

3. Appendix 3: Landscape, Townscape and Visual Appraisal

Introduction

- 3.1 This townscape and visual baseline study has been prepared by Waterman CPM Ltd (WCPM) on behalf of Peel Holdings.
- 3.2 This appraisal explores in greater detail the key aspects of the physical nature, sensitivity and value of those physical elements forming the landscape and built environment, as identified in Appendix 2: Urban Design Appraisal. In particular, the nature, sensitivity and visual aspects of key elements and receptors.
- 3.3 The baseline study is a 'working document' that analyses the current character and visual context of the site and wider study area. The content at this stage is not finalised, and is dependant upon input from consultees and principal stakeholders.
- 3.4 The context of the study area and the scope of the baseline study are further defined below.
- Study Area Context – Location and Description***
- 3.5 The Wirral is located to the north-west of the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain on a peninsula formed by the Mersey and Dee Estuaries. The geology of the Wirral peninsula is dominated by glacial boulder clay overlying Triassic sandstone. The resulting landscape forms a low-lying but gently rolling platform punctuated by numerous low sandstone outcrops. The Wirral peninsula is divided by a sandstone ridge extending from Bidston Hill down to Storeton Hill resulting in two widely differing areas with a predominantly pastoral landscape to the west and the more industrial urban area centred on Birkenhead to the east.
- 3.6 Wirral's coastline is approximately 41 kilometres long and varies depending on its aspect. The broadest area of coastal zone is found on the north Wirral Coast and along the Dee estuary with the exception of Hoylake and West Kirby which comprise developed residential coastline. In contrast, the coastal zone along the River Mersey is more narrowly defined and much of its length has been developed for residential and industrial purposes, many of which require a coastal location.
- 3.7 The site area itself is located to the rear of the Wirral waterfront off the Mersey basin in an area which is bounded by the A5139 Dock Road to the north and the A5030 Beaufort Street and B5146 Corporation Road to the south. The A5088 Wallasey Bridge Road and the A5027 Duke Street both cross the site by means of the Bascule Bridges and the area is also bounded by the A554 Tower Road to the east. The Dock Road also provides a direct link to the M53 motorway to the west and to the Mersey Tunnel (Kingsway) to the east. The site includes Bidston Dock, the East and West Floats of

Birkenhead Docks, and adjacent dockland, and the total area is approximately 500 acres.

- 3.8 The study area is predominantly accessed from the road network but can also be reached by a short walk from the Woodside and Seacombe ferries as well as a number of railway stations (including Bidston Station, Birkenhead North Station, Birkenhead Park Station, Conway Park Station, Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Central Station) which lie to the south of the site and connect the surrounding area to Liverpool city centre.
- 3.9 To the south east lies the Birkenhead town centre shopping area. The town centre comprises a mix of retail and leisure uses including a large market hall and two shopping centres. The remaining area surrounding the site is dominated by a combination of large residential areas and industrial infill particularly associated with the dockland corridor.

The Redevelopment Opportunities associated with Wirral Waters

- 3.10 The site was originally identified for redevelopment as part of the Wirral Waterfront Regeneration Area. Following the acquisition of the site by Peel Holdings, a thorough scoping and consultation exercise has been progressed to ensure that an appropriate and well informed redevelopment response is established. The production of

this thorough baseline study work is an important part of this process.

Scope of Appraisal

- 3.11 The initial stage of any landscape (or townscape) and visual appraisal is to review the existing landscape and visual resource in the form of the baseline landscape and visual conditions (from a strategic to local, or site specific level). The data collected is then used to inform the design process for any future development and ultimately assist with the estimation of the resulting landscape and visual impacts.
- 3.12 Baseline studies record and analyse the existing landscape and townscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape or townscape is experienced and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the study area.
- 3.13 It is important to acknowledge that the baseline landscape/townscape is not static and may experience ongoing changes unrelated to any future development proposals. Also, it is necessary, as far as possible, for the baseline study to address not only the existing conditions but also such landscape/townscape dynamics as can be identified, together with the likely future character of an area without any new development. Whilst baseline work seeks to identify constraints and opportunities, impact analysis is not considered as part of the assessment at this stage.

Appraisal Definitions

3.14 To assist the reader in understanding the distinct difference between landscape, townscape and visual elements of a baseline study, definitions have been provided. The basis for these definitions has been taken from the Guidelines for Landscape, Townscape and Visual Appraisal by Landscape Institute and Landscape Character Assessment by the Countryside Agency.

Landscape

3.15 'Landscape' is defined as the human perception of the land conditioned by knowledge and identity with a place. 'Landscape Character' is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It also creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.

Townscape

3.16 'Townscape' comprises the physical and social characteristics of the built and urban environment and the way in which we perceive those characteristics. It is this mix of characteristics and perceptions that make up and contribute to both landscape and townscape character and give a 'sense of place' or identity. Characteristics may

be commonplace and make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness or they may be individual, eye-catching and prominent or have strong local, cultural associations.

Visual Amenity

3.17 Visual amenity is defined as the value of a particular area or view in terms of what is seen. A visual envelope is the extent of potential visibility to or from a specific area or feature.

Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessments

3.18 'Landscape/Townscape and Visual Assessments are independent but related issues. 'Landscape and Townscape Assessments' deal with the analysis and classification of the landscape/townscape, its character and quality, while a 'Visual Assessment' relates to the appearance of those characteristics and the resulting visual amenity.

Report Content

3.19 In terms of content, the remainder of Appendix 3 is structured as follows:

- **Approach and methodology** used to undertake baseline studies, and lists the documentation and guidance used;
- A summary of the principal **landscape/townscape and visual planning considerations**, and reviews most relevant guidance;

- **Preliminary landscape, townscape and visual appraisal findings;**
- **Visual appraisal**, and the suggested principal landmark elements and viewpoint locations (receptors) as determined by WCPM;
- Summarises the **initial implications and opportunities** for Wirral Waters; and,
- Sets out the **additional consultation and work requirements** to be undertaken.

3.20 A series of Plans accompanies this Appendix. These have been prepared using Peel Holdings' OS licence 100037579.

Approach and Methodology

- 3.21 The townscape and visual baseline study undertaken by WCPM has been undertaken with reference to a wide range of documentation and sources of information relating to policy and planning advice, legislation, guidance on assessing both townscape character and visual amenity, and other background material for the region and local study area.
- 3.22 The underlying methodology used by WCPM for the purpose of baseline study is:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape, Townscape and Visual Appraisal', produced by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) in 2002 (Second Edition); and,
- Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland, produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency, 2002.

3.23 The appraisal contained within this document would be considered as a 'baseline study' within the context of these guidelines and does not amount to a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of townscape and visual issues.

3.24 Other overriding guidance on townscape and visual character appraisal and tall buildings that has been considered as part of this baseline study includes:

- Guidance on Tall Buildings – CABE & English Heritage (July 2007);
- The Government's Response to the Transport, Local Government and Regional Affairs Select Committee's Report on Tall Buildings (Ref: Cm 5649) – Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State (November 2002); and
- Building in Context: New Development in Historical Areas - English Heritage/CABE (2002).

3.25 Guidance and documents that relate specifically to the site and surrounding area, that have also been reviewed, include:

- Tall Buildings: Supplementary Planning Document – Liverpool City Council (Approved for consultation, December 2004);
 - Briefing Paper 4: Strategic Views along the River Mersey – North West Regional Assembly;
 - Strategic Views along the River Mersey Final Study Brief – NWRA (2002);
 - Strategic Views along the River Mersey – Entec UK Ltd (Final Report 2003);
 - The World Heritage Site Management Plan - Liverpool City Council (2003);
 - Nomination of Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City for Inscription on the World Heritage List Part 5: The Future for the World Heritage Site and Management Objectives (2004);
 - Written Statement S/5/99 Matter 5: Regionally Strategic and Locally Important Views – NWRA;
 - Partial Review of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the North West: Sustainability Appraisal of Draft Revised RPG. – NWRA (2004); and,
 - Regional – Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West (submitted January 2006).
- 3.26 Guidance produced for London – that has also been considered where appropriate, includes:
- London’s Skyline, Views and High Buildings (SDS Technical Report Nineteen) – DEGW for the Greater London Authority (August 2002);
 - The London Plan: Policy 4B.16 – Mayor of London (2004); and,
 - London View Management Framework, Draft SPG – Greater London Authority (April 2005).
- 3.27 As the baseline study is refined and additional consultation undertaken, the approach, methodology and relevant guidance may well change. The baseline study can be reviewed at regular intervals to reference and interpret any alterations in the approach to assessment, strategic view, tall building and World Heritage Site guidelines.

Landscape / Townscape Planning Context

- 3.28 As background to any baseline study it is important to have an understanding of the policy context. Whilst other technical studies will provide focused analysis of overall planning framework and subject related policy, WCPM has reviewed relevant landscape and townscape policy. A detailed summary of national, regional and local policy is contained at **Appendix 1** and illustrated on **Plan 1**.
- 3.29 The key issues related to the study area are set out below, with the most prevalent identified and discussed.

Summary of Landscape / Townscape Planning Issues and Relevant Guidance

3.30 The principal landscape / townscape planning issues relevant to the site relate to its rich commercial history and maritime heritage, as well as its prominent position adjacent to the Wirral waterfront, within view of the Liverpool waterfront. Important considerations include:

- The proximity of the Liverpool World Heritage Site and associated buffer;
- The location of the site adjacent to a number of designated Conservation Areas (including Bidston Village, Birkenhead Park, Flaybrick Cemetery and Hamilton Square);
- The study area comprises the setting of several Listed Buildings and structures (including the Twelve Quays Pumphouse, East Float Corn Warehouses); and,
- The proximity of a historic park of national significance (Birkenhead Park).

