private sector investment;
- Viability – cost/value considerations, considered in the context of wider dialogue regarding potential public sector funding support that may be available and residual land value appraisals prepared as part of the NF process;
- Technical assessment – high level assessment of technical viability in terms of highways, sustainability, heritage, planning, any known abnormal around contamination and the need for remediation; and

- Deliverability – land ownership, reliance on public sector funding, planning risk, and potential for public – private partnership delivery.

4.11 The outcome of the option testing process is summarised in the following table – applying a RAG (red/amber/green) rating and explanation for each consideration.

Table 4.2: Option Appraisal Summary

	Option 1: Infrastructure-led		Option 2: Responding to heritage		Option 3: Framing green spaces	
	RAG Rating	Comment	RAG Rating	Comment	RAG Rating	Comment
Contribution to vision and objectives	Amber	The option assumes a lower development output than the Birkenhead 2040 high level modelling. This suggests the full potential associated with the area is not being maximised in terms of housing delivery. The option does however include the most variation in densities modelled – ensuring the full consideration of meeting a range of housing needs – and honours the delivery of open space and approach to movement as established within the vision.	Amber	This option delivers the lowest development output overall and is therefore considered to be the most cautious of the options developed and tested. Whilst heritage is a development constraint, it is not specifically identified within the vision and objectives as a driver for development in this location. Whilst a range of densities are tested, the framing of this option by heritage specifically the option does not specifically consider the impacts of highest density living in this location.	Amber	As with the previous two options, the third option delivers below the unit numbers modelled within the Birkenhead 2040 high level modelling. The option has considered a range of densities whilst honouring the delivery of strategic green space and ensuring a high quality and landscaped setting for new development coming forward.
Private sector leverage	Amber	Concern has been raised through the commercial appraisal of the option regarding the scale and location of apartment delivery within the project and first phases. In particular the centrally located plots of the highest density could sit as an 'island' in the short to medium term and would not relate as well to the Central Birkenhead context as plots within the north-west 'nose' of the neighbourhood – which are identified to have more appeal.	Green	The lower density approach taken within this option is considered to be most in line with current market demand certainly as the neighbourhood looks to build on market strength to the south. Some concerns raised in relation to the non-traditional application of slightly lower densities across the area, and in particular the approach to stacking units, but recognition that these typologies could be important to deliver the wider vision for the neighbourhood and the Birkenhead 2040 Framework.	Amber	Concern has been raised through the commercial appraisal of the option regarding the scale and location of apartment delivery within the project and first phases. In particular the centrally located plots of the highest density could sit as an 'island' in the short to medium term and would not relate as well to the Central Birkenhead context as plots within the north-west 'nose' of the neighbourhood – which are identified to have more appeal.
Viability	Red	Option is identified to be significantly unviable, before abnormal costs have	Amber	Most viable of the three options considered, but still not a development	Amber	As with Options 1 and 2, Option 3 is not viable even before abnormal costs have been

		<p>been factored into the analysis. Level of apartment delivery noted to have a significant impact on viability of the option.</p> <p>All viability analysis has included affordable housing delivery at 10%. It is assumed viability can be enhanced through a more detailed design process and improved cost information.</p>		<p>scheme. As for Option 1, the viability analysis has included affordable housing delivery at 10%.</p>		<p>factored into the costs applied. Similarly to Option 2, the more balanced approach between densities, and the overall lower density identified makes Option 2 more viable than Option 1. As for Options 1 and 2, the viability analysis has included affordable housing delivery at 10%.</p>
Technical Assessment		<p>Option does not include delivery of school – flagged up during the option testing process as being required, which will be reflected in the preferred option. Potential for impact on wider heritage assets given height in the north in particular, but also critically in the centre with potential impacts on longer views from / to Liverpool. This option assumes the highest proportion of plots above 180dph – with highest average heights and density as a result across the scheme.</p>		<p>Option does not include delivery of school – flagged up during the option testing process as being required, which will be reflected in the preferred option. Most sensitive treatment of heritage across the three options, both in terms of geography of density across the area, but also maximum building heights – with no plot modelled above 180dph.</p>		<p>Option does not include delivery of school – flagged up during the option testing process as being required, which will be reflected in the preferred option. Concerns raised with height and density modelled within the centre of the site – with potential impacts on longer views from / to Liverpool.</p>
Deliverability		<p>Given the significant issues with viability identified, in addition to the known complexities to deliver the comprehensive development of this area – including strategic infrastructure project delivery, need for remediation, and abnormals associated with level changes, in addition to multiple landowners, material delivery challenges have been identified in relation to Option 1..</p>		<p>The market commentary and more favourable viability analysis under Option 2 suggests that this is a more deliverable option certainly than Option 1. There is a need to improve viability, and it is noted that this option delivers the fewest number of units – which needs to be considered in the context both of the Local Plan and the need to create a strong business case for public sector funding.</p>		<p>Option 3 is considered to be very similar to Option 2 in terms of its deliverability – the option remains unviable, but not to the extent of Option 1, unit numbers are higher than under Option 2 which could leverage a stronger case for public sector investment.</p>

