



LISCARD

Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard: An Integrated Masterplan

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INTRODUCTION



Introducing Liscard

Liscard town centre is the main retail and service centre for Wallasey and North Wirral. The town’s main retail area is focussed on the pedestrianised Liscard Way and covered Cherry Tree Shopping Centre. Along the arterial roads that lead to the central core are a greater number of independent retailers and other business uses such as estate agents, banks, bars and eateries.

The town centre core was significantly redeveloped in the 1960s and has seen limited investment since the 1990s. A number of high profile retailers have left the town in recent decades and vacancy rates are rising. Recognising that this is part of wider changes to the nature and purpose of town centres, the Liscard Integrated Masterplan has been commissioned to shape a new vision for Liscard beyond retail.



The aim of the masterplan is to re-balance the town centre, focusing on the provision of an improved retail offer, along with opportunities for leisure, community and residential uses, and a complementary evening economy; all of which should encourage sustainable development and the growth of diverse independent businesses, re-establishing Liscard as a modern, vibrant and thriving town centre.

Existing Town Centre Boundary as defined in the current Unitary Development Plan



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Masterplan Purpose

The masterplan provides a Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard. It articulates an ambitious vision and a clear framework to drive forward and guide the sustainable economic growth and renewal of Liscard over the next 15 years. It will influence how the Council enables investment in social, economic and environmental regeneration and will inform the emerging Local Plan. The masterplan is not intended as a blueprint, however, and alternative options that support the overall principles of the masterplan will be supported.

The masterplan has been prepared within the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which will undoubtedly have an impact on town centres. The production of this masterplan will therefore play an important role in enabling the Council to have a clear vision in place for Liscard so that a strong case can be put forward for any future development and funding opportunities.

The masterplan is a significant opportunity to reshape Liscard in a way that will improve the experience of residents, businesses and visitors ensuring it is a town centre fit for the future. A well-connected, more accessible and attractive town centre will provide an enhanced focal point and in doing so will play a part in enhancing community wellbeing.



Town Centres - The National Picture

Across Britain, town centres are facing considerable challenges that threaten their future vitality and viability. High Street retailers are being hit hard by online competition, increasing rent prices and high maintenance costs, and as a consequence, many town centres are suffering from falling retail sales, reduced footfall and rising vacancies. The expectations of town centres is also increasing and those that don't have the quality and broader diversity of attractions that customers now expect are increasingly falling off the map.

Faced with these pressures, there is a need for town centres to adapt to the massive changes in shopping habits, global trends and the dynamics that attract people to town centres. There is too much retail floor space in the UK: changing consumer shopping habits have resulted in a need to physically change how town and city centres look. Not only is there too much retail in our urban centres but it is often in poorly configured and designed space and based on a cost model that no longer works for a number of retail operations.

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced potentially permanent effects on society and the economy. Lasting changes could include more people working from home, people travelling less and permanent shop and business closures. The opportunities to re-imagine town centres will need to focus on the space that is made available and unlikely to succeed in its current form and the distinctive needs and aspirations of local people who are more likely to work, shop and socialise within closer proximity to their homes.

Recognising that people visit town centres for a variety of reasons, there needs to be a shift in emphasis, with town centres being restructured from primarily retail areas, towards mixed use places that contain a diversity of uses including other commercial and cultural enterprises, entertainment and leisure, social and community uses, and housing. These uses help to create vibrancy, emphasising the social factor of town centres as places to meet friends, join community activities or simply enjoy sitting and watching everyday life. This can in turn generate an economically beneficial level of footfall that sustains the commercial function of town centres.

The key trends in town centre regeneration can be summarised as:

Fewer 'High Street' shops, more independent traders. As the large chain stores struggle to compete with the growth of online retailing, independent, artisan traders offering a personalised service that cannot be found online have a chance to thrive.

Leisure, food and drink. Shopping has become just one of a range of activities rather than the sole purpose for visits to town and city centres. Consumers are increasingly seeking trips that blend retail with a hospitality opportunity. Food and drink uses also help to retain footfall into the evening.

Community hubs. The provision of public services such as healthcare, social support, education and culture helps to drive footfall in town centres and ensures their relevance to civil society. The re-imagining of town centres from commercial centres to civic centres will put more emphasis on the need for spaces where people can come together with a common purpose.

Town centre living. Housing can help to create a more lived in town centre. The value of town centre living as part of mixed-use town centre development is also being recognised by retail investors and shopping centre owners who are taking a more diverse approach to their assets.

Workspace. Shared office space can support the development of small and medium enterprises that contribute to the wider economy but also bring into town centres a daytime population of workers who use local shops, cafés and restaurants. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may mean that more people chose to work closer to home rather than travel to a large central office.

Health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on how the public realm is used. People are increasingly valuing public space for social interaction and exercise.

Structure of this Report

INTRODUCTION

Introduces Liscard and the local and wider picture with regard to the need for a masterplan

1

LISCARD TODAY

Describes the character of Liscard in more detail

2

A VISION FOR LISCARD

Presents a new ambitious vision for the future of Liscard town centre to take it from a 'Clone Town to a Home Town'

3

CONNECTED TOWN

Sets out the proposals for enhancing movement and connectivity within Liscard town centre

4

SPACES FOR PEOPLE

Describes the proposals for the public realm

5

RENEWING THE CORE

Focuses on the redevelopment and restructuring of the core retail area

6

URBAN VILLAGE

Describes proposals for new housing outside the core retail area

7

COMMUNITY HUB

Sets out the proposal for increased community provision within the town centre

8

DELIVERY

Describes how the masterplan can move forward to implementation

9

LISCARD TODAY



Historic Character

The town centre as experienced today is the product of centuries of human activity. Liscard is an early medieval settlement but became more established as a town centre in the nineteenth century.

The early development of the town followed a linear pattern and centred at the junction of Liscard Road, Seaview Road, Wallasey Road and Manor Road. 'The Old School' (188 Liscard Road) was erected in 1839 and is now Liscard Business Centre. In 1852 a plot of land was purchased in Mill Lane and the foundation stone of their first church in the District, St Alban's, was laid in July 1852. The church is now Grade II listed as is the water tower on Mill Lane, which was developed in 1860.

To the south-east of the town centre Central Park was established adjacent to Liscard Hall, providing a high-quality central green open space for the growing population of the surrounding area. At the turn of the 20th Century, Liscard began to further establish itself as a key centre in the wider area of Wallasey. In 1911, at 53 Seaview Road, the Liscard Electric Palace cinema opened (now Shoemarket). Another 'picture theatre' opened on the corner of Seaview Road and Liscard Village in 1926 (Capitol Buildings, now partly demolished). This prominent building stands in an anchor location at the junction of three major routes through Liscard Village Centre and forms an important focal point for the town.

By the late 1960s the central area of Liscard (bounded by Liscard Road, St. Alban's Road, Wallasey Road and Mill Lane), was redeveloped to create a new shopping precinct with anchor tenants including Marks & Spencer, Tesco and Woolworths, as well as the Dominick House office block and Liscard House residential tower. The central area of the town was pedestrianised becoming Liscard Way, following the creation of a gyratory of roads incorporating St. Alban's Road, Wallasey Road, Mill Lane and the newly created Liscard Crescent. The shopping centre was covered over and reopened as the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre in 1991.

- Photographs:
1. Liscard Electric Palace Cinema (Shoemarket)
 2. Capitol Buildings
 3. St. Alban's Church Hall
 4. 'The Old School' - Liscard Business Centre
 5. The White Lounge - The Beer Keg
 6. St. Alban's Church
 7. The Boot Public House
 8. Liscard Water Tower



Heritage Buildings Location Plan



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Built Character

Seaview Road

- Arterial route and northern gateway to the town centre.
- Terraces of mainly Victorian era commercial buildings (with residential above).
- Commercial function of this street is waning (vacant units).
- ASDA store defines the edge of the town centre boundary but has a weak relationship with the town centre.
- Peripheral nature of Asda is reinforced by commercial roadside uses on the western frontage of Seaview Road.
- Non-designated heritage asset is at No. 53 Seaview Road, formerly Liscard Electric Palace.
- Nodal point where Liscard Way, Wallasey Road and Seaview Road meet is defined by the Wellington Hotel and Capitol Buildings, creating a potentially attractive nodal point.
- Seaview Road Car Park is enclosed to the east by the now vacant Municipal Building (formerly occupied by the Borough Council) and the vacant Liscard Community Centre.
- The Municipal Building is of some architectural interest, especially on Egerton Street.
- Together the car park, Municipal Building and community centre have been identified as a development opportunity.