3.31 The review of the policies which encompass the above designations, together with analysis of associated guidance has enabled WCPM to determine four principal landscape planning issues. These issues are identified and their importance set out below:

- Impact of any development and in particular tall buildings on character and views to and from 'Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City' World Heritage Site;

- Impact of any development upon views and character of Birkenhead Park;
- Impact of any development upon views and character of Hamilton Square; and,
- Impact on skyline views and character from Bidston Hill - Area of Special Landscape Value.

Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City' World Heritage Site

3.32 The Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City was inscribed onto the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage List on 2nd July 2004. The site contains a number of internationally important building groups, which provide evidence of the City's historic character and significance, and it has an outstanding waterfront. This rich architectural legacy includes the Pier Head Group, the William Brown Street Civic Buildings, the Docks and Warehouses and the Commercial Centre, one of the finest and most complete, Victorian Commercial Districts in Britain. The city and port of Liverpool are an exceptional testimony to the development of maritime culture in the 18th and 19th centuries, contributing to the building of the British Empire.

3.33 In order to retain World Heritage Status, Liverpool must adhere to advice and guidance from UNESCO. This is concerned particularly with protecting the site from the potentially adverse impact of new development and the historic integrity of the site. The Government is obliged to consult UNESCO and its United Kingdom

representative, ICOMOS-UK (International Council on Monuments and Sites) on major applications affecting the site. These organisations are particularly concerned about the effect of tall buildings within the setting of the site and on strategic views to and from the site.

- 3.34 Some tall buildings proposals within Liverpool have resulted in criticism from UNESCO, who have warned that Liverpool could be stripped of its World Heritage Status if development threatens strategic views. Recent proposals such as the Brunswick Quay Tower have been subsequently dismissed by the Communities Secretary, whose decision statement made clear the determination to protect the part of the Liverpool waterfront which had been awarded World Heritage Site status. It stated that the 'tower would be detrimental to the setting and added that it would obscure views of the City's Anglican and Roman Catholic Cathedrals from the Wirral'.
- 3.35 There is also a requirement that the associated 'Buffer Zone' must be reviewed every 6 years. It is understood that at the first review, the 'Buffer Zone' is unlikely to be extended to cover the Wirral peninsula. The 'Buffer Zone' is designed to protect significant views into and out of the World Heritage Site and protect it from development which is incompatible with its distinctive character and status.
- 3.36 The World Heritage Site Management Plan addresses key issues affecting the World Heritage Site, and clearly states that new buildings should respect the historic townscape. There is at present

no specific Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for such World Heritage Site issues. Guidance is currently being produced and Liverpool City Council will launch a public consultation on its proposals in 2008. Once adopted it should give more certainty to all parties on the acceptable forms of development in the World Heritage Site and associated 'Buffer Zone'.

- 3.37 Development proposals which will be visible from Liverpool's world famous waterfront should conserve or enhance the setting, and views to and from the World Heritage Site should aim to increase and not lessen in any way, the attractiveness of the World Heritage Site. Conservation of important views is an important objective for the Liverpool World Heritage Site Management Plan. Strategic views identified by the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA/Entec) from the World Heritage Site across the Mersey to the Wirral, will be appraised as part of this Baseline Study. It will also be necessary to identify important existing views of the World Heritage Site from within Wirral, to appraise the quality and sensitivity of such views.

Birkenhead Park

- 3.38 As well as being Grade I listed on the English Heritage Register, the park is also world renowned. Designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and opened in 1847, Birkenhead Park is universally acknowledged to be the first publicly funded park in Britain and was the model upon which Frederick Law Olmstead based his design for Central Park, New York.

- 3.39 The concept was of an idealised country landscape of open meadows and woodland belts with lakes shaped to appear as sinuous rivers. Although the development of the park was financed by the sale of the surrounding land for residential development, with time the woodland belts have largely obscured surrounding built form so that the character of the park is largely as originally intended. Any proposed development which will be visible from the park must endeavour to preserve the special character and appearance of the park itself and its wider setting.
- 3.40 Consultation will be necessary to determine to what extent the skyline and setting of the park needs to be protected.

Hamilton Square

- 3.41 Hamilton Square dates from 1826 and is of particular importance as it contains the largest Grade I Listed Buildings Victorian Square, outside London.
- 3.42 Proposals for any new development which will be visible from the Hamilton Park Conservation Area will need to preserve the wider visual amenity and character of the Square. The design and scale of new development located beyond, but visible from the Central Square will need to be discussed with consultees, in order that the historic character, unity of design and 'sense of space' and enclosure is preserved.

Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value

- 3.43 Bidston Hill has extensive views over the Wirral Peninsula and across the site area to the Liverpool waterfront. The view from Bidston Hill was originally identified as a strategic view by the NWDA/Entec, but was later omitted.
- 3.44 The visual impact of any new development will be expected to be appropriate in terms of the character, scale, appearance and landscape setting. This is particularly important in the case of designated Areas of Special Landscape Value. The existing skyline and view from Bidston Hill will need to be considered with consultees, to establish the extent to which important views of landmark elements within Birkenhead and the Liverpool World Heritage Site should be protected and managed.

Most Relevant Guidance

- 3.45 '**Guidance on Tall Buildings**', a document produced by **CABE and English Heritage** is of great relevance to appraisal and design in urban areas. The guidance suggests that Local Planning Authorities, in areas where significant development including tall buildings is a possibility, should be encouraged to identify locations where tall buildings are appropriate and where they are not acceptable, through commissioning an urban design study. This should take into account historic context; identify elements that create local character; and, other important features and constraints, including:
- Streetscape;

- Scale;
- Height;
- Urban Grain;
- Natural Topography;
- Significant Views of Skyline Features;
- Landmark Buildings and associated Settings (including backdrops);and,
- Important Local Views, Prospects and Panoramas.

3.46 In the right place tall buildings can serve as beacons of regeneration, and stimulate further investment; however, by virtue of their size and prominence, such buildings can also harm the qualities that people value about a place. The guidance outlines the following criteria which should be addressed in relation to the design of tall buildings. These include:

- The relationship to the context and the effect on the skyline;
- The effect on the whole existing environment, including the need to ensure that the proposal will conserve or not damage or detract from:

- 1 World Heritage Sites and their settings, including the buffer zone;
- 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and their settings, including the foregrounds and backdrops to landmark buildings;
- 3 Archaeology;

- 4 Historic parks and gardens, landscapes and their settings;
- 5 Other open spaces, including rivers and waterways and their settings and views from them; and,
- 6 Other important views, prospects and panoramas.

- The relationship to transport infrastructure;
- The architectural quality - particularly important because of its effect on the skyline;
- The contribution it will make to external and internal public spaces and facilities, it should contribute positively and give a 'sense of place';
- The effect on the local environment, including night time appearance and the permeability and legibility of the site and the wider townscape; and,
- Function and fitness for purpose and sustainability, based on whole life costs and benefits.

3.47 As with any development, any new tall building should be in an appropriate location, it should be of first-class design quality in its own right and should enhance the qualities of its immediate location and setting. Its effects on the wider historic environment as well as local context should be acceptable in the context of national, regional and local policies and it should produce more benefits than costs to the lives of those affected by it.

- 3.48 An updated version of the '**Guidance on Tall Buildings**' was issued in July 2007. This updated guidance again advocates a plan-led approach to tall buildings and explains that Local Planning Authorities will need to consider the scope for tall buildings, where these are a possibility as part of strategic planning. The Local Planning Authorities should still carry out an urban design study in order to identify, in map-based form, areas that are appropriate, sensitive or inappropriate for tall buildings. In addition, the identification of "cluster" zones is advocated where several tall buildings can sit together in a place where they do not impact on historic areas or views.
- 3.49 Any applications for major tall buildings should present proposals in the context of their own urban design study for the immediate and wider areas affected. Where there are concurrent proposals for other tall buildings, or where others are likely to follow, the potential cumulative effect of these should be included. All proposals should be accompanied by accurate and realistic representational material which shows the proposal in all significant views affected, near, middle and distant, including the public realm and the streets around the base of the building. In many cases, it will be helpful to show the scheme in context at varying heights.
- 3.50 Because of the level of detail needed for tall building applications, applications for outline planning permission will not normally be appropriate; however, the 2007 guidance differs from previous guidance in that it does allow outline applications to be considered

in cases where the applicant is seeking to establish the principal of a tall building, as an important element within a robust and credible masterplan for an area to be developed over a long period of time. The application will still need to include a comprehensive assessment of the site context and visual impact assessment based on maximum and minimum scale parameters as part of the EIA. A separate further EIA may also be required for reserved matters applications.

- 3.51 Further guidance is also included on the effect of tall buildings upon World Heritage Sites. This requires stakeholders to adopt a management plan for the World Heritage Site, including the 'Buffer Zone' and explains that this plan, together with the statement of significance for the site will be key considerations in the planning process.
- 3.52 The document concludes that CABE and English Heritage have complimentary roles in evaluating tall building proposals. CABE is primarily concerned with promoting high standards in architecture and the design of the built environment across England. English Heritage is the Government's advisor on the historic environment and its remit will be to first establish whether the site is an appropriate one for tall buildings and then to address other factors, including design quality as a response to its context.

Landscape and Townscape Appraisal

Approach and Methodology

- 3.53 Landscape means more than just 'the view'. It is the physical and cultural (i.e. its use and management) characteristics of the land itself. The character of a landscape can be defined as a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another. Townscape comprises the physical and social characteristics of the built and urban environment and the way in which we perceive those characteristics. It is this mix of characteristics and perceptions that make up and contribute to both landscape and townscape character and give a 'sense of place' or identity. Characteristics may be commonplace and make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness or they may be individual, eye-catching and prominent or have strong local, cultural associations. It is important to recognise that both the characteristics of the landscape themselves and the way in which we perceive those characteristics may well change over time.
- 3.54 This definition is based on work done as part of the Countryside Agency Guidance for England and Scotland "Landscape Character Assessment, 2002".
- 3.55 Landscape and townscape character is assessed at a range of scales, from regional down to county, district and site specific. The main

value of having a landscape/townscape character assessment is to help in the process of managing and informing change in a particular location. Any changes have the potential to shape future landscapes/townscapes but a thorough understanding of the baseline landscape or townscape will help to ensure that these changes will make a positive contribution.