Neighbourhood Framework Preferred Option

- 4.12 The optioneering exercise for Hind Street has not identified any one of the three alternatives considered as being preferred in its entirety. As a result, a preferred approach for Hind Street to be taken forward by the landowners must draw on the analysis of the alternatives considered and carry forward the respective strengths of each option tested.
- 4.13 Hind Street is both a uniquely exciting and complex development area – and the preferred option must find a balance between ensuring that we get the best from the regeneration of the neighbourhood through a deliverable scheme. We are particularly aware in the context of preparing the preferred option that Hind Street is an important neighbourhood in the context of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and the Local Plan – both in terms of its potential for early delivery and its role in changing the residential offer within the urban area, and in doing so proving the concept of high quality intergenerational and family living in the core.
- 4.14 As with all the Birkenhead 2040 neighbourhoods, the Hind Street NF preferred option is ambitious and positive with regards the nature of change and the scale of change. It responds to the constraints and opportunities noted within the baseline analysis, and the process of option testing and identifies the following key shaping factors to the future development of the neighbourhood:
- Need for a comprehensive approach: the NF process has clearly identified that the only way to genuinely create a coherent neighbourhood, overcoming the physical challenges that exist across the site, and ensuring a robust approach to the delivery and long-term management of strategic infrastructure including open space across the Hind Street. The analysis has identified the importance of avoiding a piecemeal approach to development across the area – specifically putting the overall ambition and strategic infrastructure delivery at risk;
 - Need for a sensitive approach to density: the option testing and in particular the viability analysis supports the need to ensure a balanced approach to unit mix and size across the neighbourhood. But the preferred option cannot be swayed by current market conditions – and must find a balance between ensuring that the development proposition is deliverable, whilst staying true to the vision and opportunity that has been identified. This neighbourhood must be more than a suburban housing scheme – an outcome that has to be achieved through the preferred option. A robust approach to density can and must complement land uses and amenities already in Birkenhead Town Centre to ensure that development in Hind Street supports and sustains the uses in the core as well as providing localised amenity for its residents and users; and
 - Need to deliver unlock the full potential of Hind Street through infrastructure project delivery: there is no robust and high-quality development strategy for Hind Street, delivered in the context of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework, that is achievable without the delivery of the new A41 link road and Birkenhead Landing. The potential to deliver a new neighbourhood in line with the vision established within the NF is much greater in a scenario where the second phase of the Dock Branch Park is progressed through the area. The progression of the preferred option therefore must be twin-tracked with the implementation of these wider catalyst projects.
- 4.15 Comprehensive regeneration has the potential to create something incredibly special at Hind Street, and of a material scale in the context of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and Local Plan.
- 4.16 This includes the potential to unlock a significant amount of development opportunity through infrastructure delivery, with potential for development to commence in part across Hind Street within early years of both the 2040 Framework and the Local Plan.