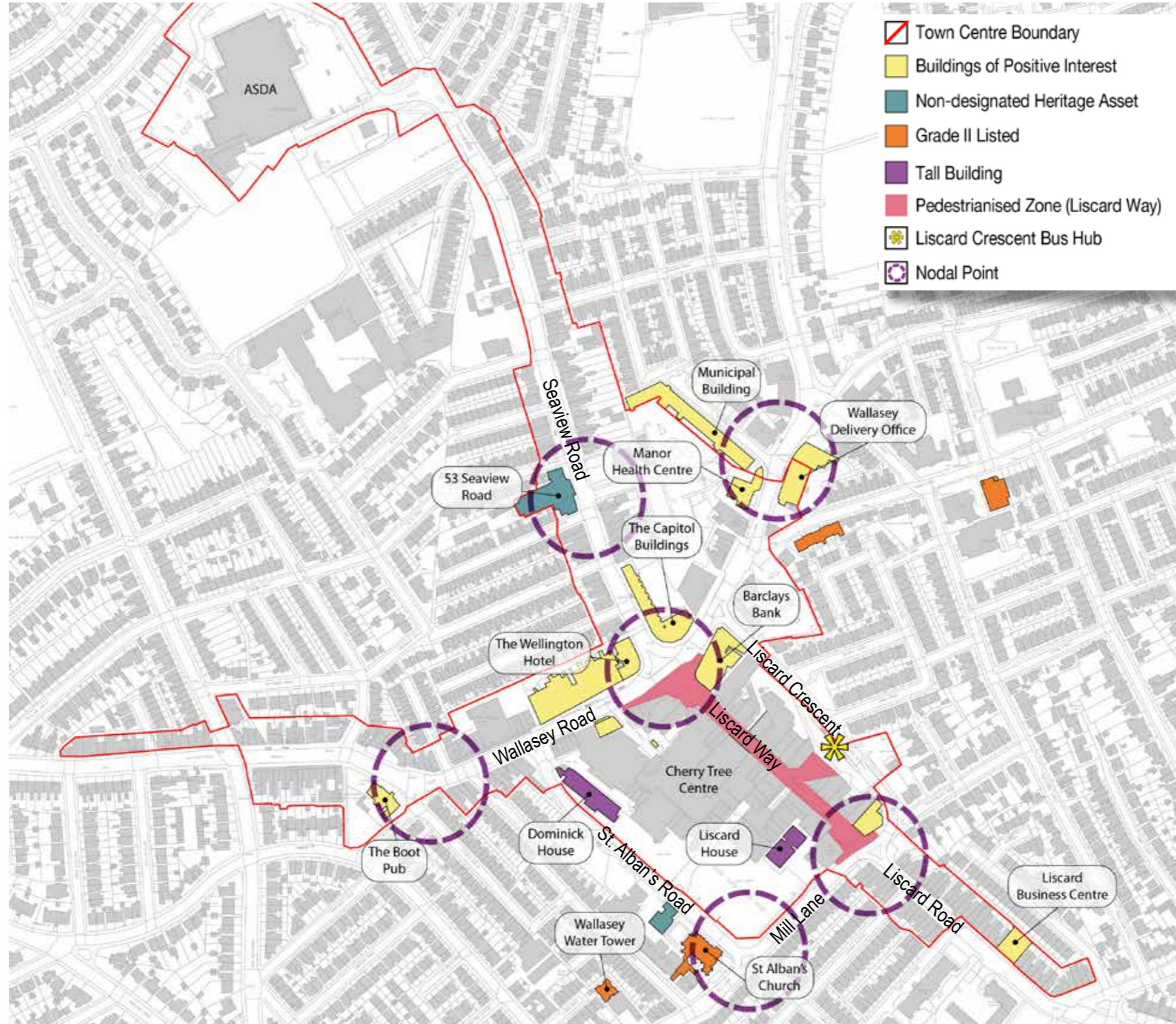
Wallasey Road

- Almost continuous commercial frontage, providing the western gateway to the town centre.
- Commercially more successful along its length.
- Architecturally the area feels better maintained and more interesting, but some properties are in a poorer condition or have been insensitively altered.

Central Area

- Liscard Way and adjacent Cherry Tree Centre form the central shopping area of Liscard.
- Cherry Tree Centre dominates

Built Character Plan



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- the southern side, whilst the northern side is more visually interesting due to a greater mix of (often traditional) properties.
- Some loss of historic shop fronts and features.
- Vacancy rates are generally low.
- Cherry Tree Shopping Centre externally presents a largely unattractive and dated appearance.
- The centre is set back from St. Alban's Road and Mill Lane, with a mix of surface car parking, servicing areas and blank façades, which jars with surrounding heritage buildings.
- Liscard House tower block (13 storeys) is a prominent landmark but is not particularly attractive and it relates poorly at street level, being set back from Mill Lane in a car park.
- Dominick House is another tall building. It is now empty and in need of regeneration.

Liscard Crescent

- Poorly defined route with the rear of properties presenting an unattractive frontage.

Mill Lane

- Wallasey Water Tower (Grade II Listed) forms a distinctive landmark.
- The spire of St. Alban's Church positively contributes to the skyline in this area.
- Frontages on Mill Lane include residential terraces and commercial properties.

Liscard Road

- Southern gateway to the town.
- Terraces of commercial buildings with residential above, rising in density to the centre of the town.
- Buildings in a fair state of repair, most have lost their historic shop fronts and other historic features.
- A number of empty units.
- Liscard Business Centre, a historic building and modern infill development, is a notable feature.

Environmental Character

Seaview Road

- Sufficient pavement width, but uneven with mixed paving provision and cracked surfaces on both sides.
- Car parking along both sides leads to pavement parking.
- Empty units and poor upkeep of buildings impair the visitor experience.

Wallasey Road

- Forms part of Liscard’s main commercial offer.
- Sufficient pavement widths for pedestrian movement.
- Overall quality of the public realm is in need of improvement.
- Lighting is inconsistent and the overuse of bollards and guardrails creates a vehicle-dominated feel.
- Build-outs for bus stops are common along the northern side.
- Opportunities for including extra features, such as street furniture or planting, have been missed.

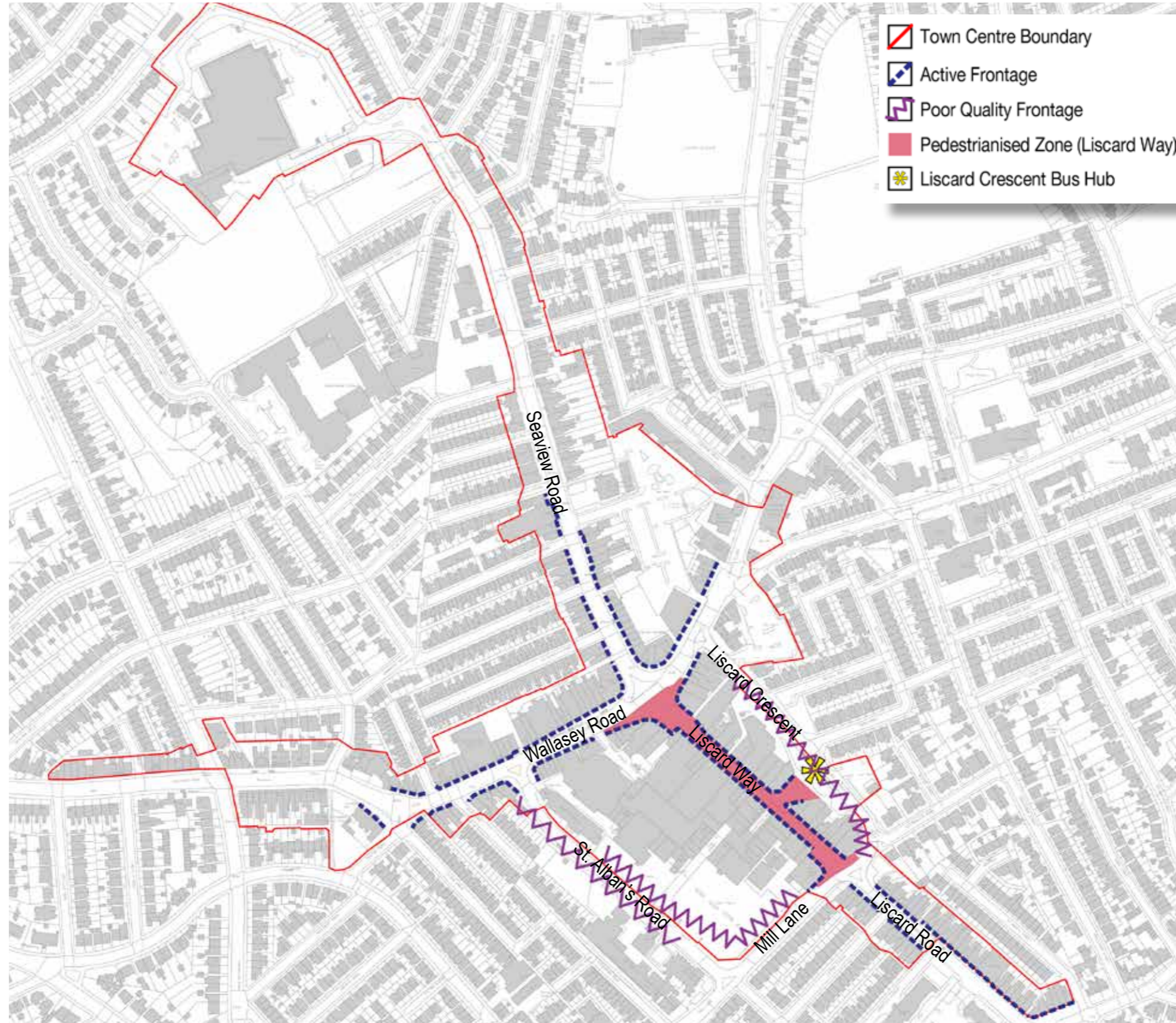
St Alban’s Road

- Car parking fronts this key route and provides little animation or interest.
- Multiple dropped kerbs for car park entrance / exit break up the footway and make the walking experience unpleasant.
- Pavement widths acceptable on the northern side, but narrow on the southern side.
- Lack of active frontages and wayfinding make St. Alban’s Road unappealing.

Liscard Way

- Fronted by retail uses on both sides.
- Good natural surveillance and a mix of active frontages.
- Pedestrianised and last enhanced in the 1990s, now dated.
- Block paved areas are becoming undulating in parts, a number of street trees have been lost, and street furniture and lighting

Environmental Character Plan



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- columns are looking weathered.
- Public realm configuration lacks a positive identity.
- Public realm is underutilised as a space to dwell and enjoy.

Liscard Crescent

- Service areas front key routes.
- Rear servicing area conflicts with residential amenity
- Significant number of visitors to Liscard access town centre here
- Limited controlled crossing points at the bus gyratory.
- Route needs to be realigned / reconfigured to make it more cohesive.

Mill Lane

- Good state of repair, with wide footways and cycle lane provision built in along the northern side
- Tree planting adds to the open and attractive feel of the pedestrian amenity in this area
- Pedestrian links to Liscard Road and Liscard Way are good and desire lines open.