- 3.56 As part of the characterisation process, the wider study area is classified into distinct 'Character Areas' which can be defined as areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent common character allowing areas of similar character to be grouped together. The landscape or townscape is then further refined to allow landscape/townscape character types to be identified within each character area. Character types are generic types which possess broadly similar patterns in every area where they occur whereas 'Character Areas' can be described as the individual geographical area in which these landscape or townscape types occur.
- 3.57 The local landscape character of the area under consideration has been largely obscured by the urban sprawl associated with the Merseyside Conurbation although a number of landscape features are still discernible including the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge, the gently rolling landform associated with the River Birket valley and individual features of the coastline.

3.58 For the purposes of this report, the appraisal of townscape character is a particularly important part of the baseline process, and helps to ensure that certain key issues are addressed, including:

- The understanding of how and why urban landscapes are important;
- The promotion and appreciation of townscape issues and a thorough understanding of the local urban context;
- The successful accommodation of new development within the urban environment, including the capabilities of the local townscape to absorb change; and,
- The establishment of townscape enhancement and management principles aimed at reinforcing the urban environment.

3.59 A series of preliminary 'Townscape Character Areas' (TCA's) have been identified as part of the baseline study and these areas will continue to be refined and updated as the project moves forward. It is acknowledged that the wider urban area is under considerable development pressure resulting in ongoing changes to both the character and appearance of the study area.

3.60 Each Townscape Character Area description is also accompanied by a separate list of the key characteristics of that area. Key characteristics are those aspects of character which give an area its distinct 'sense of place'.

Regional Character and Context

3.61 In terms of regional landscape character, the Wirral peninsula is split into two main character areas as identified within the Countryside Agency's Character Map of England (see **Plan 2** and **Appendix 2**). The presence of a dramatic sandstone ridge running through the peninsula has resulted in the two widely differing Character Areas of 'Wirral' (Character Area 59) to the west and 'Merseyside Conurbation' (Character Area 58) to the east. The boundary between the character areas largely follows the line of the M53 motorway and runs from Bidston Hill in the north, through Noctorum and Mountwood, to Storeton in the south. To the south-east, Character Area 58 abuts Character Area 60 'Mersey Valley' which is a distinctive river-valley landscape focusing on the Mersey, with its estuary and associated tributaries and waterways.

3.62 The Wirral Character Area 59 has the following key characteristics:

- The land slopes gently westward from the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge to the coastal strip along the Dee estuary;
- Low-lying plain punctuated by wooded sandstone ridges and gorse-clad sandstone outcrops;
- Formal landscape created by former, large, country estates, country parks and mixed agricultural land interspersed with residential development and extensive areas given over to horticulture;
- Medium sized field pattern defined by intermittent clipped hedgerows with copses and field ponds. Coastal areas (often

degraded) with a geometric field pattern bounded by ditches draining former marshlands;

- Coastal scenery of inter-tidal mud/sand flats and salt marshes along the Dee estuary and extensive dune systems, particularly at Meols;
- Predominantly mixed woodland with a high proportion of mature pines which are concentrated on sandstone ridges and country estates, as well as extensive areas of heathland associated with sandstone outcrops;
- Intricate network of lanes, bridleways and footpaths; and,
- Many garden centres and market gardens.

3.63 The settlement pattern of this part of the Wirral is a mixture of large country houses and estates, predominantly built using local red sandstone, and larger towns and villages such as Heswall, Hoylake and West Kirby. In recent years the towns and villages have developed as dormitory settlements for workers in Birkenhead, Liverpool, Ellesmere Port and Chester resulting in the development of an effective road and rail network with strong links to the national motorway network in particular.

3.64 The majority of settlements are a mixture of traditional sandstone buildings, post-war housing development and restricted modern infill housing and apartments. The development of this area as a commuter belt has resulted in development pressures which have impacted upon the setting of individual settlements and the gradual increase of modern property which does not make reference to the local vernacular. The core of the area is predominantly mixed

agricultural land, with areas of improved pasture, arable farming and market gardens interspersed with residential development and scattered country houses with associated parkland.

3.65 In stark contrast to Character Area 59, the site itself falls within Character Area 58 'Merseyside Conurbation', which is located to the east of the Wirral peninsula. This character area incorporates the City of Liverpool and its environs in addition to the urban/industrial areas of Birkenhead which lie to the north-east of the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge.

3.66 The amount of open countryside within the urban fabric of the Merseyside Conurbation is extremely limited and generally is restricted to isolated pockets of versatile, high quality Grade 2 land. To a lesser extent, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the railway network form important landscape corridors. The urban growth and built-up landscape of the Liverpool Conurbation is dominant on the north of the Mersey Estuary and extends to Birkenhead in the south. The urban influence largely overrides the underlying geology and physiography with just hints remaining of previous landscape elements such as the ridge at Allerton and Childwall. On the Birkenhead side of the river it is still possible to identify some of the underlying topography which led to the development of this area although the key characteristics of the area are less well-defined than other surrounding regional character area. The key features include:

- Eastern portion of the Wirral peninsula, sloping gently eastward from the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge to the River Mersey;
- The Liverpool urban area sloping gently westward down to the River Mersey from the Allerton/Childwall sandstone ridge;
- The shallow valley of the River Birket which has been widened and excavated to create the Great Float and associated docklands;
- The rolling landscape of the Wirral ridge creating a shallow basin surrounded by Wallasey Hill to the north, Bidston Hill to the West and Storeton Hill to the south;
- The strongly urban and highly developed coastline to the River Mersey;
- A network of manmade open space including several Victorian public parks;
- Limited amount of open countryside restricted to isolated pockets of versatile, high quality Grade 2 land;
- Birch woodland clumps and gorse associated with exposed sandstone ridges such as Bidston Hill; and,
- Distinctive cultural landscape with major city/towns of Liverpool, Birkenhead and Wallasey having much in common in relation to past and existing development pressures. Highly distinctive waterfront to City of Liverpool associated with World Heritage Site.

Local Townscape Context

3.67 The first Mersey Ferry began operating from Birkenhead in 1150 when a Benedictine Priory was built there. Despite the massive changes taking place on the Liverpool side of the river, particularly

during the industrial revolution, the Wirral was generally distanced by the physical barrier of the River Mersey and retained its largely agricultural bias until the introduction of the steam ferry service in 1820. From then up until the arrival of William Laird, Birkenhead became a small seaside resort based around Church Street with a hotel located in Abbey Street.

3.68 The development of the town of Birkenhead was magnified by the arrival of William Laird in 1824. He bought a piece of land in Wallasey Pool and started a business that was to make Birkenhead internationally known. This was reflected in the population of the town which increased by 1300% over ten years from 1821 to 1831. Hamilton Square, built by William Laird, was opened in 1833 followed by the first Hall and market hall in Hamilton Street in 1835. In 1840, the Birkenhead to Chester railway, planned by George Stephenson, opened. In 1843, 123 acres of land was bought for the construction of Birkenhead Park which was subsequently designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and is recognised as being the first publicly funded park in Britain as well as the inspiration for Central Park in New York.

3.69 The principal features/elements of the study associated with the townscape context can be summarised as:

- Hamilton Square and environs;
- Birkenhead Park;

- The River Mersey waterfront, Liverpool City and associated inter-visibility;
- Birkenhead and Liverpool docks including the Wirral Waters site; and,
- Scattered historic buildings and landmark elements (including the context of the World Heritage Site).

Local Townscape Character / Townscape Character Areas (TCA's)

3.70 As part of the baseline study process, the study area and its immediate environs have been classified into 10 Townscape Character Areas (TCA's) as illustrated on **Plan 3**). This characterisation assists in defining the capacity of the townscape to accommodate new development or redevelopment. Each of the TCA's has been sub-divided to further analyse the distinct 'Character Types' which make up that area and to enhance the understanding of the urban context. The TCA's identified on **Plan 3** include:

TCA1: River Mersey Corridor

3.71 The River Mersey originates at the confluence of the River Tame and the River Goyt. It flows west towards Liverpool, passing through South Manchester and Warrington where the river becomes tidal. It widens to form the Inner Estuary at Runcorn which coincides with the navigable River Weaver.

3.72 The Mersey estuary continues west through the 'Narrows', a straight narrow channel with depths of up to 30m driven by a change in geology. It forms the outer estuary, a large area of inter-tidal sand and mud banks as it flows into Liverpool Bay and the Irish Sea. The Mersey is a tidal river with the second highest tidal range in the UK of about 10m (the third fastest tidal rip in Europe). These strong tides have created deep channels and sandbanks throughout the Mersey Estuary which can make navigation difficult.

3.73 The navigable Mersey runs for 43 miles from Warrington to Mersey Bar and makes connections with various inland lines including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, via Liverpool Docks, and the Manchester Ship Canal. The Mersey corridor's most distinctive feature is the easily identifiable Liverpool waterfront. The Wirral waterfront is less characteristic with fewer riverside features, including Wallasey Town Hall and the Mersey tunnel ventilation shaft.

3.74 The River Mersey Corridor TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Redundant dockland infrastructure;
- Active dockland/ferry/container base;
- Public promenade/open space; and,
- Urban waterfront.