- 4.17 The options analysis confirms the following in relation to development plots, density and infrastructure delivery:
- Assumed residential-led redevelopment of the area, subject to the strategy for business relocations from the area the NF, including the reasonable integration of Commercial, Business and Service uses (Use Class E), Hotels (Use Class C1) and Local Community and Learning uses (Use Class F) to the north of Hind Street and Waterloo Place, if and where it can be demonstrated that these uses are complementary to, and/or, cannot be accommodated within the Birkenhead Town Centre Sub-Regional Centre and Birkenhead Commercial District..
 - More intensive development of the area generally – in terms of the balance between strategic open space and residential development plots – than the alternatives tested. This approach has been taken to maximise value through the development process, whilst still seeking to ensure we are able to deliver a demonstrably landscaped and urban garden village neighbourhood.
 - Even within this more intensive development form – the protection and ultimately delivery of strategic green space is noted and prioritised, including Dock Branch Park Phase 2 (including connections up to Dock Branch Park Phase 1).
 - Delivery of a two-form entry primary school (420 places) relating to the need identified for new school provision to the south of the Great Float relating to the wider programme of residential delivery across the Birkenhead urban area. Hind Street was identified through the Birkenhead 2040 Framework process as being a candidate location for a school across the southern NF areas to meet this identified need. Reflecting on this within the context of the vision and objectives for Hind Street, it is clear that any school delivery would need to be innovative in terms of design and approach to interface with open space and the wider development form, and not undermine the approach to density advocated. This could include the consideration of an innovative design that could integrate the school built into the residential realm, thereby enabling potential higher value uses on the current assumed school plot. Future masterplanning should consider the ability to deliver a school as part of the development of the Hind Street area, with developers expected to make a contribution to delivery. Contributions should be considered in their wider Birkenhead context if any future school is to meet a strategic need across the urban area and draw on development outside of Hind Street as appropriate.
 - Highest density development plots are assumed at and around the Birkenhead Central Station, including the delivery of a southern entry to the station to directly connect into this neighbourhood – maximising the potential of the station to drive both quantum and value of residential development in these key locations.
 - A balanced approach to density across the wider plots identified ensuring that we are able to draw on the market strengths to the south where more traditional suburban housing forms prevail and are viable. The overall approach to density, on a net developable area basis, exceeds the requirements of the Wirral Density Guide within this location.

Open Space and Public Realm

- 4.18 In line with the vision and established objectives for Hind Street, open space delivery is integral to the preferred option and will ultimately underpin the commercial viability and long-term sustainability of the place that we create.
- 4.19 The NF identifies the potential to deliver of open space in the following ways, as summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Open Space and Public Realm Projects Description

Ref	Description
Disused Railway line	Phase 2 Dock Branch Park bringing the disused former railway line back into use as a linear park and sustainable movement corridor – scope of delivery to be determined through future business development and detailed design, but principles of Phase 1 assumed to be carried forward into Phase 2 to ensure a coherent and consistent green infrastructure network. Design to safeguard for future delivery of Mass Transit system along this phase of Dock Branch Park, subject to initial business development and the nature of transit taken forward (and its practicality of delivery across the full length of the park). As well as functioning as a sustainable transit corridor, this space also has the potential to deliver amenity greenspace and provision for young people directly complementing development that meets with and animates the corridor.
Pocket Spaces	Within the residential environment, we believe it will be important to deliver 'pocket spaces' of functional landscape, SUDs and ecological space, natural and edible planting, which are purposeful and considered throughout the design development of the neighbourhood – creating a network of spaces and ensuring that green infrastructure runs visibly throughout the neighbourhood. These spaces could ease the burden of the allotment provision identified within Gasworks Park – subject to design and approach to management progressed. PR05 to include delivery of PRS infrastructure (Subject to agreement between landowners).
Buffer Planting	A small number of buffer planting areas is identified to the north of Argyle Industrial Estate to provide visual screening from the adjacent commercial uses and future residential uses. These functional spaces provide a visual and physical buffer between adjacent uses and have the opportunity to become established ecological planted corridors that connect with the wider network of spaces across the area.

Movement Strategy and Street Hierarchy

- 4.20 A clear movement strategy, delivered on a phase-by-phase basis, underpins the preferred option for Hind Street. Whilst clearly the potential of Hind Street will be directly opened up by the new A41 link road, our strategy is about much more than that strategic route. This includes the identification of a clear street hierarchy, relating to all forms of movement across the neighbourhood. For Hind Street the implementation of a clear hierarchy will be particularly important – to ensure that we are avoiding the creation of rat-runs, and to have control over routes into the centre from and through this strategic location into Central Birkenhead. This routing will be fundamental to ensuring we are delivering a quality, new, gateway into Birkenhead Central – with a critical success factor recognised to be the delivery of clear and easy pedestrian/cycle routes to and from Birkenhead Town Centre.
- 4.21 In line with the Birkenhead 2040 Framework area, we expect our focus on green infrastructure to translate and be reflected throughout the Hind Street street hierarchy – including greening streets measures and use of planting throughout our urban environment, both from an aesthetic perspective and to implement traffic calming and community spill-out of uses into our built realm within in a positive and managed way.
- 4.22 Key potential projects to be explored further and tested through more detailed masterplanning include:

Phase 1:

- Removal of the southern flyover;
- Widening of Waterloo Place and removal of the overbridge;
- Delivery of the Jackson Street South extension; and
- Delivery of Phase 1 Green Corridor (outside of DAP area but linked to movement implementation in the longer term).

Phase 2:

- Conversion of Conway Street / Argyle Street roundabout to a signalised junction;

- Removal of the remaining flyover infrastructure;
- Delivery of an access only route along Jackson Street South;
- Delivery of a bus only route to Green Lane; and
- Delivery of Phase 2 Green Corridor – Hind Street to Rock Ferry (including rationalisation of Toll Plaza footprint).