Liscard Road

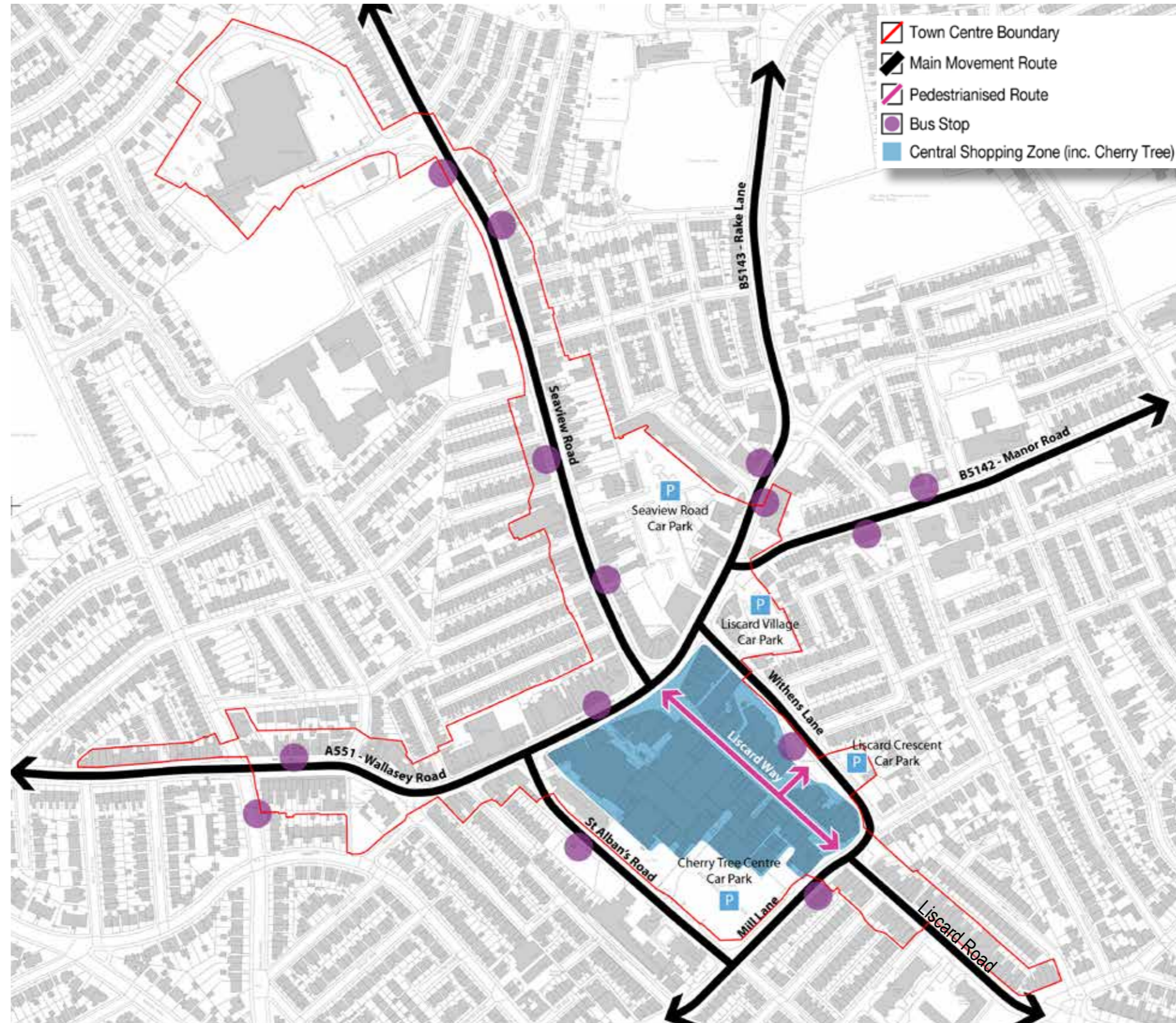
- Unattractive to pedestrians overall.
- Small area of seating and planting is worn and unappealing.
- Car parking given priority, creating difficulties for those of impaired movement.
- Crossing roads is difficult and tactile paving is worn.
- Linkages to the central shopping centre and Central Park are poor.

Access and Movement

Key Issues

- The gyratory experiences high levels of congestion with vehicle speeds often at 10kph (approximately 6mph) or lower. Congestion is at its worst during the Off-Peak and Weekend.
- Significant congestion along Wallasey Road, Liscard Crescent and at the Wallasey Road / Seaview Road / Liscard Crescent signals.
- Seaview Road car park is underused, offering little value to the area.
- The area is dependent on bus travel as the primary practical mode of public transport.
- Rail travel is not a realistic option given there are no railway stations within walking distance of the town centre.
- Pedestrian links between the bus stops and areas they serve are mixed, with poor links to the retail core from stops along St Alban's Road and Mill Lane.
- Taxi provision at Wallasey Road and Liscard Crescent is bounded by guard railing, which restricts pedestrian access.
- There is a distinct lack of cycle infrastructure.
- Central and southern areas are restricted by the one-way system that encircles it. Mill Lane and St Alban's Road have poor permeability, with no crossing provision along the desire lines to the retail uses.
- Liscard Crescent and Wallasey Road have poor pedestrian infrastructure, creating unattractive environments that are difficult to negotiate. There are conflicts with servicing along Liscard Crescent, and there is inadequate footway provision along parts of Wallasey Road.
- Levels of Nitrogen Dioxide above the average annual mean concentration have been recorded on Wallasey Road for the last 6 years and it has been identified as a localised air pollution hotspot, largely due to taxi engine idling.

Access & Movement Plan



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Key Opportunities

- Build on existing relatively high uptake in walking and relatively low uptake in trips by private car, locally.
- Encourage modal shift towards more sustainable modes including walking, bus and cycle.
- Enhance the street scene along Wallasey Road and Liscard Village, following re-provision of servicing.
- Consolidate parking and use the land for other purposes, e.g. mixed use commercial and residential.
- Upgrade bus stops to include Real Time Information (RTI).
- Gyratory layout could be revised to better serve Liscard town centre from a walking, bus access and taxi access perspective, in line with the emerging LCWIP proposals.
- Enhance cycle access, focusing on providing greater priority to cycle movements across the one-way loop and delivering more (and convenient) cycle parking.
- Progress the design of Liscard Way.
- A more efficient traffic and taxi solution throughout the retail core of Liscard town centre can assist with reducing harmful emissions in the area.

Local Perceptions

A Public Perception Study was undertaken by PLACED in October 2019, which highlighted the following issues:

- Anti-social behaviour: There was a feeling that Liscard is safe of a day, but of an evening it becomes a place people do not want to visit. Young people, and in particular those on bikes, are considered to be a key factor in this. Intervention and preventative activity, as well as a greater police presence, were considered critical.
- Shops: Most people were disappointed by the current retail offer, feeling that it had significantly declined over the years and had little diversity. There is an eagerness for some creative thinking, reduced rates and rents, and a quicker turnaround of empty units.
- Sense of the town being overlooked: People frequently referred to other areas, feeling Liscard is ignored or just 'not as good' as its neighbouring towns and cities.
- Limited offer: There is a desire to increase the non-retail offer in the town through events, workshops, activities, festivals and clubs. This includes interventions that will create activity of an evening, which will in turn help to reduce anti-social behaviour and intimidation. Establishing a community centre / hub in one of the empty units was an idea that was raised during discussion.
- Parking: Provision of free parking was felt to be important to revitalise Liscard.

As part of the development of the masterplan a Webinar was held with business and community stakeholders to explore ideas. The key findings were:

- Local people / sense of community spirit is the town's greatest strength.
- The town's appearance is its greatest weakness.
- A community focal point, followed by unique businesses and public spaces would make Liscard a more distinctive destination.
- There was very strong preference for a community hub and bringing new uses into the town centre.



S

Strengths



- Main retail and service centre for Wallasey
- Long-standing shopping centre
- 98.2% retention rate in convenience retail sector
- Distinctive independent retailers
- Centre for banking
- Emerging evening economy on Wallasey Road
- Good bus links to surrounding areas and towns
- Engaged and active business and residential communities

W

Weaknesses



- Loss of many key retailers and a retail offer now focused on 'value' end of the market
- Limited leisure offer and inactivity during the evening
- Public realm looks tired
- Dated appearance of Cherry Tree Centre
- Lack of greenery and character in public spaces
- Empty units, particularly on Seaview Road and Liscard Road
- Poor building upkeep and shop signage

O

Opportunities



- Diversification through changes of use
- Develop underused sites and densify the town centre to create more activity
- Create more focal points and dwell spaces
- Improve pedestrian connectivity to adjacent communities
- Expansion of cycle network through the town centre (LCWIP)
- Housing need identified in local plan
- Promoting sustainable development
- Making more of the town's heritage and distinctiveness

T

Threats



- The nature of High Streets is intrinsically changing with advances in technology and consumer behaviour
- Business closures due to the impact of COVID-19
- Negative impacts of retail servicing on residential amenity
- Impact of crime and ASB on the desirability of the town centre
- Air pollution hotspot on Wallasey Road
- Lack of railway connectivity



3

A VISION FOR LISCARD



Towards a Vision

In 2004 the New Economics Foundation produced its report “Clone Town Britain: The Loss of Local Identity on the Nation’s High Streets.” The report identified the ‘assault on the character of town centres’ and their growing homogenisation through the loss of ‘real’ local shops and distinctive shop fronts to make way for near-identical chain stores. In the intervening period, however, people’s shopping habits have changed considerably and many once well-known chains common to towns like Liscard have either rationalised their portfolio away from second and third tier towns (Marks & Spencer) or disappeared entirely (Woolworths).

Potential lasting changes following the COVID-19 pandemic are only more likely to accelerate this process, leading to more store closures and an oversupply of floorspace, but whilst the well documented ‘death of the high street’ is potentially a threat to the social and economic vitality of Liscard, it also provides a fundamental opportunity to re-imagine a new type of town centre that is more locally distinctive, more interesting and more community focused; less of a ‘clone’ and ‘more Liscard.’

A town that is:

- **More diverse** – retaining a good range of retail in the town centre, but balancing this with a much wider range of uses including leisure, residential and workspace.
- **More people focused** – reducing the impact of traffic and making the town centre easier to navigate from surrounding communities by foot, cycle and public transport.
- **More social** – creating spaces (both internal and external) that bring people together and enliven the town centre both by day and into the evening.
- **More attractive** – enhancing the appearance of the town and the quality of spaces including more green infrastructure and colour.

These aspirations provide the foundations for the Vision for Liscard.