3.75 The key features of TCA1 can be summarised as follows:

- Busy local and national ferry services;
- Historic dock system (originating from 1715 in Liverpool and 1820 in Birkenhead);
- Links to the Manchester Ship Canal and other waterways to the east;
- Architecturally distinctive river frontage, including a World Heritage Site, in Liverpool;
- Active river frontage with significant public access; and,
- Wide estuary and river basin.

TCA2: Dock System/Lower River Valley

3.76 In recent years the area at the eastern end of the docks, between the East Float and the river, has been developed into The Twelve Quays. Cargo passing between Merseyside and Ireland leaves from this location to avoid having to pass through Liverpool's enclosed dock system. A new floating stage has been constructed and Wallasey and Bidston docks infilled. Morpeth and Egerton docks have been improved and their quaysides developed with industry, offices and museums.

3.77 The Birkenhead dockland area is less complete structurally than the Liverpool Docks and also lacks the architectural interest of Liverpool particularly in the detailing of such features as the dock walls. Materials used in construction differ and appear to be of poorer

quality with brick built dock walls being characteristic of the Birkenhead docks and appearing less impressive than the substantial sandstone walls and gateways across the river. The dockland infrastructure which is particularly in evidence at the Albert Dock has been utilised to provide residential, retail, entertainment and cultural benefits but these opportunities are lacking in Birkenhead. A number of small museums have been created but lack cohesion in their distribution across the area. The surviving Corn Mill is currently being renovated and converted to provide residential accommodation.

3.78 In contrast to its heyday the dockland character is predominantly focussed on areas such as the ferry terminals and other port industries. Many of the industries currently occupying dockside workshops have no links with the dockland or river.

3.79 The Mersey Dock System/Lower River Valley TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Redundant dockland infrastructure;
- Active dockland/ferry;
- Limited Public Promenade; and
- Urban waterfront.

3.80 The key features of TCA2 can be summarised as follows:

- Large under-utilised expanses of water;
- Dominant river corridor and estuary;
- Local and regional ferry infrastructure;
- Areas of dereliction;
- Mixed surface and building treatments, a variety of textures and colours;
- Redundant railway/tram infrastructure;
- Workshops and industrial units housing businesses unrelated to the dockland location; and,
- Isolated buildings of historic and cultural interest.

TCA3: Structured Parkland

3.81 **Birkenhead Park**, opened in 1847, is located to the west of the town centre and east of Bidston Hill and lies south of the A553 Park Road. The park is universally acknowledged to be the first public park in Britain and forerunner of the Park's movement which subsequently inspired other parks around the world including New York's Central Park. The park was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton based on a concept of an idealised countryside landscape of open meadows and naturalistic woodland belts. The lakes within the park were shaped to appear as sinuous rivers with views across to features such as the Boathouse and Swiss Bridge. Paxton incorporated surrounding land into the park which was sold at an enhanced value for housing to help pay for the building of the park. As part of the design, he also

provided a separate perimeter road for traffic which allowed the park interior to be enjoyed by pedestrians.

3.82 Birkenhead Park retains this character with large open areas fringed by tree belts which largely screen the surrounding urban sprawl even during the winter months. Properties overlooking the park are generally of even height and predominantly comprise substantial residential dwellings of 3 storeys high. The park is very accessible from the surrounding area with numerous pedestrian routes and the benefit of sections of the perimeter road which are extensively used by car owners for access and parking. Overall the character is one of managed informal open space which is largely removed from the surrounding residential properties.

3.83 **Central Park** is located further to the north, in Wallasey, and was originally the private parkland associated with Liscard Hall (Moor Heys House). The land was bought by Wallasey Local Board on 1889 and opened to the public in 1891 becoming an important and well-used open space. The park comprises three formal gardens in addition to informal open space, sports pitches, nature ponds, a fishing lake and children's play areas.

3.84 The Structured Parkland TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape type:

- Victorian public park.

5.1 The key features of TCA3 can be summarised as follows:

- Birkenhead Park (first publicly funded park);
- Central Park, Wallasey

TCA4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor

3.85 The Birkenhead area is ringed by a series of green spaces which vary in character and topography from the managed landscapes of the golf courses to the more informal spaces around Bidston Hill and the reclaimed Bidston Moss.

3.86 To the west of the study area, Bidston Moss includes a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) sandwiched between the River Birket, the M53 and A554 which was designated in 1994 and covers approximately 8ha. The land was formerly a borrow pit used during the construction of the M53 motorway and access is limited to pedestrians. To the east of the LNR is the former Bidston Moss landfill site which covers some 40ha. Its domed finish is clearly visible from Liverpool and the surrounding area. To the north, the former Cross Lane tip (domestic refuse) has been unmanaged and consequently supports a ground cover of invasive weed species.

3.87 In contrast the final area of Bidston Moss comprises the land adjacent to Bidston Golf Course and takes the form of a flat-topped mound constructed, in part, from waste materials arising from the construction of the Mersey Tunnel. The combination of the 4 spaces creates a feeling of openness and informal/unmanaged green space which links visually with Bidston Hill nearby. In the wider context, the Bidston Moss area provides a largely green space in the vicinity of the motorway which is visible from the surrounding area as far as Liverpool.

3.88 To the south, Bidston Hill features strongly in views across Birkenhead with the distinctive forms of the Windmill and Observatory visible on the ridgeline. The hill comprises mainly scrub woodland with clearings permitting views across the wider area. From the windmill, a public footpath leads down the hill, through Taylor's Wood, to Boundary Road giving access to Flaybrick Memorial Gardens (formerly Flaybrick Cemetery).

3.89 Flaybrick Memorial Gardens date from 1864 when the site was opened as Birkenhead Cemetery. The Cemetery was designed by Edward Kemp, curator of Birkenhead Park, as the result of a competition and covers some 26 acres of gardens. The cemetery was designated as a Conservation Area in 1990 due to its considerable local significance. The character and appearance is mainly derived from the quality of landscaping, the formality of the design and the topographical setting. Within the site the primary

unifying features include the tree-lined processional avenue, the prominence and setting of the twin chapels and the sandstone perimeter wall with cast-iron coping railings.

3.90 The Conservation Area status seeks to preserve and maintain important elements of the character of the cemetery including the extensive views of Birkenhead and Liverpool as well as the quiet character and landscape quality of the cemetery itself.

3.91 The gardens today are managed for a number of functions including historical/cultural interest, wildlife, wildflowers, a summer flowering meadow and an arboretum.

3.92 The Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor TCA can be sub-divided into the following landscape/townscape types:

- Semi-natural open space;
- Open space linked to the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge;
- Reclaimed land;
- Golf courses; and,
- Cemeteries.

3.93 The key features of TCA4 can be summarised as follows:

- A cluster of reclamation areas including Bidston Moss;
- Bidston Hill/mid-Wirral sandstone ridge, including associated woodland groups;
- Golf courses;

- Flaybrick Cemetery Conservation Area; and,
- Locally distinctive structures including the Observatory and Windmill on Bidston Hill.

TCA5: Structured Industry

3.94 Immediately beyond the dockland fringes, much of the area is given over to light industry and workshops. This informal industrial zone provides a buffer between the docklands and the gridiron street pattern of TCA6 to the south in particular. The strong grid iron street layout is not in evidence other than on plan due to the diverse mix of structures and derelict/open/storage areas.

3.95 The Structured Industry TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Locally distinct/historic industry;
- Nationally/regionally distributed industry;
- Large scale units/sites; and,
- Open land and car parking.

3.96 The key features of TCA5 can be summarised as follows:

- Small purpose built units/sheds of indeterminate character;
- Evidence of high security requirements due to urban location;
- Pattern of development restricted by the size and distribution of land available within the Laird Street Plan;

- Numerous derelict/demolished sites and poorly maintained structures; and,
- Disrupted local identity.

TCA6: Fragmented Industry

3.97 To the north of TCA2 the industrial area is predominantly contained between the A5139 Dock Road and the Kingsway Tunnel Approach. The area has a more organic form in plan, and contains a disjointed pattern of built structures and corresponding spaces.

3.98 The Fragmented Industry TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Nationally/regionally distributed industry;
- Large scale units/sites; and,
- Redundant industrial areas/car parking.

3.99 The key features of TCA6 can be summarised as follows:

- Large units/sheds of indeterminate character;
- Evidence of high security requirements due to urban location;
- Sites predominantly accessed from the Dock Road; and,
- Lack of any local identity.

TCA7: Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood

3.100 Birkenhead has experienced a number of periods of growth giving rise to extensive residential estates surrounding the town. The time line and cultural heritage is examined in more detail within the separate Archaeology and Cultural Heritage baseline study report. The area to the north of Birkenhead Park was laid out as part of the original town plan by Laird. In contrast the properties constructed within the environs of Birkenhead Park are generally large detached villas of individual design. Periods of industrial growth are reflected in the areas of more modest, brick built terraced houses. These properties, located at the back of the pavement are also used as infill in many of the undeveloped areas of the original grid iron layout. Even within the more modest areas of worker's housing, strong vistas have been developed around focal points and landmarks such as St James's church.

3.101 The Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- 19th and 20th century terraced properties and town houses;
- Park Villas;
- Pockets of garden suburbia; and,
- Late 20th century housing renewal.

3.102 The key features of TCA7 can be summarised as follows:

- Historic grid iron road layouts around Birkenhead Park to the west of the river (partly mirrored by Rodney St/Upper Parliament Street in Liverpool);
- Finest Georgian square outside London;
- Larger, individual properties around Birkenhead Park;
- Grid iron street pattern; and,
- Emphasis on views, vistas and focal points.

TCA8: Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs

3.103 Birkenhead town centre generally has a poor image with evidence of dereliction, vandalism and less commercial appeal than nearby retail centres such as Liverpool. Two modern shopping centres, The Grange and The Pyramids, are a feature of the town centre together with the Market Hall. The original Market Hall, built in 1835 and extended in 1909, was located on the site of the present Land Registry building but moved to its present location in 1977. These buildings together with the pedestrianised shopping area around Grange Street and St Werburgh's Square make up the centre of the retail district.