Phase 3:

- Deliver new Central Station Square and improved northern entrance; and
- A41 humanisation project.

Enabling Works

4.23 As has been noted previously within this NF document, a number of significant development constraints exist across the Hind Street area that have hindered development coming forward to date. These issues, including relating to the known need for remediation across large areas of the development plots identified, the need to address legacy underground gas infrastructure and deliver a new pressure reduction system, and noted challenges associated with level change across the neighbourhood, must be addressed comprehensively and strategically to ensure that they are fundable (and funded), and they are progressed in the best commercial interests of the collective (to support overall viability and deliverability of the NF).

4.24 To underpin the preferred option the following enabling works actions and projects have been identified:

Legacy Gas Infrastructure

- 4.25 During the development of the NF, high level engagement has been undertaken with National Grid in relation to the investment required to simplify existing gas infrastructure across Hind Street. The engagement has been undertaken on a positive basis, with all parties in agreement that the relocation of the existing pressure reduction system is a necessary undertaking to unlock development potential within the area. All parties further agree with the presumption of the associated re-routing of the low and medium gas pipes that run under the site currently.
- 4.26 Given the stage of the NF, no strategic engagement has been undertaken with wider landowners in relation to the in-principle decision making about the most advantageous location of the pressure reduction system and associated simplification of pipeline across Hind Street more widely – with the dialogue to date restricted to land within the control of National Grid and the Council so as to ensure that the NF does not create any ransom issues across landownerships. On this basis an in-principle agreement has been reached as to a location for the retained gas infrastructure which the design process has informed.
- 4.27 The cost associated with the relocation of this infrastructure is not known at the time of writing, with additional survey work and costings required to be prepared to enable this project to evolve in much more detail. As wider engagement progresses across the landowner group and commercial agreements potentially emerge to facilitate the comprehensive delivery of the neighbourhood the most advantageous location for this infrastructure should be confirmed and tested on a neighbourhood-wide basis, ultimately seeking to identify the preferential location for the infrastructure from a cost and location perspective to underpin and feed into the commercial negotiations and ultimately the delivery strategy for Hind Street.
- 4.28 The current identified re-location site for the pressure reduction system is adjacent to the Dock Branch Park route, immediately to the south of Waterloo Place. In identifying this location we have sought to take advantage of adjacent road infrastructure to realign the gas pipes and ensure easements are in place, but we are further mindful that this site is a potential gateway plot which could deliver good residential values. If through the commercial engagement process and negotiations alternative locations can be identified

within the wider land ownership which have less of an impact on value generation but do not create any ransom scenarios / cost implications.

Addressing Level Changes

- 4.29 There are some specific level change issues that have been identified within the baseline site analysis that could materially influence the type of development brought forward, cost of development and phasing of delivery. Conclusions on the potential need for cut and fill across the site and / or any specific design considerations that need to be applied on a plot-by-plot basis. This has been applied on the basis of available LiDAR data – with the identified need for additional topographical surveys to inform more detailed design proposals as they come forward.
- 4.30 At this stage and based on the LiDAR data available the conclusions drawn regarding level changes and potential required actions is indicative and meant as a principle guide. The NF therefore proposes that full topography surveys are progressed across the neighbourhood in addition to specialist civil engineering inputs to provide greater certainty on the volume of cut and fill and the ability of what exists on site to balance, including costs of any such works and phasing implications of the implementation of the preferred strategy. The analysis has specifically noted that the LiDAR data is not clear how deep the existing railway cutting which passes under Borough Road East is and at what point it rises to meet existing land levels. The strategy assumes that this cutting would be filled with inert material up to proposed site levels.
- 4.31 In general terms across both northern and southern parcels, the NF assumes that development parcels would tie into the adjacent existing surrounding streets – so climbing 6m (Waterloo Place) to 13m (Borough Road East) at the northern end and climbing 6m (Waterloo Place) to 10m (Green Lane). The level change would be made from existing material across the site redistributed. Importantly, this assumes no contamination within any heaps across the area which may impact if contaminated.
- 4.32 Without further survey data it is not clear whether this strategy can be implemented on a plot by plot basis or would need to be addressed phase by phase. Given the distinction in level change challenges between the phases it is assumed a single strategy would need to be agreed upfront across the full neighbourhood including each phase before implementation – including agreed ground floor levels and street approach to ensure a high-quality environment across the neighbourhood at street level.