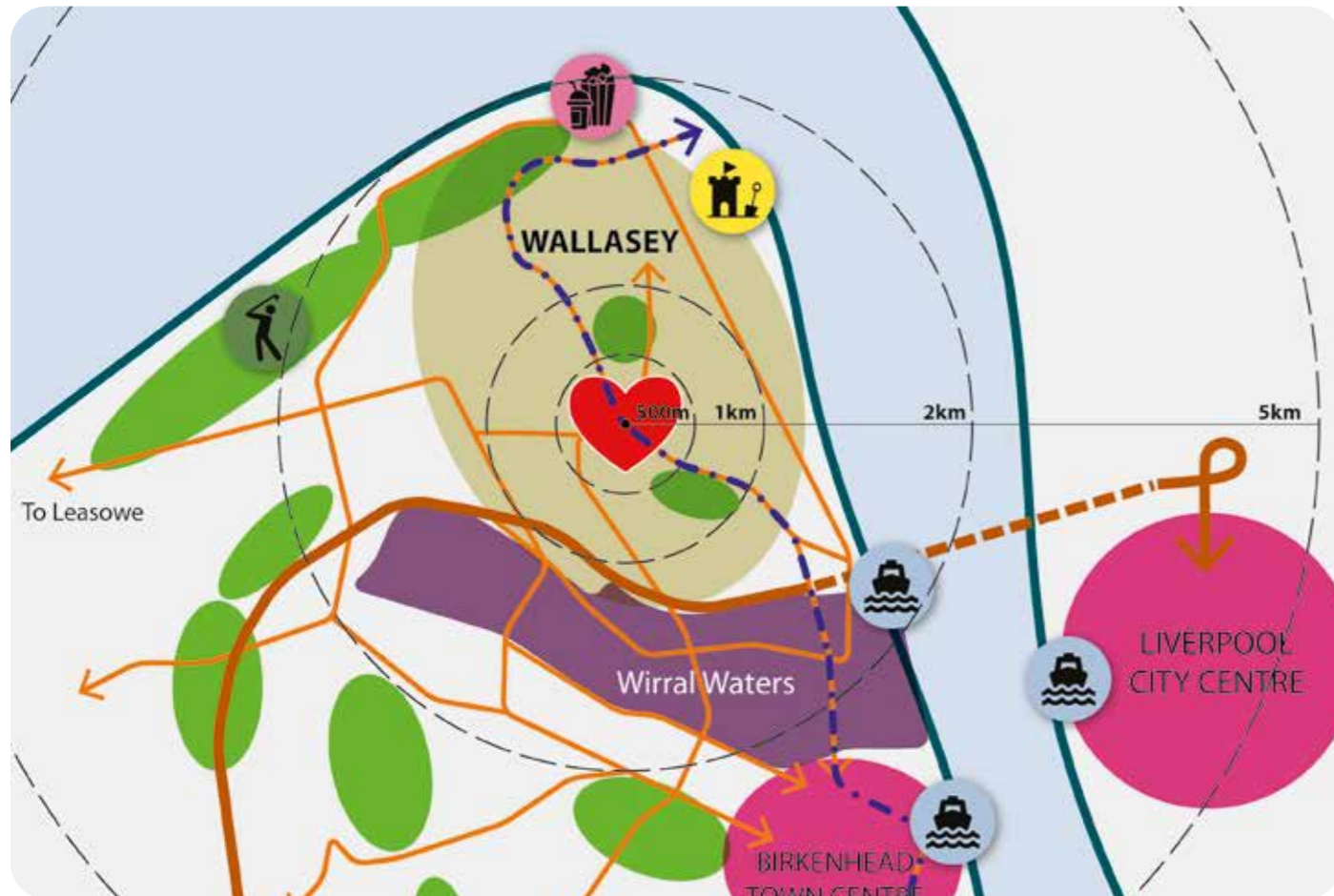


Our Vision

Liscard town centre is loved by local people because it is:

- Where everyone feels welcome
- Where people can live, work and play
- Where there is a strong sense of local identity
- Where people can come together

Liscard is the HEART of the community



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Masterplan Themes

Five masterplan themes support the vision and provide the framework for 19 masterplan projects. The themes are:

- **Connected Town** - creating a more accessible Town Centre.
- **Spaces for People** - forming a Town Centre that is more people focused.
- **Renewing the Core** - establishing a more diverse Town Centre.
- **Urban Village** - making the Town Centre more 'lived in'.
- **Community Hub** - providing local people with a focal point in the Town Centre.



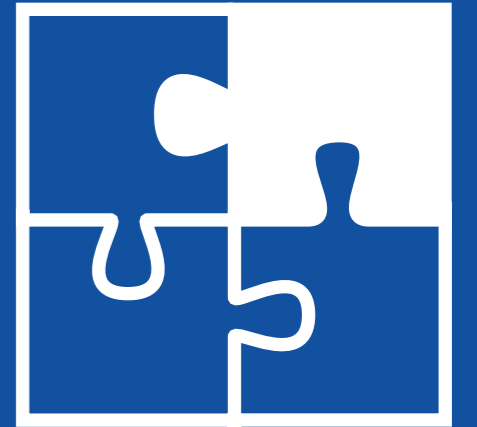
The Masterplan





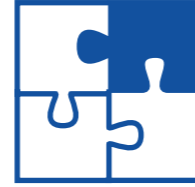
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CONNECTED TOWN



PROJECTS FOR A BETTER CONNECTED
TOWN CENTRE

CT01 - The Gyratory



What is the project?

This project involves the re-organisation of roads that form the gyratory around the town centre – Liscard Crescent, Mill Lane, St. Alban's Road and Wallasey Road. The works would involve reducing the amount of space given over to vehicles to create more space for pedestrians, cyclists and public realm. Existing road capacity would be retained at the junctions with the main traffic lanes reduced from two lanes to one. The proposal also includes the redesign of the bus layover area to create a more efficient layout in response to the overall aim of maximising pedestrian space.

Why is this project proposed?

We want to create a more walkable and cycle friendly town centre that is better connected to adjoining communities. The current road layout creates a poor environment for pedestrians and cyclists and severs the town centre core from the rest of Liscard. By reducing road space we can widen pavements and form segregated cycle lanes that will help to create safer and calmer streets. This reclaimed space will also increase the capacity for green infrastructure and public realm, thus making the town centre a more attractive and convivial place.

What will the project deliver?

The narrowing of roadway provides additional space that can be utilised in response to particular issues and opportunities:

Liscard Crescent: the narrowing of the carriageway provides the space to incorporate the proposed LCWIP, a high-quality cycleway that will connect New Brighton and Birkenhead and is proposed to pass through Liscard town centre. By accommodating this link on Liscard Crescent the route can avoid Liscard Way, reducing current conflicts between cyclists and shoppers, so that Liscard Way can be a safer and more comfortable space for pedestrians. The reduction in carriageway space also provides the ability to set aside more pavement space on the southern side of the road where currently there is no clearly defined space for pedestrians. Finally, by relocating the bus layover area into a more efficient format more space can be created around the Mother Redcap statue to expand this space into a civic square.

Mill Lane: widened pavements can be formed to the northern side of the road with on-street car parking and bus provision retained on the southern side. The additional space can provide better separation of the current walking and cycle route and the ability to incorporate a two-way cycle route should cycle provision be further extended beyond the LCWIP.

St. Alban's Road: the space gained from the carriageway can provide additional on-street car parking (potentially also EV charging points), as well as wider pavements and provision for landscaping and street tree planting, which can screen servicing areas.

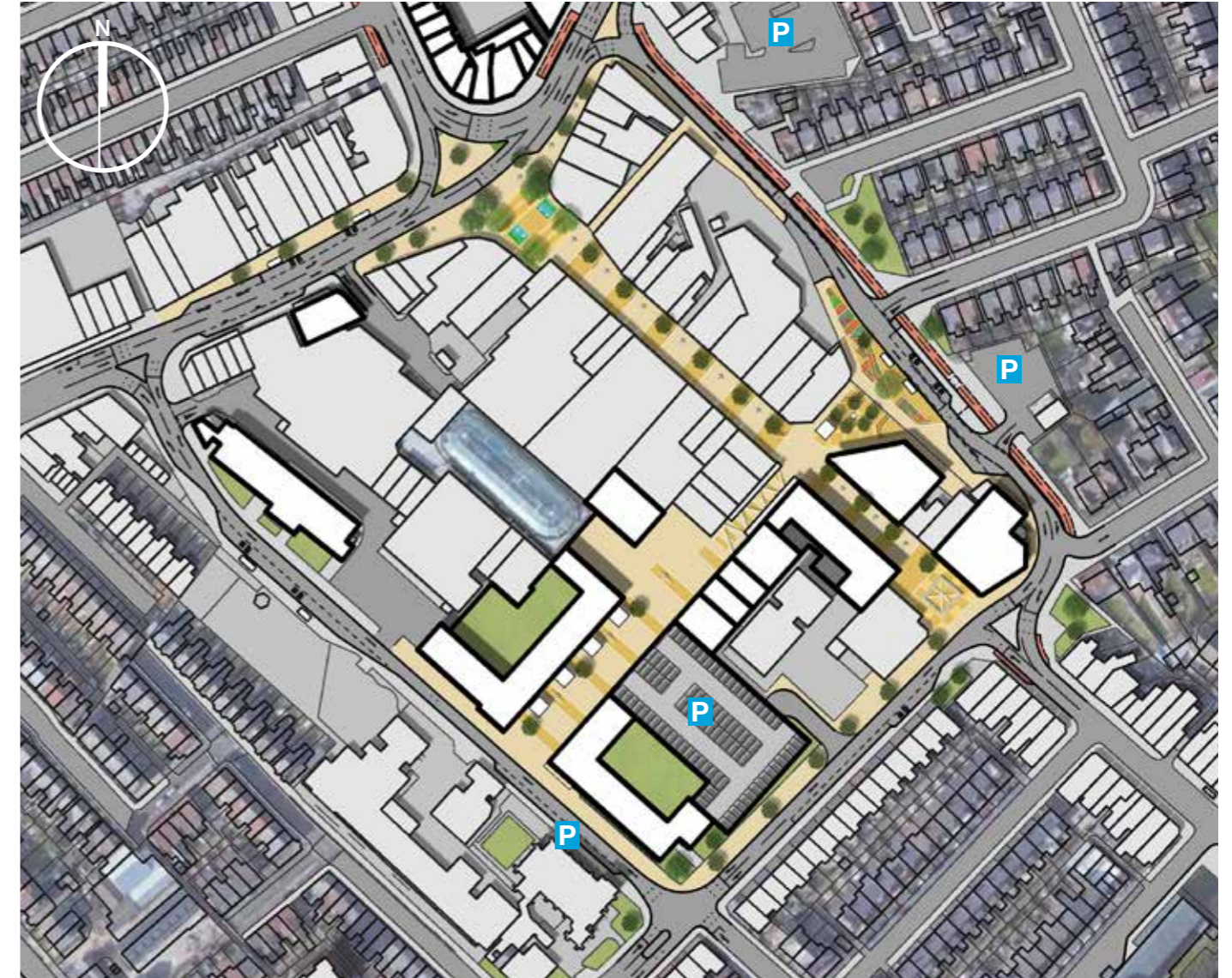
Wallasey Road: the northern and southern pavements can be widened in certain areas to create more spill-out space for adjacent properties. The north side of the road benefits from a southerly aspect, which should make it attractive for outdoor seating.

The proposals clearly reduce vehicular capacity, but this is part of a transition towards promoting sustainable transport over the private car in response to the Climate Emergency and the health and wellbeing of local residents. Reduced vehicular capacity is likely to encourage through traffic to take different routes, so there will need to be wider mitigation measures imposed on surrounding local roads to prevent rat running. Highway designs are illustrative and would be subject to further detailed design work.

Summary

- Liscard Crescent, Mill Lane and St. Alban's Road reduced to a single carriageway.
- Dual carriageway arrangement retained at junctions.
- Upgraded crossings for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- Off road cycle route and widened pavements provided on Liscard Crescent.
- Pavements widened on Wallasey Road, Mill Lane and St. Alban's Road.
- New off-street car parking provided on St. Alban's Road.

The Gyratory



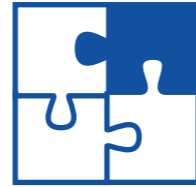
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Liscard Crescent before and after



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CT02 - LCWIP Cycle Route



What is the project?

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) is progressing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) that is developing a cohesive network of high standard active travel routes across the region. Liscard is identified for improvement under Phase 2 of the scheme, as part of a link between New Brighton and Birkenhead. Under this phase of the LCWIP, a two-way cycle corridor is proposed that extends along Seaview Road in the north to Liscard Road in the south.

Why is this project proposed?

We want people to be able to walk and cycle for short journeys, but for this people need suitable routes, which requires improving the design of roads so that people can walk and cycle from where they live to where they want to go. This is not just about people who already walk and cycle, but those people who would and could do so with more suitable roads, footways and cycleways. Walking and cycling has many benefits, from improved mental and physical health to improved air quality and reduced congestion.