3.104 As part of the Strategic Spatial Development Area Strategy document produced by Wirral MBC, three 'quarters' have been identified in the older part of the town centre. These comprise:

- 'The Grange West Quarter' which includes Grange Road West and Oxton Road;

- 'The Central Quarter' which includes Argyle Street, Grange Road East and Clifton Crescent; and,
- 'The Hamilton Quarter' which includes Argyle Street, Market Street, Hamilton Square and Hamilton Street.

3.105 The Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs TCA can be subdivided into the following townscape types:

- Locally based retail units;
- High Street shops/shopping centres;
- Central Business District; and,
- Waterfront small business parks.

3.106 The key features of TCA8 can be summarised as follows:

- Finest Georgian square outside London;
- Separate retail and commercial districts;
- Scattered historic buildings including pump houses associated with the docks;
- Town centre museums associated with local industry; and,
- Modern, purpose-built shopping centres and high street shopping.

TCA9: Northern Neighbourhoods

3.107 The majority of the northern housing areas fall into the category of late nineteenth and early twentieth century housing in the form of long parallel streets of terraced housing. There are numerous areas where housing has been infilled including pockets of garden

suburbia. The area also includes some high rise development (predominantly 1960's) to the southern edge of Wallasey Hill around Oakdale Park. On the edge of the fragmented industrial zone (TCA6) there are areas of late twentieth century housing renewal based around cul-de-sac layouts. The majority of the properties do not reflect the local vernacular or materials which add to the fragmented appearance of the urban fringe.

3.108 The Structured Industry TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Terraces (19C/20C);
- Garden Suburbia;
- Late 20C housing renewal; and,
- Apartments/high density development.

3.109 The key features of TCA9 can be summarised as follows:

- Prominent location on the side of Wallasey Hill;
- Large areas of traditional terraced housing (predominantly back of pavement);
- Pockets of infill comprising semi-detached properties and apartments;
- Some older style (1960-70) high rise properties (mainly on the southern edge of Wallasey Hill); and,
- Areas of inter and post war garden suburbs.

TCA10: Southern Neighbourhoods

3.110 The southern housing areas are divided between pockets of twentieth century social housing, areas of 19th and 20th century terraced housing and the more affluent park villas, semi-detached and large detached properties which are characteristic of the Noctorum fringes. The higher density housing is generally associated with the Town Centre, abutting the Laird Street Plan, and takes the form of locally typical terraced houses. The more modern properties generally lack local distinctiveness.

3.111 The Southern Neighbourhoods TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- 19C and 20C terraced properties;
- Late 20C housing renewal;
- Garden suburbia;
- Park villas and semi-detached; and,
- Apartments.

3.112 The key features of TCA10 can be summarised as follows:

- Large areas of locally indistinct social housing;
- Housing renewal areas; and,
- Lower density areas to the south-west associated with open space such as the ladies' golf course.

Land Uses within TCAs

3.113 There are a number of land uses which may be found in one or more of the Townscape Character Areas. The type and distribution of land use will be subject to ongoing assessment due to development pressures across the area. Further site survey will continue to inform this section. The main land use types identified within the study area at present include:

- Dockside workshops/dry docks/ship repairers;
- Town centre retail areas – including 2 modern shopping centres and a range of both local and high street shops;
- Town centre industrial units/workshops;
- Small business units frequently developed as business parks in locations at Woodside and Twelve Quays;
- Town centre car parking;
- Recreational venues;
- Schools; and,
- Public buildings/Hospitals.

Importance and Sensitivity of Townscape Receptors

3.114 In assessing the level of sensitivity of a landscape/townscape receptor, a judgement needs to be made on the importance to society of the landscape or townscape under consideration. This will be based on and take into account views of consultees about what is important in the landscape/townscape and the reason for its importance. This information is required in order to:

- Establish the level of importance of the affected landscape/townscape and whether this is at local, regional or national level;
- Enable any losses of features, characteristics, or functions to be assessed in relation to the importance or value attached to them;
- Enable the effects on other, less tangible, perceptual characteristics to be assessed such as scenic quality;
- Assist in identifying features which could be enhanced; and,
- Identify mitigation proposals, through avoidance or relocation, by appropriate remedy or offsetting negative effects through compensatory measures.

3.115 When describing landscape/townscape sensitivity, it is important to identify the people or groups who could be affected by the proposals because the landscape is valuable to people in different ways. Consideration will therefore be given to:

- People who live and work in an area may have a different perception of the landscape to that held by visitors because of their more regular contact with the landscape/townscape and the ongoing changes within it;
- Special interests: for example, the ecological, cultural or historic value of the landscape/townscape, as knowledge of these issues can affect perceptions and appreciation of the landscape/townscape; and,

- Landscapes/townscape valued by a wider public than the local population, because they have a strong image or are well known and valued nationally or internationally, such as the Liverpool waterfront.

3.116 The WCPM appraisal of the importance and sensitivity of townscape character and townscape features is based on a set of criteria developed from the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). Ultimately the criteria is used in the form of a significance matrix for assessing impacts on townscape character but at baseline stage the criteria are used in order to make a judgement on the sensitivity of each Townscape Character Area.

3.117 The sensitivity of townscape character lies along a continuum depending on its importance which ranges from international to low local importance. It is accepted that there is likely to be a degree of overlap between each defined category. The sensitivity depends on the level of existing designation and on the inherent quality and condition of the townscape character and individual features.

3.118 The categories are defined as follows:

- International – Internationally designated feature or townscape character, susceptible to relatively small changes;

- National – Nationally designated feature or townscape of particularly distinctive character, susceptible to relatively small changes;
- County – County designated feature or townscape reasonably tolerant of changes;
- High (local) – A townscape of feature designated as being of District/Borough value with characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes;
- Moderate (local) – Locally valued components or townscape reasonably tolerant of changes; and,
- Low (local) – A non-designated townscape character or feature, the nature of which is potentially tolerant of substantial change.

3.119 Having identified a series of 10 Townscape Character Areas as part of the initial desk top study, WCPM will move the baseline study forward through the consultation process in order to agree the relative sensitivity of the TCA's and associated features.

3.120 Associated with the TCA's, the main townscape receptors likely to be affected by any development proposals (subject to consultation) are likely to include the following:

- The setting of the Conservation Areas;
- The setting of scattered Listed Buildings;
- The low Wirral skyline punctuated only by occasional historic buildings and structures;

- Views across the River Mersey to the Liverpool skyline and World Heritage Site;
- The Wirral Waterfront; and,
- The local Townscape Character Areas identified by WCPM.

3.121 Townscape receptor locations and sensitivity are illustrated on **Plan 4**.

3.122 As noted above, the work carried out to date is the result of desk-top studies and does not include any detailed site investigation work. Observations have been made based on historical information and a walk-over of the external site boundaries. Detailed site survey work will be carried out once agreement on site access has been reached and will inform the full assessment of the site character in consultation with the Wirral MBC Conservation Officer and English Heritage.

Visual Appraisal

3.123 In order to establish a thorough understanding of the visual context associated with the study area and the consideration of views across the site, WCPM has undertaken a visual appraisal. The work has involved a desktop sieving exercise and supporting fieldwork (undertaken in February 2007), to establish the baseline parameters.

3.124 This section considers the following visual parameters:

- Approach and Methodology
- Context, Visual Connections and Linkages;
- Zone of Visual Influence;
- Landmark Elements and Skyline Appraisal;
- Strategic Views;
- Local Views;
- Transitory / Sequential Views;
- Distant Views;
- Visual Appraisal of the Site; and,
- Importance and Sensitivity of Visual Receptors.

3.125 At this stage WCPM has gathered enough data and undertaken sufficient fieldwork to determine the selection of 15 principal photoviewpoints; and, identified key visual landmarks associated with both the Liverpool and Wirral skylines. Additional work is required to fully assess the visual context of the site and transitory views; and, further consultation is required with English Heritage and Wirral MBC to agree the selection of principal views and the sensitivity of visual receptors.

Approach and Methodology Criteria

3.126 The primary objective of the visual appraisal work is to assess the current 'Strategic Views' policy and guidance available, and assess how it serves the study area. In association with this, WCPM will review the types of view experiences particularly appropriate to Merseyside and the Wirral, and select a range of suitable visual receptors (photoviewpoint locations). Both 'Strategic' and 'Local'

views will be appraised, as well as the visual context of the Merseyside and Wirral peninsulas.

3.127 The work also requires the analysis of the site area itself, the visual relationship with existing land use and the inter-visibility with local visual receptors.

3.128 For the purpose of this baseline study, WCPM has utilised the following criteria to appraise views and visual amenity (based on the approach set out within SDS Technical Report Nineteen – London’s Skyline, Views and High Buildings (DEGW for GLA, August 2002):

Viewing Place

3.129 The criteria identified for a viewing place are that it should be:

- Established – through use over time;
- Accessible – publicly accessible and well used; and,
- Distinctive – embody a ‘sense of place’ and provide an opportunity to pause and contemplate the view.

The View

3.130 The three generic criteria linked to the view itself, include:

- View value – views are about aesthetic, cultural and historic considerations. An important view should represent one or more of these considerations;
- Composition – views are typically composed of foreground, middleground and background. Important views should express quality of one or more ‘grounds’ and good relationship between them; and
- Landmark elements – views provide visual settings for landmark element(s). An important view should reflect the value of the landmark element(s) and the compositional quality of its setting.