Remediation

- 4.33 As noted within the baseline summary, there is known contamination across the site which will require remediation as part of the development process. Whilst areas of the land owned by National Grid have been partially remediated, works have not been delivered to a consistent level and do not cover the whole of the developable area of the Hind Street neighbourhood. Where remediation has been delivered, it is believed to be insufficient to support residential development of the form proposed within the NF – specifically below apartment density.
- 4.34 Further work is required to understand the full extent of contamination across the area, and then a remediation strategy established to support the future implementation of development on a plot-by-plot basis. Given the nature of historic activity on the site, and given some existing uses including scrap metal storage, the cost of remediation is considered to be a material abnormal cost.
- 4.35 The NF recommends that site investigations are progressed across the neighbourhood to inform a more robust understanding of contamination and support the development of a strategic remediation strategy to inform the detail of the delivery strategy alongside more detailed scheme design.

Development Principles

- 4.36 The NF process has identified a series of development principles that the Council as Local Planning Authority would expect to see reflected in future masterplanning and any future outline planning application being progressed by the major landowners through their collaborative working.
- 4.37 The Hind Street major landowner group have agreed development and design principles with the Council based on the Hind Street NF – these “agreed” development and design principles are included below. These principles will be considered and reflected through future masterplanning and in future planning applications across the area.

Comprehensive Approach

- 4.38 The NF process has identified that a comprehensive approach will be required to realise the full potential of the area, and to create a coherent and connected Urban Village neighbourhood. The Local Planning Authority will seek to endorse a single agreed masterplan with clear phasing, including Birkenhead Landing to guide and underpin future planning applications for the Hind Street area.

Design quality:

- 4.39 Design quality will be integral to creating an exemplar Urban Village. Hind Street will have its own unique identity but must align with emerging Design Guidance being prepared at the Birkenhead scale. A design framework for building and public realm design to support a low carbon urban village should form part of the masterplan for the site.

Community creation and inter-generational living:

- 4.40 Development at Hind Street should be residential-led supported by a mix of complementary town centre uses and community infrastructure that will deliver against the recognised opportunity to create new homes to meet housing needs and capitalise on the proximity to Birkenhead Town Centre.
- 4.41 The on-site approach to residential type and tenure mix must support community creation, enabling people to live in Hind Street throughout their lives – as individuals, through relationships and as families. A wide range of tenures will therefore be appropriate across the site, including affordable rent, market sale, build to rent, discount market sale, and intermediate providing opportunity to meet and respond to market and community demand.
- 4.42 The northern component of the Hind Street area can capitalise on its proximity to Birkenhead Town Centre becoming a front door from the south. This area will include a blend of town centre uses to complement the existing and future town centre offer, as well as providing the opportunity to support a vibrant working urban community by responding to the demands of modern working lifestyles. There must also be consideration of the retention or relocation of existing and valued businesses within this area.

Urban approach to density:

- 4.43 The NF supports the need to ensure a balanced approach to unit mix and size across the neighbourhood. A long-term strategy for change in this location should be resilient to market conditions finding a balance between ensuring that the development proposition is deliverable, whilst staying true to the vision and opportunity that has been identified. This neighbourhood must be more than a suburban housing scheme – and the density brought forward in the future must recognise this. A minimum average density requirement of 60dph (gross) is required across the area.

Low Carbon:

- 4.44 As a low carbon Urban Village it is imperative that low carbon credentials be considered at every stage of housing, infrastructure and movement design and delivery, including energy generation; storage; consumption; efficiency.

Open and Green Space:

- 4.45 Open space, community and public realm and healthy living principles should be designed in at the outset and be appropriate to the principles of an Urban Village set within a Garden City. These principles should apply and be consistent with the scale of the site and will require the creation of a genuine network of useable and valuable green infrastructure and public realm, for example, allotments, balconies, roof terraces, green walls and a focal green open space.

Community Infrastructure:

- 4.46 In addition to open and green space further community infrastructure is expected to be required. There is an identified need for a two-form entry primary school (420 places) to support the wider programme of residential delivery across the Birkenhead urban area. Hind Street has been identified as an optimal location for the new school and a preferred site should be reflected in the masterplan

Strategic Infrastructure:

- 4.47 The realisation of the site's full potential requires a comprehensive phased strategic infrastructure strategy securing the removal of the "concrete collar" flyovers in the north over the longer term, alongside a strategy to respect and/or relocate existing gas infrastructure over the short-term enabling the first phases of development in the south. A constraints plan will be required to inform the development of the masterplan. The masterplan must reflect the phased nature of the delivery of the strategic infrastructure and should allow for initial phases of southern development to be undertaken, and be sustainable, whilst broader infrastructure works are being undertaken.