What will the project deliver?

The LCRCA are currently developing the wider LCWIP route. The project aims to deliver a high-quality segregated cycleway between New Brighton and Birkenhead subject to road widths and other constraints. The masterplan shows the route running along Seaview Road on the western side of the carriageway. The route then crosses Seaview Road and Liscard Village to run along Liscard Crescent before joining Liscard Road with the Liscard Crescent section being designed as part of the overall redesign of the gyratory requiring the closure of access to the Liscard Village car park from Liscard Crescent and the relocation of the entrance to the Liscard Crescent car park. The LCWIP proposals are provisional and subject to further design development and consultation. Any proposals that are brought forward for Liscard Crescent will need to reflect the final agreed route.

LCWIP alignment in Liscard Town Centre



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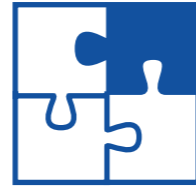
Summary

- New dual carriageway off-road cycleway through Liscard Town Centre.
- Cycleway forms part of a wider route connecting New Brighton to Birkenhead.

Segregated cycle lane precedents



CT03 - Parking



What is the project?

The town centre currently has car parking provision in the following locations:

- Cherry Tree Centre Car Park – 254 spaces + 8 disabled spaces
- Seaview Road Car Park – 184 spaces + 7 disabled
- Liscard Village Car Park – 76 spaces + 2 disabled
- Liscard Crescent Car Park – 15 spaces + 5 disabled

The overall amount of car parking should seek to meet the needs of those living, working and visiting in the town centre while supporting a move towards walking, cycling and public transport usage. It is proposed that the Seaview Road car park will be developed as part of a high-quality housing scheme and that the amount of car parking would be retained at the Cherry Tree Centre, however, this would be re-provided as a multi-storey car park to release land for redevelopment. It is also proposed to provide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points and to upgrade cycle parking provision in the town centre.

Why is this project proposed?

Whilst we want more people to visit the town centre by foot, cycle and bus, it is accepted that people will still choose to come to Liscard by car. It is essential that the town centre has the right type and amount of car parking including electric vehicle charging as society transitions to electric vehicles. There is also a need to provide high-quality cycle parking to encourage cycling more generally. The Seaview Road Car Park has low patronage, which is considered to be due to its proximity in relation to the Town Centre and associated inconvenience. The Cherry Tree Centre Car Park is more centrally located and, by re-providing a multi-storey car park, there is scope to retain or even increase the amount of car parking as appropriate to the scale of the final redevelopment. Future parking provision at the Liscard Village and Liscard Crescent car parks will be considered as part of a future review of Council car parks and should take into account the potential for new housing development in the town centre to increase footfall and reduce the need for trips by car.

What will the project deliver?

The amount of car parking at the Cherry Tree Centre will be retained or increased as part of the redevelopment of the centre. The masterplan shows a three storey car park (two storeys plus rooftop car parking), which would provide a similar amount of parking at c.250 spaces. A small amount of additional on-street car parking can be accommodated as part of the redesign of St Alban's Road. All car parks will need to provide an increasing amount of EV charging points as uptake of electric vehicles increases. It is also proposed that the Cherry Tree Centre accommodates a cycle hub. This would predominately provide secure, covered cycle parking with the scope for additional facilities such as lockers and potentially shower / changing facilities.

Summary

- New multi-storey car park (c.250 spaces) to replace Cherry Tree surface car park.
- Seaview Road car park to be developed.
- Provision of EV charging points.
- Town Centre Cycle Hub.

Existing Car Parking Location Plan



A. Cherry Tree Centre Car Park
C. Seaview Road Car Park

B. Liscard Village Car Park
D. Liscard Crescent Car Park



5

SPACES FOR PEOPLE



PROJECTS FOR A MORE PEOPLE-
FOCUSED TOWN CENTRE



SP01 - Liscard Way

What is the project?

Liscard Way is the main public space within the town centre core. The proposals are to comprehensively redesign the public realm with new paving, lighting, street furniture and green infrastructure.

Why is this project proposed?

Liscard Way was last updated in the early 1990s and today it is looking very tired, which creates a poor impression for the town. Block paved areas are becoming undulating in parts, a number of street trees have been lost, and street furniture and lighting columns are looking weathered. The configuration of the public realm including the location of street furniture and signage lacks a positive identity and consequently the public realm is underutilised as a space to dwell and enjoy. By completely redesigning Liscard Way, including design features to deter cyclists, the aim is to make it feel less like a thoroughfare and more like an attractive and convivial space that encourages people to shop and visit the town.

What will the project deliver?

Liscard Way will be retained as a pedestrianised space with cyclists encouraged to use the LCWIP cycle route so there is more space for pedestrians and opportunities to dwell. The proposals include:

- Green infrastructure – planting of new appropriate tree species and retention of healthy mature trees, along with complementary shrub planting to soften the public realm, provide shelter, colour and visual interest.
- Street furniture – including comfortable seating to encourage people to stop and enjoy their environment, increasing the potential for a varied commercial offer (e.g. new food and drink uses).
- Paving – the full upgrade of street surfaces to create an accessible space for all and a high-quality appearance.
- Lighting – a mix of general lighting to create a safe evening environment and accent lighting to provide visual interest.



Liscard Way



Liscard Way Visualisation



Summary

- c.3,300m² of upgraded public realm.
- New street lighting.
- New street furniture including seating.
- A mix of retained and new planting.



SP02 - Mother Redcap Place

What is the project?

There is an existing area of public realm between Liscard Way and the bus stops on Liscard Crescent with the Mother Redcap statue at its centre. The proposals are to rationalise the bus stops to expand this space into a civic square.

Why is this project proposed?

There are currently few public spaces in the town centre. Whilst this area is currently a square of sorts it could be so much better. It forms a key gateway to the town by bus and could also provide an enhanced east – west route through the town centre as part of the proposals for the Cherry Tree Centre. The Mother Redcap statue is currently the sole piece of public art in the town and there is potential to create more of a focal point for the town centre and enhance opportunities for civic pride.

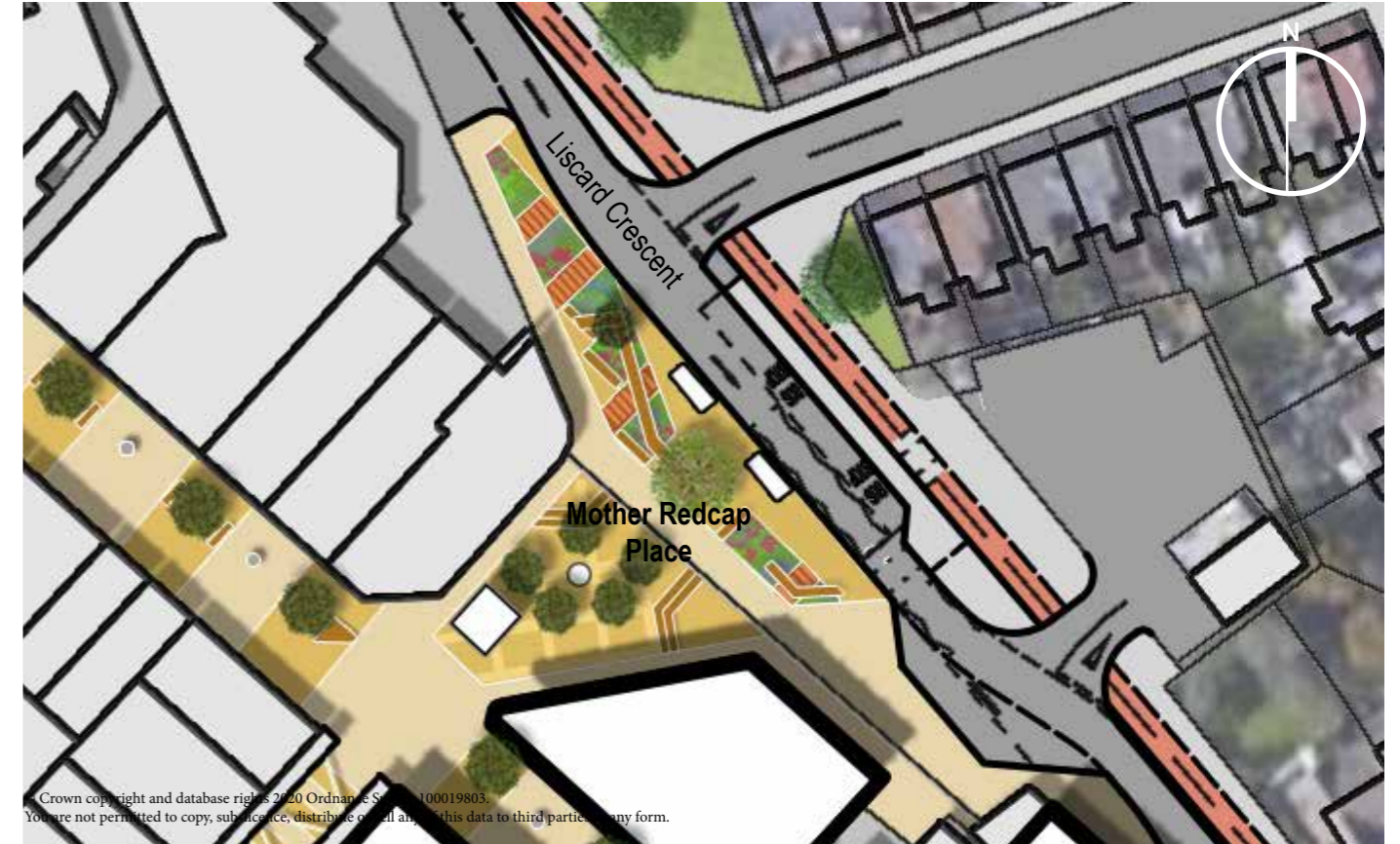
What will the project deliver?

The aim is to expand the public realm and create a high-quality civic square. The proposals include:

- Mother Redcap – retention (potential relocation) of the statue within an enhanced setting.
- History / storytelling through the public realm – new paving and street furniture with unique designs that relate to Liscard’s history.
- Seating - removal of existing benches and replacement with better quality street furniture and a more varied offer of seating options.
- Green infrastructure - planting of new appropriate tree species and retention of healthy mature trees, along with complementary shrub planting to soften the public realm, provide shelter, colour and visual interest.
- Lighting – a mix of general lighting to create a safe evening environment and accent lighting to provide visual interest.



Mother Redcap Place Plan



Precedent Images



Summary

- c.500m² of upgraded public realm.
- New seating and street furniture.
- A mix of retained and new planting.
- New street and accent lighting.



SP03 - Gateways

What is the project?