View Experience

3.131 The relationship between ‘the view’ and the ‘viewing place’ constitutes the ‘view experience’. There are a number of generic view experience conditions, which are summarised as follows:

Viewing Place	View	View Experience
High point	Panorama	A wide view from outside looking into the city
Open space	Contained prospect	A broad view with a clearly defined edge
Corridor space	Broad prospect	A broad view with a changing edge condition
Contained space	Contained townscape	A round view of a cohesive urban experience
Linear space	Axial	A linear view with a singular defined object
Through space	Unfolding	A shifting, changing view along major routes

3.132 The view criteria are applicable at both strategic and local level.

Context, Visual Connections and Linkages

3.133 The geographical prominence of the Wirral peninsula provides a unique identity in terms of visual reference when viewing the North West coast at a national scale. This is accentuated by the presence of the River Dee corridor to the west and the River Mersey to the east. When appraising the visual context of the study area, it is important to acknowledge the visual dominance of the surrounding water, and the legibility offered by the River Mersey when arriving from Liverpool Bay / Crosby Channel.

3.134 On arrival via Liverpool Bay / Crosby Channel, the legibility of the coastline is defined by topography and built form associated with Crosby and Wallasey, with rural coast beyond. From the entrance to the River Mersey, the legibility of the channel is guided by the dock edges, wharfs and built skyline associated with Liverpool to the east and Birkenhead to the west. Distant views terminate at the industrial skyline associated with Ellesmere Port to the south (see **Plan 5**).

3.135 Despite the physical separation of the River Mersey corridor, the proximity of the Liverpool and Birkenhead conurbations offers a great degree of inter-visibility. This is accentuated by the local topography, which provides a subtle visual backdrop to both urban areas. The visual connection between Birkenhead and the Liverpool frontage is also strengthened by the filtered / framed views associated with the Wirral Docks (and 'Wallasey Pool' basin associated with the former River Birkett Valley).

Zone of Visual Influence

3.136 In order to determine the extent of the site visible from the wider study area and to assist in defining the scope of the baseline study, WCPM has utilised MapInfo GIS software to generate a digital Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) map (see **Plan 6** and **Plan 7**). The software interpolates topographical data and provides a worst case 'view shed', based on the visibility of the site surface (existing site circumstances). The ZVI generated does not take into account man-made landform, vegetation, buildings or other structures; however,

it does provide a tool to refine the area of fieldwork required and to determine the extent of possible visual receptors.

3.137 The ZVI generated reveals a relatively limited 'view shed', largely as result of the rising topography and local ridgelines that surround the site. The limits of the ZVI can be described as:

- To the east - the rising Liverpool topography and ridgeline associated with the A5058, Anfield, Everton and Woolton (Allerton and Childwood Ridge);
- To the south – the rising ground associated with Oxton, Prenton Park and Storeton Hill beyond;
- To the west – the rising land associated with Bidston Hill (Mid Wirral Sandstone Ridge); and,
- To the north – the rising topography associated with Egremont and Liscard.

3.138 Verification on site has confirmed the accuracy of the ZVI; although, man-made features such as Bidston Moss and surrounding built form provide some variation in visibility.

Landmark Elements and Skyline Appraisal

3.139 In order to assess the visual interest of the study area and the context of the two adjoining conurbations, it is important to have an understanding of the current skyline and the landmark elements that are associated. The location and visibility of landmark elements is a crucial part of determining strategic and local view corridors, as well

as reinforcing legibility and 'sense of place' in our urban and rural environments.

3.140 The principal landmark elements and skyline features associated with both the Wirral and Liverpool study areas include (see **Plan 8, Plan 9** and **Plan 10**):

1. Bidston Hill Observatory (Grade II Listed);
2. Bidston Hill Windmill;
3. Wallasey Town Hall;
4. East Float Corn Warehouses (Grade II Listed);
5. Twelve Quays Pumphouse;
6. Hamilton Square Station;
7. Wirral Museum (Grade II Listed);
8. St. Mary's Tower, Birkenhead Priory (Grade I and Grade II* Listed);
9. Cammell Laird Shipyard;
10. Tobacco Warehouse, Stanley Dock (Grade II Listed);
11. The Three Graces – The Royal Liver Building (Grade I Listed), Cunard Building (Grade II* Listed), Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Building (Grade II* Listed);
12. The Albert Dock (Grade I Listed);
13. Radio City Tower / St. John's Beacon;
14. Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (Grade II* Listed);
15. Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (Grade I Listed);
16. Tunnel Ventilation Building – Wirral (Grade II Listed);
17. Tunnel Ventilation Building – Liverpool (Grade II Listed);

- 18. Unity Building; and,
- 19. Beetham's West Tower.

- 3.141 The importance of the landmark elements listed above is obviously influenced by level of visibility, condition, historic status and statutory protection (with many features listed or associated with the Liverpool World Heritage Site); however, WCPM will need to undertake additional consultation with English Heritage, The World Heritage Site Officer, Liverpool City Council and Wirral MBC to determine the sensitivity of such features and any view management requirements.
- 3.142 It is important to note that the skyline appraisal work undertaken by WCPM represents the current situation, and that ongoing work will be necessary to incorporate the silhouette of consented and proposed schemes. A methodology will also need to be established as part of any future assessment work in order to determine the cumulative impact associated with the changes to the Wirral and Liverpool skyline.
- 3.143 At this stage it is easy to see that the majority of the landmark elements are associated with the Liverpool conurbation. The visibility of such features is accentuated because the inter-relationship of topography and built form, both individually and in aggregation, provides a considerable degree of visual prominence in the wider landscape. Their contribution is an important part of the

urban morphology, current visual context and distinct character of Liverpool.

- 3.144 The rapid development of the Liverpool skyline is in stark contrast to the poorly defined skyline of the Wirral.

Strategic Views

- 3.145 Once the visual assets of a major conurbation have been determined, it is commonplace for Local Planning Authorities to define 'strategic views' or to produce supplementary planning guidance (SPG) to deal with 'skylines, views and tall buildings'.
- 3.146 A strategic view is defined as 'the line of sight from a particular point to an important landmark or skyline'. Most emergent guidance considers that a strategic view should seek to frame a local icon to the exclusion of all else in the town/city; and, that any strategic view should provide a visual link to the heart of a town/city from surrounding environs. Other examples of strategic view criteria focus upon a skyline as a whole, rather than individual landmarks which make a view distinctive.
- 3.147 The current views available towards the Liverpool skyline do not focus on one landmark element alone but rather link together a series of features and visual events to create a distinctive panorama across the River Mersey. This is reflected within the SPG produced for the North West Regional Assembly (Entec, 2003), which deals specifically with the 'Strategic Views along the River Mersey'.

Strategic Views Along the River Mersey – North West Regional Assembly / Entec, 2003

3.148 The origin of the strategic views research dates back to 1999 when the Government Office for the North West published a paper outlining the need for studies to inform the review process for Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) in the North West. Proposal 7 within the paper established the need to examine what, if any, strategic views of regional importance exist within the Mersey Estuary and inland from Manchester to Liverpool Bay.

3.149 In November 2002 Entec were commissioned to undertake a study. In November 2002 Entec were commissioned to undertake a study. The Mersey Corridor study area was defined by taking a 2.5km offset north and south of the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal. The offset distance reflected the fact that few individual buildings are clearly discernible beyond this distance and haze, which is especially prevalent over the estuary, tends to prevent the identification of all but the most prominent features. It was considered that this width of area allowed for the consideration of views into, across and out of the Mersey Valley that incorporate both the lower lying areas and the more elevated areas as the topography generally rises. The boundaries were then adjusted so that they reflected features such as roads and railway lines, which were recognisable on the ground and in a small number of locations the offset distance was extended to incorporate obvious strategic viewpoints. The extent of this study area is illustrated on the insert on **Plan 2**.

3.150 Following the completion of the research, the North West Regional Assembly sought to translate the findings into an appropriate policy approach for inclusion within the RPG for the North West. Following a final consultation process, the 28 strategic views identified were refined as many were considered not to be of regional significance. The refined list included 12 viewpoint locations:

- Strategic View 1 – Liverpool Waterfront and Seaforth Docks (from the Magazine Promenade, Wallasey);
- Strategic View 2 - Liverpool Waterfront and Seaforth Docks (from Wallasey Town Hall);
- Strategic View 3 – Liverpool Waterfront (from Woodside Ferry Terminal);
- Strategic View 4 – Liverpool City Centre and Manchester Ship Canal (from Eastham Country Park);
- Strategic View 5 – Manchester Ship Canal and the Mersey Estuary (from Frodsham Hill);
- Strategic View 6 – Runcorn Silver Jubilee Bridge and Spike Island (from Wigg Island, near Runcorn);
- Strategic View 7 – Runcorn Silver Jubilee Bridge and the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (from Pickerings Pasture, near Widnes);
- Strategic View 8 – Lowry Lifting Footbridge views westwards and eastwards (from the Lowry Lifting Footbridge);
- Strategic View 9 – Lowry Lifting Footbridge and Imperial War Museum North (from the Quays Theatre, Lowry Centre, Salford Quays);

- Strategic View 10 - Liverpool Waterfront and City Centre (from Everton Park, Liverpool);
- Strategic View 11 – Birkenhead Waterfront and Liverpool Pier Head (from Albert Dock near Canning Half Tide Dock, Liverpool); and,
- Strategic View 12 – Royal Liver Building / Liverpool Pier Head and Birkenhead Waterfront (from Princes Dock, Liverpool).

Selection of Strategic Views

3.151 The strategic views have been reviewed by WCPM to determine which are applicable to the study area. A number of the strategic views are relevant; however, the angle and orientation of the view has had to be altered to accommodate the wider study area. Some of the original 28 strategic views identified are also considered to be relevant, as the focus of the views relate to the Liverpool conurbation and World Heritage Site, rather than the Mersey corridor. Where appropriate the Entec strategic views are referenced in the text.