Access & Movement:

- 4.48 Immediate adjacency to Birkenhead Town Centre is a key asset, particularly with flyovers removed. The historic 'grid' needs to be expanded to meet and become integral to the ethos of the development – feeling seamlessly as one place, yet at the same time dealing with the reality that the Birkenhead tunnel entrance will continue to attract traffic from the wider area, particularly East Wirral and an east-west route to link across the southern side of the town centre is likely to be needed, albeit in a less visually intrusive or severing format to the current flyovers.
- 4.49 The Hind Street area is well connected by two Merseyrail train stations (Birkenhead Central and Green Lane) providing easy and regular access to Liverpool and Chester City centres, and other employment sites in between. The masterplan must show how this connectivity is maximised to promote the use of public transport and active travel modes, with a focus towards these stations, and the adaption of stations to face the development.
- 4.50 The proposals should reflect the low carbon objective in relation to car ownership and car parking requirements throughout. This includes in the design and layout of properties from micro to macro level. Active modes should be at the forefront so that streets are primarily focussed to being 'places' where pedestrians and life can exist, ideally in a green environment, and where vehicles, while still being able to access properties, are not the dominant mode – either on through movements or when parked. High density will mean that by nature the place feels active, and this should be reflected most intensively at street level, offering a stark alternative to green field or suburban sites that form a stark alternative.
- 4.51 An access plan will form part of the masterplan. The access plan must be developed alongside the strategic infrastructure and integrated land use proposals to demonstrate connectivity with the wider borough transport network, particularly through non-car modes, into the town centre and to provide certainty that development in new homes in the southern part of the site are not isolated and can benefit from the site's proximity to Birkenhead Town Centre. Phasing will be critical to success, and advantage should be taken of the multiple access points, including the Mollington Link to the south, to make sure that the site can be developed at high density in a timely manner from early stages. All plans must take account of future mobility changes (such as EV or changing delivery patterns) as a matter of course.

- 4.52 Ultimately the scheme needs to be accessible and connected while not being 'highway-led' or 'vehicle intrusive'.

Value in stewardship:

- 4.53 A bespoke approach to place and neighbourhood management should be developed, including for residential areas, public realm and landscape. Long term stewardship which can foster local ownership and pride should be integral to the design process to allow long-term innovative and community management arrangements to be considered and implemented.

Phased and Flexible Delivery:

- 4.54 The residential led development of Hind Street provides a significant brownfield regeneration opportunity. It is recognised that there are a range of constraints on the site and that full site development could take between 10 and 15 years. A phasing plan must form part of the masterplan. The phasing plan must consider the identified constraints and demonstrate the timeframe for addressing these constraints is aligned with the phasing plan. There should be flexibility in timing and phasing to enable early delivery and effective cashflow for the whole scheme.

5. Delivery Strategy

Introduction

- 5.1 The preceding sections of this report have outlined the context and drivers for change within the Hind Street NF area culminating in a vision and objectives for change. The document has then set out the option testing process followed to further inform a preferred option for development, and associated development principles to be tested further and enshrined within a comprehensive masterplan that will be developed by major landowners across the NF area.
- 5.2 The remainder of this section sets out further detail on how the NF will be expected to be delivered, including specific actions required to be progressed by the Council and key partners.
- 5.3 Successful implementation of the NF requires the progression of the following, in no particular order:
- Infrastructure delivery;
 - Establishing a robust regeneration and planning framework;
 - Place management and long-term stewardship;
 - Governance, delivery vehicles and partnerships;
 - Strategic approach to securing funding;
 - Delivery of the catalyst projects; and
 - Delivery of supporting actions identified within the Birkenhead 2040 Framework.

Infrastructure Delivery

- 5.4 The NF recognises the importance of infrastructure delivery – including capital investment in streets, the bus station, the railway stations and their environments, the public realm and landscaping – to support wider aspirations.
- 5.5 The NF recognises the important role for Wirral Council in taking a leading role in implementing the infrastructure programme – including the use of public funding as a catalyst and noting the dominance of highways infrastructure and associated land which is under Council control. As noted in relation to funding, this includes significant progress made during the NF production where funding has been secured for key projects including £8m for the removal of the Borough Road flyovers.
- 5.6 There is also an existing maintenance backlog across the urban area and development proposals will be required to consider how this can be addressed where capital projects won't be delivered and there is likely to be additional detriment. Impact of proposed development on the existing highway network will be tested through the planning application process.
- 5.7 It also recognises the need to secure strategic funding to enable this programme of works to be implemented on a timely basis. For optimum delivery it is also recognised that land assembly may be required.
- 5.8 Detailed delivery strategies should be developed and progressed for each infrastructure project identified.