The main approaches to Liscard Town Centre form two gateway areas. From the north the junction of Seaview Road, Wallasey Road, Liscard Village and Liscard Way is a focal point and from the south the junction of Liscard Road, Mill Lane and Liscard Way forms another gateway. It is proposed to enhance the arrival experience into the town centre with new public realm features in these locations.



Why is this project proposed?

As with many areas of the town centre, the public realm is dated and tired. Visually prominent from Seaview Road to the north and Liscard Road to the south, these two spaces act as important markers for the town centre. The proposals will provide a better environment for visitors to the town centre and are also an opportunity to 'advertise' the town centre to passing traffic. By creating new high-quality and distinctive features the aim is to form a new positive impression of Liscard and encourage more people to visit the town centre.

What will the project deliver?

The gateway proposals will be designed within the overall theme and palette of Liscard Way with each having a unique feature to create distinctiveness and diversity. The main spaces will focus on Liscard Way with new paving, street furniture and green infrastructure, but designs should bleed out into the wider junction to maximise impact.

Northern gateway (junction of Seaview Road, Wallasey Road, Liscard Village and Liscard Way) – the proposal should include the retention of appropriate tree species, potentially with a water feature which would serve to drown out traffic noise and create a calmer environment.

Southern gateway (junction of Liscard Road, Mill Lane and Liscard Way) – the proposal includes the replacement of the existing gateway signage, potentially with a new sculptural / lighting feature.

Summary

- New and distinctive feature spaces at either end of Liscard Way.
- Potential to incorporate water, sculpture, lighting and signage.
- New street furniture and green infrastructure.
- New accent lighting.

Gateways Plan



Precedent Images





SP04 - Wallasey Road

What is the project?

Wallasey Road is one of the main arterial routes into the town centre and is becoming a focus for food and drink outlets and the evening economy. As part of the widening of pavement areas through the works to the gyratory, the proposal is to create an enhanced setting for outdoor café culture.

Why is this project proposed?

The overall quality of the public realm is in need of improvement. Surfacing materials vary in terms of quality and condition, lighting is inconsistent and the overuse of bollards and guardrails creates an environment that feels unappealing and vehicle-dominated. The widening of pavements and new public realm will create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians and enhanced impression of the town centre within this key location.

What will the project deliver?

The proposal includes the complete upgrade of the public realm between St Alban's Road and Seaview Road to include:

- Widened pavements – to provide pedestrians with more circulation space and to encourage spill-out cafe seating.
- Paving – the full upgrade of street surfaces to create an accessible space for all and a high-quality appearance.
- Lighting – a mix of general lighting to create a safe evening environment and accent lighting to provide visual interest.
- Green infrastructure – planting of new appropriate tree species, along with complementary shrub planting to soften the public realm, provide shelter, colour and visual interest.

There is also further scope to extend these improvements to the rest of Wallasey Road, through new paving, street furniture and green infrastructure.



Wallasey Road Plan



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Precedent Images



Summary

- Widened pavements with upgraded paving.
- Enhanced lighting.
- New street furniture.
- New planting.



SP05 - Tower Place

What is the project?

Tower Place is a new street and open space that would be formed as part of the redevelopment of the Cherry Tree Centre. The space is shaped by extending the existing Greenfield Way mall to St. Alban's Road and creating an enlarged public square outside Cherry Square.

Why is this project proposed?

Liscard currently has few public spaces, with the main thoroughfare of Liscard Way being the only focal point in the town centre. By extending Greenfield Way and opening it out to form a square there is scope to create a new multi-use space that would provide a stage for different activities that will enhance the vibrancy of the town centre including events, outdoor markets and food and drink spill out areas. This location also provides the opportunity to enhance connections to Cherry Square, which is a key asset in the form of a significant covered space, but is largely hidden from the rest of the town centre. The street will form a continuous east – west connection across the town centre between St Alban's Road and Liscard Crescent, which will improve pedestrian access to town centre from adjacent communities.

What will the project deliver?

Tower Place will form a direct connection between Liscard Way and St. Alban's Road, opening up views of Liscard's historic water tower, which will form an interesting setting and enhanced sense of place. Tower Place will include:

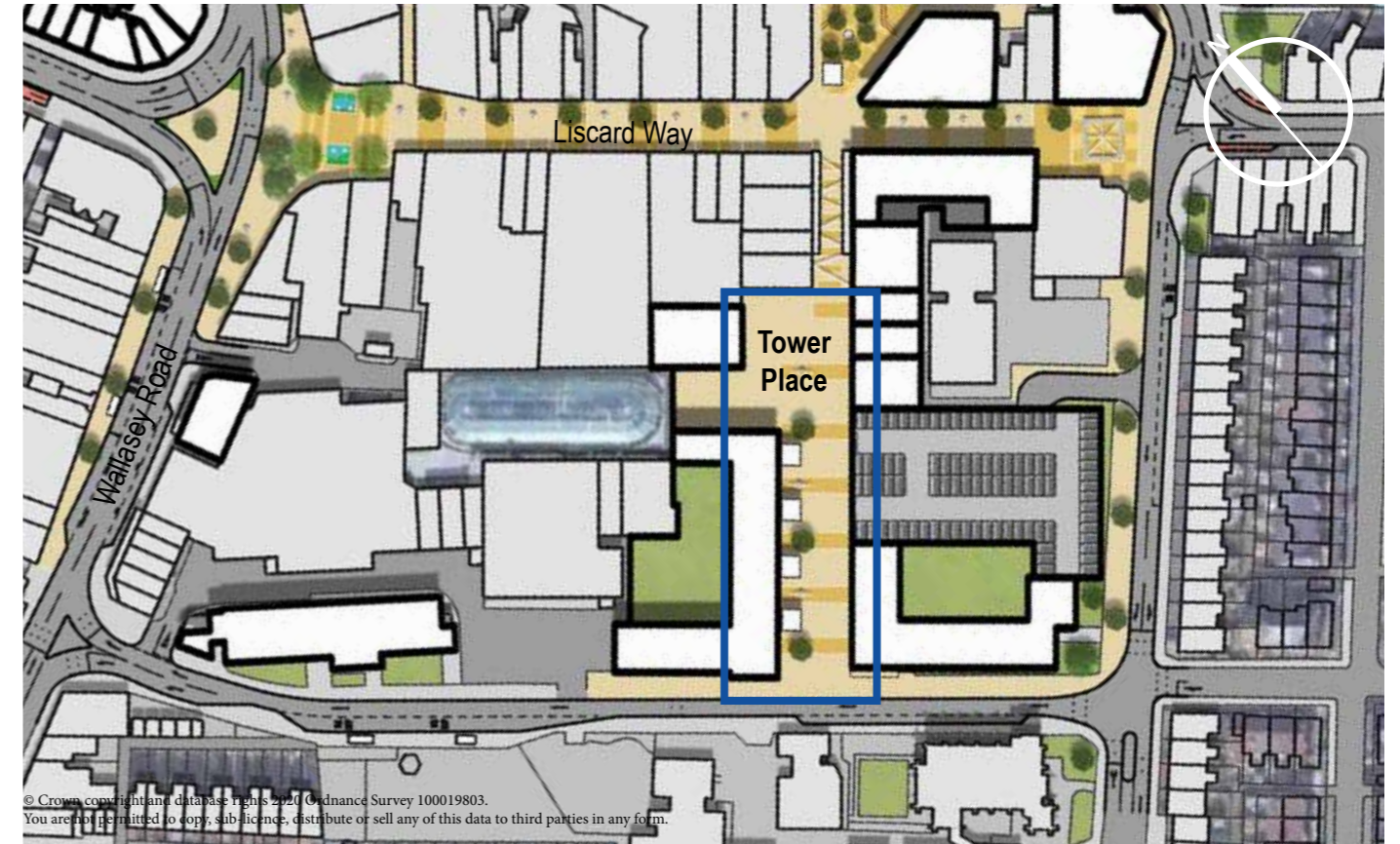
- High-quality paving, street furniture, street and accent lighting and green infrastructure.
- A flexible open space that can be used for events and market traders with the necessary utilities infrastructure.



Summary

- New town centre street and square (c.1,000m²).
- High-quality paving, street furniture, street and accent lighting and green infrastructure.
- A flexible open space that can be used for events.

Tower Place Location



Tower Place Visualisation





SP06 - Lighting Strategy

What is the project?

As part of the upgrade of the public realm and the enhancement of the town more generally, there is a particular opportunity to light up the town. This includes improved street lighting, but also accent lighting and other lighting effects. A lighting strategy would be commissioned to identify the issues and opportunities for lighting, exploring the potential for seasonal and festive lighting and the scope for a lighting festival in the town centre.

Why is this project proposed?

People have commented that they feel that the town centre is not a welcoming place to visit at night - sensitively deployed street lighting can lead to reductions in crime and fear of crime, and increase pedestrian street use after dark. Creative lighting can also create a more distinctive and special environment that further encourages the development of the evening economy.

What will the project deliver?

The lighting strategy will develop a series of design principles relating to lighting and will include the design of specific lighting schemes across the town centre. The strategy will identify ways for people to take more notice of the heritage and features of the town centre, create opportunities for play and interaction, enhance feelings of safety and improve wayfinding. Particular opportunities include:

- Liscard Way / Tower Place / Mother Redcap Place.
- The northern and southern gateways.
- Feature buildings such as the Water Tower.
- Arterial routes into the town centre, e.g. Seaview Road.