3.152 The following strategic viewpoints have been identified following a review of the earlier Entec studies and initial consultation with the Wirral MBC Conservation Officer (see **Plan 11** and corresponding Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheets):

- *Woodside Ferry Terminal*: Associated Ferry Building is Grade II Listed (see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 8**) – (Entec Strategic View 3, but extended for this baseline study). Views from the pedestrian concourse of the ferry terminal take in a significant

length of the Liverpool skyline. Part of Birkenhead skyline is also visible including notable buildings such as Hamilton Square Station The study area and surrounds is largely screened by Woodside Business Park;

- *Albert Dock*: World Heritage Site / Grade I and II Listed Buildings / Mersey Waterfront Regional Park / National Cycle Network (see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 13**) – (Entec Strategic View 12). A popular, bustling location at any time of year associated with riverside walks and the nearby marina. The wide riverside paths provide open views of the Wirral waterfront taking in Rock Park, Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead, Seacombe, Liscard and New Brighton.
- *Everton Hill*: Protected Green Space (see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 15**) – (Entec Strategic View 10). A well-used local viewpoint giving panoramic views across the City of Liverpool and the Wirral beyond. The location has visitor parking and is popular at all times of day. Views extend from the two Liverpool Cathedrals to the east, round to Perch Rock and Liverpool Bay to the west. In clear weather, the views across to the Wirral include features such as the windmill on Bidston Hill; and,

3.153 Of the strategic views excluded from the final Entec study, this baseline study will include the following, because of its panoramic nature and relevance to the wider study area:

- *Bidston Hill*: Area of Special Landscape Value (see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 3**) – The summit of the hill provides fine 360° views encompassing north Wales to the south-west, the Wirral peninsula (to the north and west) and Liverpool and Birkenhead to the north-east.

Local Views

3.154 In addition to the identification of relevant strategic views, WCPM has identified other principal views that require analysis as part of this baseline study. The views have been selected to further acknowledge the availability of local panoramas, vistas, prominent landmark elements and designated land. The local views do not focus upon the Mersey Corridor (unlike the Strategic Views), but encompass the visual setting of the wider study area. The local visual receptors selected at this stage include (see **Plan 11** and corresponding Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheets):

- *St Hilary's Church, Wallasey* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 1** (Grade II Listed). The church forms a dominant feature of views from the surrounding area due to its scale and the sense of openness provided by its graveyard. Although impressive views can be obtained from the church tower it is not a freely accessible location to the public. For the purposes of this report the view from the church is taken from the public domain which permits glimpses of the Liverpool skyline between residential properties;

- *Bidston Moss* – see **Photoviewpoint 2**. The community woodland area offers a network of informal footpaths and nearby cycle routes cross over the former landfill site giving views across the dockland associated with Birkenhead;
- *Flaybrick Hill Cemetery* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheets 4 and 5** (Conservation Area / Registered Park or Garden of Historic Interest). On the slopes of Bidston Hill, Flaybrick Cemetery contains an interesting collection of monuments and Listed Buildings. The most notable feature of the Cemetery is the impressive vista along Bidston Avenue. The cemetery is well-used by casual visitors and dog walkers and glimpsed views of Birkenhead are possible in places;
- *Birkenhead Park* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 6** (Conservation Area which possesses Grade I status within the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens). The park provides a sense of space and seclusion within the urban sprawl of Birkenhead. The surrounding park vegetation largely screens any external features and views beyond the park boundaries are limited to the adjacent high quality Georgian terraces and detached villas which are a feature of the area. The skyline is not punctuated by any intrusive elements beyond;
- *Hamilton Square* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 7** (Conservation Area) in the heart of William Laird's

Birkenhead. The square is impressive and contains the largest number of Grade I Listed Buildings in a square outside London. Access is restricted for vehicles resulting in an attractive open area to the front of the museum (the former Birkenhead Town Hall). Georgian town houses surround the square punctuated only by the Tower of the museum. The roofline and stylised geometry of the buildings results in a harmonious space with rhythm and natural flow to its boundaries. The view is not interrupted by any features from outside the square resulting in a complete and harmonious prospect;

- *St. Mary's Tower / Birkenhead Priory* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 9** (Scheduled Monument / Grade I and Grade II* Listed) is a small but important site in the history of Birkenhead. It was here that the Benedictine Priory was founded in 1150 and the first ferry across the Mersey which resulted. The setting of the Priory today lacks any of the isolation of its original setting. To the south the view is dominated by busy dry docks and the remaining boundaries are fringed by small business units and workshops. The Priory itself retains the tower of St Mary's Church which provides panoramic views of the surrounding area;
- *Rock Park* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 10** (Conservation Area), originally built for the merchants of the town, which enjoys 180° views of the River Mersey from the

Narrows through to the inner basin. For the purposes of this study, the view has been confined to the north-western prospect although the dominant feature of the view is the oil terminal with Cammell Lairds beyond;

- *Otterspool Promenade* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 11** (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park / Protected Green Space / National Cycle Network) is a popular open space and promenade used for both passive and active recreation. The riverside walkway gives impressive views across to the Wirral shoreline and features including Cammell Lairds and Birkenhead Priory Church Tower are clearly visible to the north-west. Views from this location do not feature the Liverpool skyline which is screened by landform and vegetation;
- *Liverpool Anglican Cathedral entrance* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 12** (Conservation Area / Grade I Listed / World Heritage Site Buffer). The northern entrance to the Cathedral, which is most commonly used by everyday visitors, permits glimpsed views of the skyline of Liverpool Pier Head and across to the East Float of Birkenhead docks. The pump house and Corn Warehouses can be clearly identified as features on the skyline; and,
- *St Nicholas Church Gardens* – see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 14** (World Heritage Site / Protected Green

Space / Church Grade II Listed) is a popular location in the heart of the World Heritage Site. This view has been selected as being representative of numerous glimpsed views from and through the designated area. The gardens provide a small green oasis off a busy road and are popular at lunchtime with local office workers. The gardens are elevated and glimpsed views of the Wirral skyline include the taller buildings associated with the East Float.

Transitory / Sequential Views

3.155 Sequential or transitory views occur when an observer moves along a linear route, as a series or continuum of points. The identification of such views often links to the defined strategic and local views, but requires the wider approaches of the study to be assessed and interpreted. At this stage WCPM has not undertaken the appropriate study area appraisal to determine the extent of sequential views; however, the principal movement / transport corridors to be considered will include:

- Mersey Ferry routes and associated arrival nodes;
- The M53 corridor;
- The Wirral Dock system;
- The local rail network; and,
- The local highway, cycleway and pedestrian network.

3.156 WCPM will need to agree the scope of the sequential appraisal work with relevant consultees and establish appropriate recording techniques (such as the use of video recording), in order to progress this element of work.

Distant Views

3.157 As part of the baseline study, distant viewpoints have also been identified. Although relevant in relation to the scale of the study area, the distance between these receptors and the site area; and, the inter-visibility available suggests that detail consideration and assessment is not necessary. It is acknowledged that, subject to favourable weather conditions, the study area does have the potential to be visible over considerable distances, due to the openness of the Wirral peninsula.

3.158 The principal distant visual receptors include:

- Eastham Country Park;
- Thurstaston Hill;
- Winter Hill / Pennine foothills; and,
- North Wales coastline and Snowdonia National Park.

Visual Appraisal of the Site

3.159 At a 'site specific' level, it is important to have an understanding of the local visual context, including:

- Visual connections and vistas across the site;
- Views out from the site;
- Views and inter-visibility between existing receptors;
- The legibility and permeability of the site; and,
- The visual condition / detractors associated with the site.

3.160 The work undertaken to-date by WCPM does not include such detail site analysis, and the focus of the baseline study is upon the review and selection of strategic and local views, as well as the identification of landmark elements.

Importance and Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

3.161 A key stage in baseline study, once the visual data has been obtained is to attribute value or sensitivity to the views, landmarks and visual receptors. Although WCPM has established appraisal criteria in association with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), this process and associated sensitivity values will be significantly influenced by the thoughts and judgments of relevant consultees (including English Heritage, Wirral MBC, Liverpool City Council, the World Heritage Site Officer and CABE). Once the range of receptors, strategic / local views, landmark elements and attributed value / sensitivity, has been agreed through consultation, the baseline can be progressed and a strong platform for future impact assessment is established.

3.162 At this stage, the identified views / visual receptors have been divided into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary significance, according

to the sensitivity of the receptors. The sensitivity is dependant on the following criteria (as defined by the Landscape Institute and IEMA):

- The location and context of the viewpoint;
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor; and,
- The importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity, designation, historic or cultural significance, and consultee opinions).

3.163 WCPM suggest that the most sensitive receptors (primary) are associated with:

- Strategic views of regional importance; and,
- Internationally and regionally designated landscapes.

3.164 Other sensitive (secondary) receptors include:

- Locally important or designated landscapes;
- Users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way and those driving on local roads;
- Occupiers of residential development; and,
- Community valued views.

3.165 Less sensitive (tertiary) receptors should include:

- Users of major transport corridors;

- People at their place of work;
- Receptors where focus is upon an alternative activity and less susceptible to changes in the view; and,
- Distant views.

3.166 Although consultation has yet to be undertaken with the relevant consultees to determine the acceptability of the selected visual receptors and associated criteria for analysis, WCPM has set out provisional sensitivity judgments.

Primary Receptors

- Woodside Ferry Terminal (Strategic View and associated Grade II Listed Ferry Building);
- Everton Hill (Strategic View and associated Protected Green Space);
- Albert Dock (Strategic View and associated World Heritage Site / Grade I and II Listed Buildings / Mersey Waterfront Regional Park / National Cycle Network);
- Bidston Hill (Area of Special Landscape Value);
- Hamilton Square (Conservation Area);
- Birkenhead Park (Conservation Area and associated Grade I status within the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens);
- St. Mary's Tower / Birkenhead Priory (Scheduled Monument / Grade I and II* Listed);

- Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (Conservation Area and associated Grade I Listed Building / World Heritage Site Buffer); and,
- St. Nicholas Church Gardens (World Heritage Site / Protected Green Space / Church Grade II Listed).