Establishing a Robust Planning Framework

- 5.9 The BRF has a critical role in the emerging Wirral Local Plan. It forms a key part of the evidence supporting the Local Plan Preferred Urban Intensification spatial option, by identifying the potential scale of brownfield development in Birkenhead. The BRF will be subject to consultation in Spring 2021 before being finalised and endorsed as the Council's Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead.
- 5.10 This NF is one of a series recommended by the BRF. It has been prepared to provide further detail to the initial neighbourhood vision and spatial concepts set out in the BRF and to provide evidence of potential brownfield housing delivery for the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.11 The Local Plan will set out a series of Regeneration Areas. Each of these Regeneration Areas will have a specific Local Plan policy which will be informed by this Neighbourhood Framework and other NFs. Development proposals within the Regeneration Areas will need to comply with the Local Plan policy. Where appropriate, and as informed by this and other NFs the Local Plan Regeneration Area policies may require further detailed site or sub area masterplans which have been recommended. Development will also have to regard to the Birkenhead Design and Public Realm Guide Supplementary Planning Document which the Council is to prepare as part of the delivery strategy for the BRF.
- 5.12 As noted previously, the major landowners are working collaboratively to prepare a comprehensive masterplan to support the submission of a single outline application for development at Hind Street.

Place Management and Stewardship

- 5.13 The NF recognises the importance of place management and long-term stewardship in ensuring that the benefits of development are felt in the long term – and to ensure that early phase development creates and maintains the right conditions to support enhanced viability and conditions for delivery across Hind Street in later development phases.
- 5.14 The NF requires management and stewardship to be considered at the outset of the design process across the Hind Street area – informing physical design, use (formal, informal and meanwhile), and materiality of individual projects and development.
- 5.15 Consideration must be given to the interface between different projects (including across NFs), ensuring a continuous high-quality management regime exists across land ownerships and development boundaries.
- 5.16 The Council will expect a demonstrable consideration of management to be included within planning applications across the Hind Street area, including within evidence of management having been factored into design evolution captured within Design and Access Statements supporting planning applications. Planning applications will be required to include evidence of place management and stewardship strategy to be applied across development within the Hind Street area on a comprehensive basis.

Governance, Delivery Vehicles and Partnerships

- 5.17 There is a significant level commitment within the Council and strategic partners to deliver the BRF.
- 5.18 The Council recognises that the scale and ambition of the LeftBank regeneration programme, covering Birkenhead and the wider urban area reaching from New Ferry to New Brighton, means that it needs to adopt an enhanced, bespoke delivery vehicle model.
- 5.19 It further recognises the importance of its own role, and the need for clear leadership within the delivery of the NF infrastructure programme and key projects, including the catalyst projects identified in the BRF. The

Council will undertake this leadership role to leverage private sector investment and involvement in the delivery programme.

- 5.20 Wirral Council is in dialogue with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to explore alternative delivery models for the Birkenhead 2040 and wider LeftBank programme. It is expected this process to take in the region of 18-months to scope and design the right delivery model for the LeftBank programme, including delivery of the interventions captured within this NF. At the time of writing the preferred model for LeftBank is not fixed but will be instrumental in delivering the town centre ambitions. This process will further complement existing resource within the Council – adding additional skills and capabilities, with a specific focus on commercial, delivery and urban design capabilities to enable implementation of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework.
- 5.21 Since January 2020 Wirral Council has operated a joint steering group with Homes England and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to oversee the development and delivery of the LeftBank programme including a senior Homes England Programme Lead in support.
- 5.22 Within the Council a newly established Regeneration and Place Board provides oversight of the LeftBank and Local Plan programme and co-ordinates the operation of external partnership groups.
- 5.23 The Council has established a project management hierarchy that will be in place for the duration of the NF programme and indeed across LeftBank. The Council has recently established a new Regeneration and Place Department which brings together regeneration, asset management, strategic transport, planning, housing, and PMO disciplines into a single delivery unit. It is critical that the Council assembles project teams to implement key projects, on a multi-disciplinary basis, including the catalyst projects.
- 5.24 The Council understands the importance of wider partnerships to enable delivery across the NF programme. There is a key role for appropriate developers who share the Council's vision and ambitions for redevelopment of brownfield land. The Council will be looking to establish a developers' forum including Registered Providers to deliver the programme. The major landowners are working collaboratively across Hind Street to enable delivery of this NF.
- 5.25 The Council realises the importance of acting positively within its statutory responsibilities – and will seek to ensure Planning Performance Agreements are in place across all major projects where appropriate and or requested to facilitate these working arrangements.