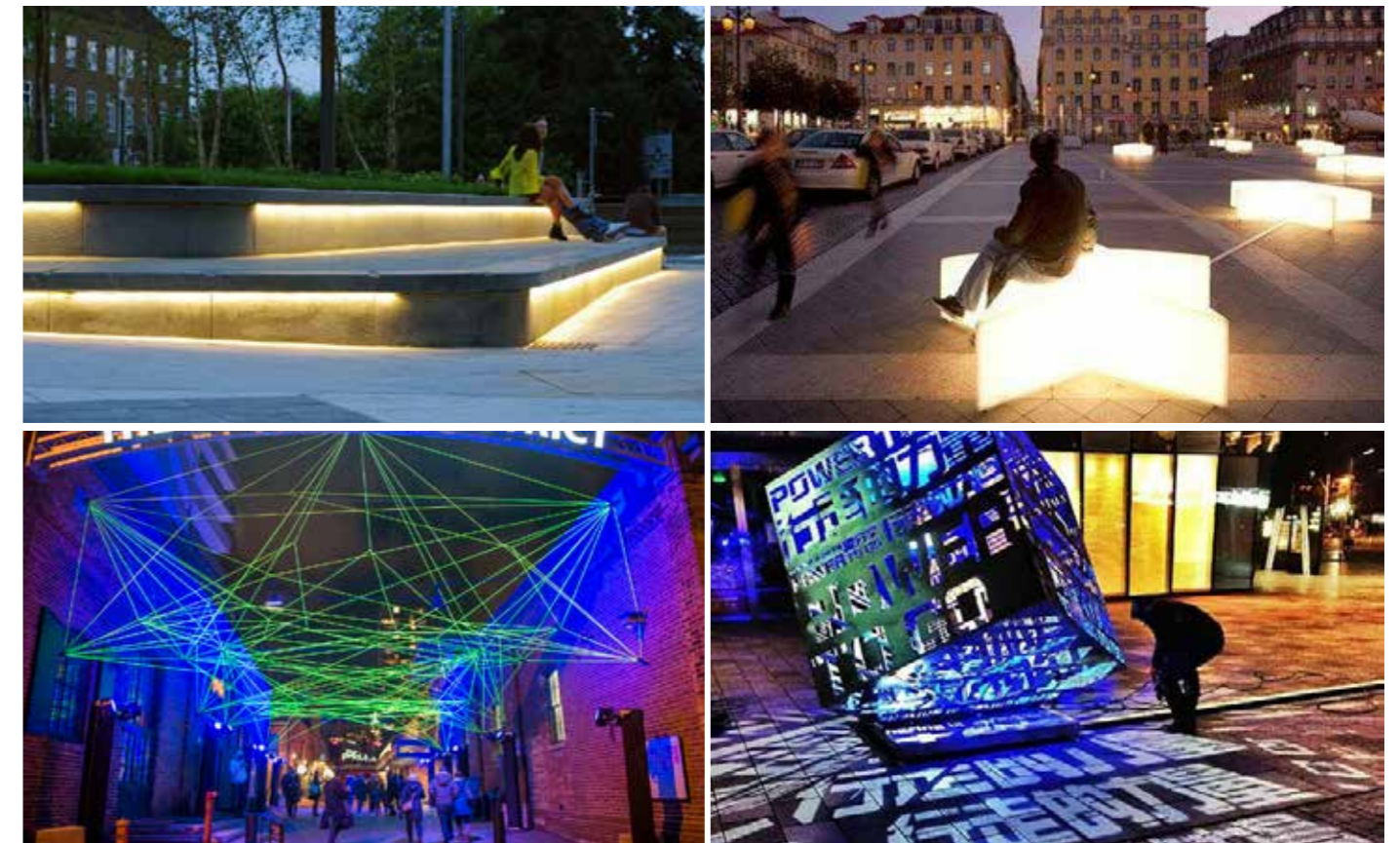
Summary

- A Lighting Strategy to identify opportunities to enhance street and accent lighting.
- Strategy to inform public realm proposals.
- Strategy to include seasonal and festive lighting opportunities.
- Strategy to include opportunities to light buildings and emphasise distinctiveness.

Lighting opportunities



Precedent Images



SP07 - Green Infrastructure



What is the project?

Green infrastructure is the overall term to describe a network of natural elements such as trees, other forms of vegetation and planting, green space and water features such as rivers and canals. As part of the enhancement of the town centre there is scope to increase the amount of green infrastructure and to improve its quality through a green infrastructure strategy that would be used to inform any redesign of the public realm as well as other opportunities.

Why is this project proposed?

Green infrastructure can provide multiple benefits. It can support people's mental and physical health, encourage active travel, cool urban areas during heat waves, create a more attractive place that attracts consumers and investment, reduce water run-off during flash flooding, provide carbon storage and sustainable drainage. The extent to which green infrastructure provides these benefits depends on how it is designed and maintained, meaning there is a need for an overall strategy.

What will the project deliver?

The green infrastructure strategy will develop the principles for increasing the amount and quality of green infrastructure in the town centre. It will identify a series of projects and proposals including:

- Planting proposals for new and existing spaces, e.g. Liscard Way, Tower Place.
- Identification of opportunities for street tree planting, e.g. St. Alban's Road, Mill Lane.
- Improvements to green areas in the town, e.g. St. Alban's Church grounds, Liscard Crescent.
- Opportunities for green walls, planters, hanging baskets etc.

Summary

- A Green Infrastructure Strategy to identify opportunities to enhance coverage in the town centre.
- Strategy to inform public realm proposals for key public spaces and arterial routes.

Existing Condition



Precedent Images





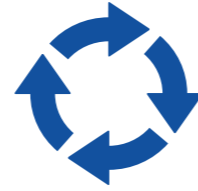
6

RENEWING THE CORE



PROJECTS FOR A MORE DIVERSE TOWN CENTRE

TC01 - Cherry Tree Centre



What is the project?

The Cherry Tree Centre is the town's main retail destination, comprising key anchor stores such as Primark and Wilko and other national and independent retailers. It is proposed to restructure part of the Cherry Tree Centre to bring in new uses and activities into the town centre.

Why is this project proposed?

The Cherry Tree Shopping Centre occupies a prominent central position in the town. The centre was modernised in 1991 to form an indoor mall, but externally it presents a largely unattractive and dated appearance. The centre has commercial frontage to Liscard Way and Wallasey Road, but is set back from St. Alban's Road and Mill Lane, presenting a mix of surface car parking, servicing areas and blank façades, forming a hole in the fabric of the town, which jars with surrounding buildings including the Grade II listed St. Alban's Church and St. Alban's Hall. There is scope to better use this land for new activity generating uses and to create an enhanced urban structure with better pedestrian permeability, along with the overall enhancement and modernisation of the Cherry Tree Centre.

What will the project deliver?

Two different options have been explored as part of the masterplan, but broadly the key opportunities are:

- Demolition of the units at the end of Greenfield Way to create a new street and public space (Tower Place) between Liscard Way and St. Alban's Road.
- Development of a multi-storey car park to rationalise all car parking into one space, potentially including an element of residential car parking.
- Development of a new anchor food store and other retail units at ground level to animate and enclose Tower Place.
- A new entrance into Cherry Square from Tower Place.
- Upper floor residential (assume three floors).

Option 1 retains the existing servicing ramp from St Alban's Road, which provides reduced scope for new development.

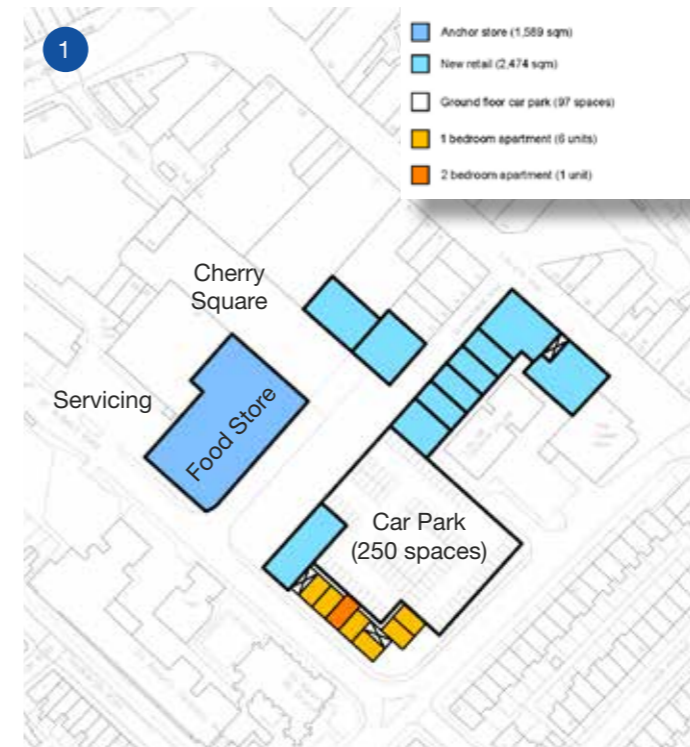
Option 2 assumes an alternative servicing arrangement with an at-grade servicing area from St Alban's Road with goods trolled from there to retail units. This option provides the scope to demolish the ramp and create mixed use development either side of Tower Place.

These are just options to demonstrate the potential of the site for comprehensive regeneration - alternative schemes that support the broad principles of the masterplan would be supported.

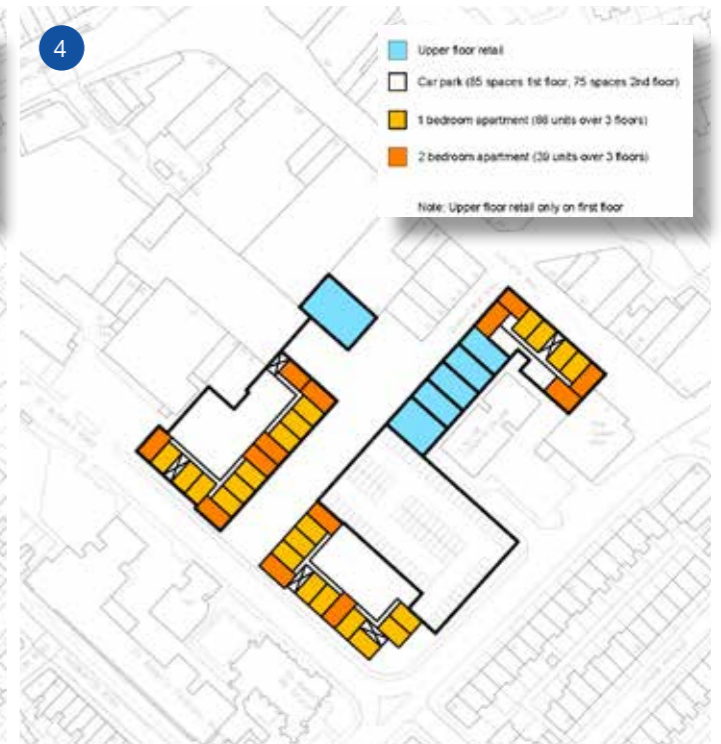
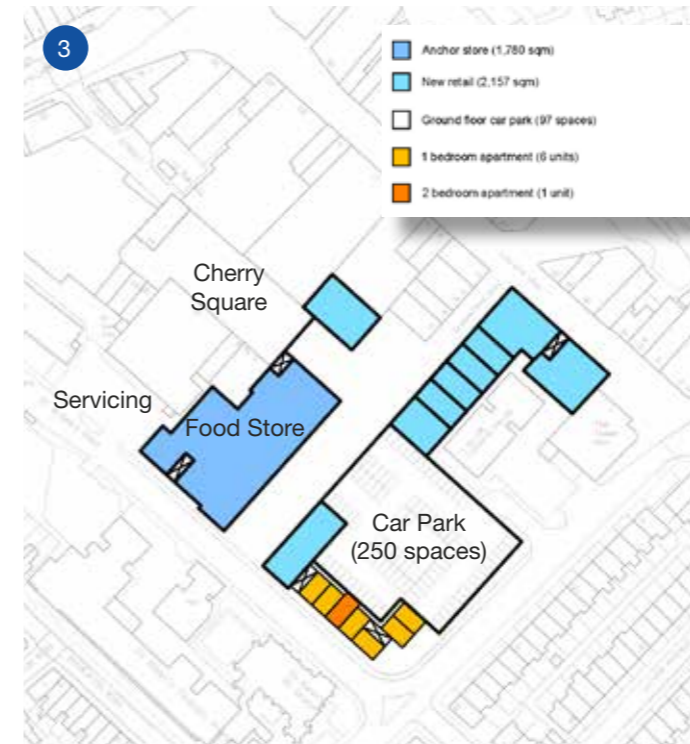
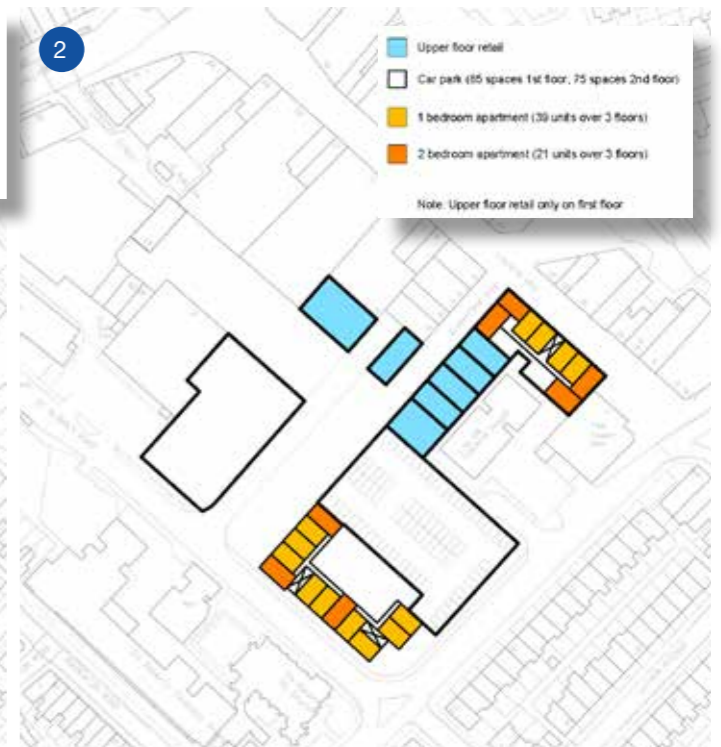
Summary