Secondary Receptors

- Rock Park (Conservation Area);
- Flaybrick Hill Cemetery (Conservation Area / Registered Park or Garden of Historic Interest);
- Bidston Moss Community Woodland;
- Otterspool Promenade (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park / Protected Green Space / National Cycle Network);
- St. Hilary's Church, Wallasey (Grade II Listed);
- Mersey Ferry routes and associated arrival nodes;
- Wirral Dock system; and,
- The local highway, cycleway and pedestrian network.

Tertiary Receptors

- The M53 corridor;
- The local rail network;
- Eastham Country Park;
- Thursaston Hill;
- Winter Hill / Peninne foothills; and,
- North Wales coastline and Snowdonia National Park.

3.167 Visual receptor locations and sensitivity are illustrated on **Plan 12** (distant tertiary receptors are not shown).

3.168 Following consultation, the appraisal work can be advanced and finalised, including the Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheets and the View Cone Analysis plans. Two examples have been produced to demonstrate the approach that is to be taken. The Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheets (see **Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheet 1 and 2**) appraise the 'View Place', 'View' and 'View Experience' for each of the selected principal viewpoints; and, the View Cone Analysis plans (see View Cone Analysis plans for Visual Receptor 1 and Visual Receptor 2) provide an illustration of the visible landmark elements and the influence of the existing site area. When complete, this material can be used to inform the design process and identify how any redevelopment proposals will impact upon the visual baseline (and to what magnitude).

Implications and Opportunities for Wirral Waters

3.169 In response to the baseline study work undertaken by WCPM at this stage, some provisional conclusions can be set out in the form of implications and opportunities. This text will be substantially expanded once the report is finalised.

Landscape & Townscape Character

3.170 This appraisal has identified those key aspects of the landscape and townscape character which future proposals must consider as part of

the design process. They are summarised here as implications and opportunities

3.171 The baseline study shows that the character of the study area generally falls into clearly defined zones with the Birkenhead docklands being a distinct and self contained unit in its own right. In contrast to the docklands, much of the surrounding area follows a slightly disjointed form as development, changing industry and periods of prosperity have dictated the development patterns of the area.

3.172 The townscape character appraisal has highlighted a series of features which are unique to this location, including:

- The size, scale, visibility and nature of the inland docks;
- The scale and importance of the Laird Town Plan and Birkenhead Park;
- The north-south divide between urban areas of differing townscape character;
- The distribution of high quality Conservation Areas (Hamilton Square) and Listed Buildings linked to the historical development of the area; and,
- The scale of the Liverpool/Birkenhead conurbation focused on the Mersey waterfront (World Heritage Site).

3.173 The overall scale of the space available allows for opportunities to 'think big'. Any development needs to be complementary to the

existing large scale features of the docks; however, the existing development associated with the dockland infrastructure lacks the scale and impact relevant to the scale of the water bodies themselves.

- 3.174 The Laird Town Plan with its distinctive grid-iron structure gives opportunities to build on and develop the existing town structure to the south. There are opportunities for developing existing vistas and boulevards as well as creating new ones. To the north, the areas of industrial activity are enclosed by the Dock Road and the Kingsway Tunnel access road. This results in isolation and lack of permeability of the area as a whole. In contrast, the area to the south was traditionally laid out as part of the grid iron road layout introduced by William Laird. Although the strong street pattern remains, it is detracted in places by the run down appearance and poor quality of modern industrial/workshop developments.
- 3.175 The high quality 'heritage' areas of the town are generally well protected (through designation) and maintained to retain their character. Users of Birkenhead Park are aware of little outside the confines of the park itself and the surrounding townscape areas are not generally intrusive. The park acts as something of an oasis in a built-up area and the substantial tree belts effectively screen the park boundaries even in the winter months. Hamilton Square also forms a largely 'inward-looking' space with a historic skyline largely uninterrupted by external structures. These historic areas of the town each form a self contained character area.
- 3.176 TCA2 forms an existing buffer between the northern and southern neighbourhoods. Its unique scale and character set it apart from the adjoining areas but there are design opportunities to acknowledge and complement the adjoining townscape character areas.
- 3.177 Three main crossing points to the site linking areas of diverse character (the three road bridges comprise the A5088 Poulton Bridge Road, the A5027 and the A554 Tower Road).
- 3.178 The study area occupies a key location on a number of major transport links including the M53 motorway, local rail network, local/regional ferry services and Mersey tunnels.
- 3.179 Consequently there are opportunities for the creation of a hierarchy of gateways:
- Regional gateway to the Wirral – accessed from the east via the Mersey tunnels and ferries, the south via the A41 and M53 motorway;
 - Urban gateways to Birkenhead and Wallasey; and,
 - Local gateways.
- 3.180 In conclusion, any redevelopment proposals should preserve and enhance attractive character areas, improve areas which are run down (Character detractors), and strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centre as focal points for cultural, leisure, commercial

and retail activities. In assessing the relationship between any future development and the existing environment, attention should be given to height, scale, density and layout and the relationship to surrounding areas, established views and landmark buildings.

Visual Amenity, Strategic Views and Landmarks

- 3.181 The local topography and subsequent intensive development of the wider study area has resulted in limited ground level views, with many linear/axial view corridors dissected by transport routes and built development. The topography does however, provide a sense of visual enclosure and inter-visibility between the Birkenhead and Liverpool conurbation. Wider views are consequently limited to elevated locations including Bidston Hill and more open locations such as the Mersey river frontage.
- 3.182 The consideration of strategic views along the River Mersey has highlighted the imbalance between the skyline and waterfront characters of Liverpool and Birkenhead, as well as the presence of many landmark elements. Views have been analysed from previous studies and the work undertaken by Entec to assess the sensitivity and relevance of strategic views into and across the study area. Further to this, a series of local views appropriate to the Wirral peninsula have also been selected for consideration with relevant consultees.
- 3.183 Redevelopment of the site provides an opportunity to establish new landmarks and strengthen the skyline of the Birkenhead area;

however, development proposals will need to respect valued receptors, strategic and local view corridors and landmark elements. WCPM does consider that there are opportunities to create a landmark development in order to raise the profile of the Wirral Dock system which will complement and balance the rapidly developing waterfront and skyline of Liverpool; however, consultation is required to determine what magnitude of change is acceptable in terms of visual amenity, particularly with the growing scrutiny regarding the visual setting of the World Heritage Site.

The Way Forward

- 3.184 As noted throughout the baseline study, there is still data review, field work and consultation to be undertaken in order to finalise the report. The principal tasks to be progressed, arising from this Landscape, Townscape and Visual Appraisal, include

Consultation:

- 3.185 Consultation with the **World Heritage Site Officer**, to determine the sensitivity of the setting and individual landmark elements contained within the World Heritage Site and the associated 'Buffer Zone'. The World Heritage Officer may also be able to clarify the current stance of UNESCO, and the risk of Liverpool losing 'World Heritage Status'. It will also be important to determine what changes are proposed in relation to the World Heritage Site Management Plan, that may derive through the production of new Supplementary Planning Guidance;

3.186 Consultation with the **Wirral MBC Conservation Officer**, to agree the methodology, approach and selection of photoviewpoints and the sensitivity of landmark elements. This will be required to agree the scope of the baseline study and establish the sensitivity of the townscape and visual receptors identified by WCPM.

3.187 Due to the relevance of the Liverpool skyline, WCPM advise that contact is made with **Liverpool City Council**. Once we have incorporated the comments and recommendations of Wirral MBC and the World Heritage Site Officer, WCPM will be in a strong position to approach the Liverpool City Council Officers to seek agreement on the scope of the baseline study. This work may well coincide with consultation being undertaken by Peel Holdings in relation to the Liverpool Waters scheme proposals; and

3.188 Following consultation with the Local Planning Authorities and the World Heritage Site Officer, an additional meeting may be required with **English Heritage** to agree the final range of receptors, strategic / local views, landmark elements and attributed value / sensitivity. It is at this stage on projects of this scale, that CABE have also been invited to the table.

Further Work Requirements:

3.189 WCPM will need to review and update relevant planning policy and associated guidance at frequent intervals, particularly with regard to

the consideration of other scheme proposals in Birkenhead and Liverpool; and, the emergent SPG on tall buildings within Liverpool. The perceived impacts and baseline study data may well change as development proposals are built-out, affecting the setting, sensitivity and potentially any future impact magnitude in relation to the Wirral Waters proposals;

3.190 To build upon the overview townscape characterisation work undertaken by WCPM and the urban appraisal studies completed by Turley Associates, additional fieldwork is required to refine local townscape character types (TCA's). The fieldwork exercise will enable distinct patterns to be identified and photographic records to be made, in response the TCA text will become more focused and illustrative TCA analysis plans can be prepared;

3.191 Once additional consultation has been undertaken (as set out above), WCPM can finalise the Photoviewpoint Assessment Sheets and corresponding View Cone Analysis plans. Consultation also create the need to revise the selection of principal viewpoints and landmark elements, as well as text revisions to recognise agreed approaches to rating sensitivity;

3.192 To expand upon the visual appraisal work already completed by WCPM, it will be necessary to undertake fieldwork that establishes the visual context of the site itself. This exercise will enable issues such as visual connections and vistas across the site, views out from

the site; and, views and inter-visibility between existing receptors to be established and appraised; and,

3.193 WCPM will also need to agree the scope of the sequential appraisal work with relevant consultees and establish appropriate recording techniques (such as the use of video recording), to incorporate the relevant findings into the baseline study. Fieldwork to appraise the transitory receptor routes will be followed by the production of technical text and illustrative plans.