Strategic Approach to Securing Funding

- 5.26 The market failure prohibiting high quality development across the Birkenhead urban area is evident also in Hind Street – particularly for the plots of a higher density and delivered within earlier phases. Hind Street has the potential to draw on a more successful and established residential market to the south – but must therefore take a balanced approach to density.
- 5.27 The implementation of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and catalyst projects will address this market failure – through targeted intervention to create critical mass of development opportunity, requiring the highest quality design quality, alongside the delivery of the catalyst projects that will fundamentally change the character and appeal of the central neighbourhoods.
- 5.28 The NF has identified a number of abnormal costs relating to delivery at Hind Street – from the outset. Further work is required to explore the full costs and phasing implications of these on-site abnormalities, but it is clear that they will have a significant impact on viability of development in general – risking the early years implementation programme identified.
- 5.29 Development viability is therefore an important consideration in early phase delivery, and the maximisation of public funding to enable early phase delivery will therefore be key – focused specifically on addressing

the viability gap within early phase development. It is crucial that early phase delivery creates the right conditions to ensure development becomes more viable over time, this must include:

- demanding quality in design across both buildings and public realm, and ensuring robust long-term management and stewardship across the built realm and transport provision;
- delivering comprehensive change and creating critical mass – recognising that infill developments won't lift the market; and
- delivering the catalysts – maximising the potential of these projects to create new conditions for development where we can achieve higher values, setting new headlines, and attracting new private sector interest and investment).

5.30 The Council are in close dialogue with Homes England and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to ensure a long term and strategic approach to funding is established to support the full BRF programme.

5.31 The Council have progressed specific dialogue to support early phase delivery of the Hind Street NF programme, including:

- Over £21.5m of infrastructure funding the subject of current Full Business Case development for submission to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority under the Transforming Cities Fund and Government under the Town Deal Fund, specific to A41 North and Phase 1 of Dock Branch Park; and
- Successful approval of £8m funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to enable the demolition of the Borough Road flyovers.

5.32 The Council will continue to be pro-active in targeting public sector funding opportunities to address the identified delivery constraints with the Hind Street delivery programme.

Securing Catalyst Project Delivery

5.33 The Birkenhead 2040 Framework (BRF) identified seven catalyst projects. These catalyst projects are required to be delivered to enable and accelerate delivery of the full ambition and scale of change captured within the BRF.

5.34 The projects range from development projects to infrastructure delivery projects, and each has its own delivery strategy and critical pathway to success. The projects are at different stages of progression – but all are being progressed meaningfully at the time of writing. The BRF sets out the headlines of the delivery strategy for each of the catalyst projects identified – including lead responsibilities, key partner relationships, next steps and critical pathway to securing delivery. It is critical to the NF that these actions are progressed and the catalyst projects are delivered.

Delivery of Birkenhead 2040 Supporting Actions

5.35 Within the BRF several critical workstreams are identified to progress developments and strategies to support positive investment (public and private sector) across the Birkenhead urban area. These are set out in the BRF action plan, to give an indication of the breadth of actions required and to inform early actions which need to be implemented as early as possible in the programme. It is critical to the NF that these actions are progressed in line with the action plan within the BRF.

Other Actions:

- 5.36 It should be noted that no site surveys relating to land conditions or detailed topography have been undertaken to inform the Hind Street NF. Progression of both on a neighbourhood-wide basis would add considerable confidence to the delivery strategy and viability analysis included herein.

Next Steps

- 5.37 The BRF provides the overall strategy for the regeneration of the Birkenhead urban area and sets the spatial and infrastructure context for the delivery of strategic development and investment accordingly. It enables the prioritisation of public sector intervention and funding and enables positive engagement with the private sector as delivery partners for the ambitions articulated. It is the prospectus for the transformation of Birkenhead. The NF therefore complements the BRF and provides regeneration principles and parameters that will inform the production of the Council's new Local Plan and guide future development proposals across the NF area.
- 5.38 On this basis, and with recognition of Birkenhead's rapidly changing market and political environment and newly identified opportunities and challenges, future development proposals across the NF area will necessarily evolve and refine the principles, parameters, and opportunities that are contained within this NF document. These proposals, however, will need to be contained and justified in a Comprehensive Masterplan for the NF area prepared by the major landowners in order to support future planning applications

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