- Part redevelopment of Cherry Tree Centre and surface car park.
- New anchor food store (c.1,600-1,800m²).
- New ground floor commercial (2,000-2,500m²).
- New homes c.50-110 apartments (over three floors).
- New multi-storey car park (c.250 spaces).

1. Option 1 - Ground Floor
3. Option 2 - Ground Floor



2. Option 1 - Upper Floors
4. Option 2 - Upper Floors



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Cherry Tree Centre Option 1



Cherry Tree Centre Option 2



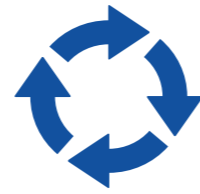
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Tower Place Visualisation



Precedent Images





TC02 - Dominick House

What is the project?

Dominick House is a currently empty office block adjacent to the Cherry Tree Centre on St Alban's Road. It is proposed to either refurbish or redevelop the building to bring it back into use – most likely residential with other uses on the ground floor.

Why is this project proposed?

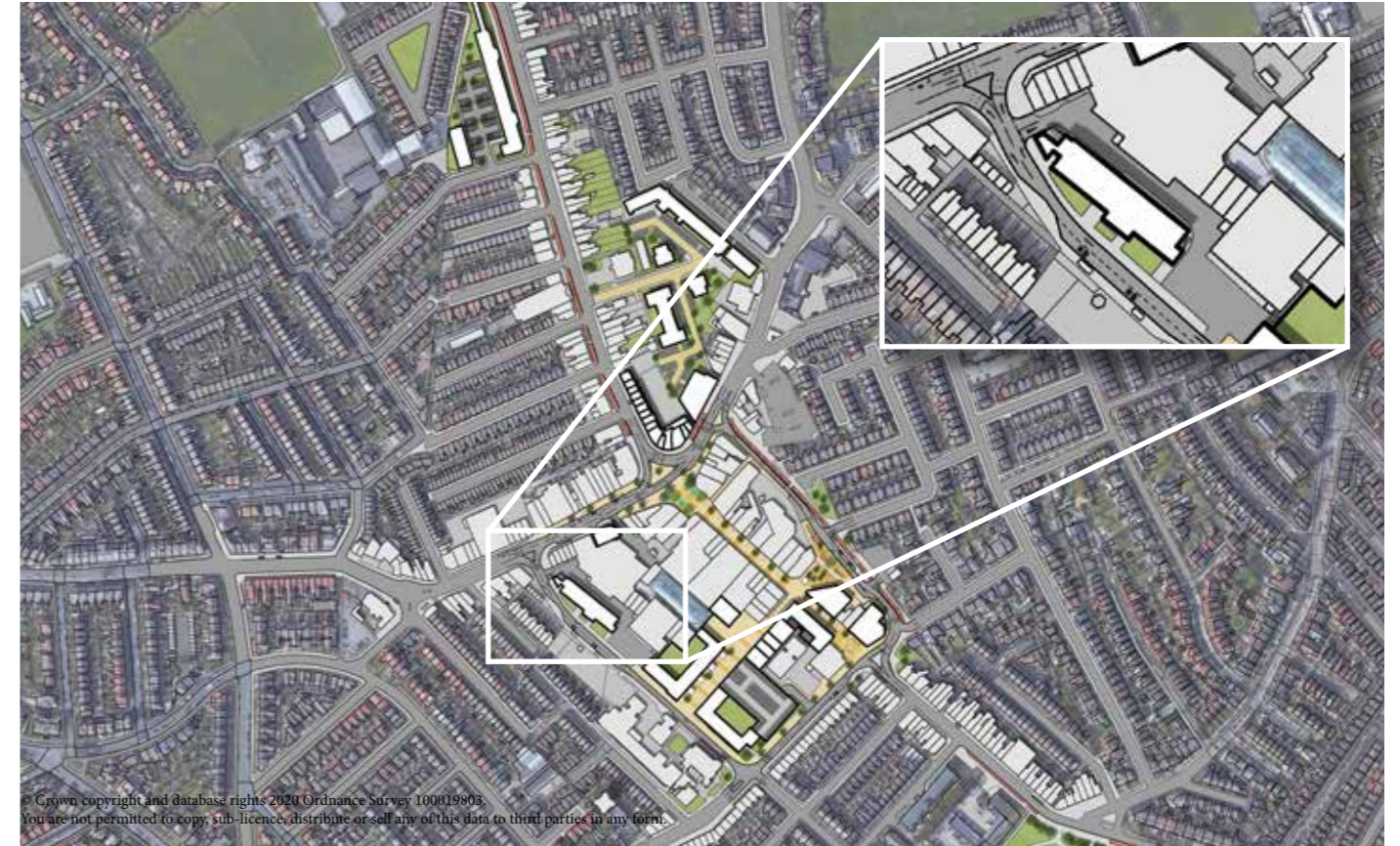
The building has been empty for a number of years and there is a need to find a new use for the site. It is unlikely that there is a market for such a large amount of office space in a secondary location such as Liscard, so a mix of other uses should be considered. The building has permitted development rights for residential, but it is recommended that the ground floor is maintained as non-residential where possible to create an active frontage at street. Any proposals for residential on the ground floor would need to be sensitively / appropriately designed given the adjacent service yard to the rear of the building.

What will the project deliver?

The regeneration of Dominick House will bring a key site back into use. The building could be retained and refurbished with a community / workspace use on the ground floor and residential above (potentially with the additional of an extra floor, subject to structural survey). There is also the scope to redevelop the building entirely to provide purpose built housing accommodation. The potential number of apartments could be in the region of 50 homes. It is assumed that these dwellings would not have any allocated car parking.



Dominick House within the Masterplan

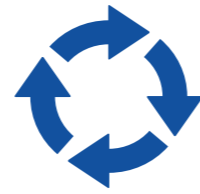


Precedent Schemes



Summary

- Refurbishment / redevelopment of Dominick House.
- Community / commercial uses to ground floor.
- Residential to upper floors c50 homes.



TC03 - Central Development Site

What is the project?

The Central Development Site comprises four retail units on Liscard Way. It is proposed to develop these units to create a new high-quality development opportunity within the heart of the town centre.

Why is this project proposed?

The site is a key location on the corner of Liscard Way and Mother Redcap Place. The buildings are largely unremarkable and there is scope to create a much higher quality development in this key location. The new building would provide better animation to Liscard Way and Mother Redcap Place, as well as bring in new community, commercial or residential uses that help to drive footfall within the town centre.

What will the project deliver?

The redevelopment would bring in a new high-quality single use (such as a community hub) or a mix of commercial and residential development to this prominent site. Redevelopment provides the opportunity to build taller and therefore deliver more accommodation to upper floors, which would generate more activity and overlooking within the heart of the town centre. Along with the upgrade of the public realm this development will contribute to enhancing the image and attractiveness of Liscard Way.



Central Development Site Plan



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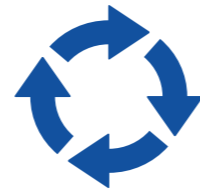
Central Development Site Visualisation



Summary

- Redevelopment of existing commercial buildings on Liscard Way.
- Community / commercial uses to ground floor c500 sqm.
- Community / commercial / residential uses to upper floors (c1,000m² / 14 apartments).

TC04 - Empty Building and Frontage Improvements



What is the project?

Across the town centre there are a number of commercial buildings that are either empty or not looking their best. This proposal identifies a number of key buildings and frontages for improvement.

Why is this project proposed?

There is a need to find new uses for vacant property. Boarded up – or worse still – vandalised shops have a negative impact on the look and feel of the town centre. There is also a need to invest in the overall quality of buildings and shop fronts along the arterial routes into the town centre, which due to poor maintenance and insensitive alterations, can give a poor impression of businesses and the overall quality of the town centre.

What will the project deliver?

Two significant buildings that positively contribute to the character of Liscard and should be brought to life with new uses are:

- Former HSBC bank, Liscard Way – this Victorian commercial building still retains many of its original features and occupies a prominent position at the southern gateway into the town. The reuse of this building should reinstate lost historic features (e.g. sash windows, shop front), retain an active frontage at ground level and fully utilise vacant upstairs accommodation.
- Former Manweb / Beer Keg, Wallasey Road – with Art Deco influences this is a particularly distinctive building. Any proposed reuse of this building should be sensitive to its character, whilst delivering both an active ground floor use and utilisation of upper floors.

In addition to these particular buildings there is scope to improve frontages on all the key arterial routes into Liscard, namely Seaview Road, Liscard Road, Mill Lane and Wallasey Road. Face-lifting improvements could include new high-quality shop fronts and signage, ideally utilising bold colours and graphics to create a vibrant and distinctive identity for the town centre as well as specific businesses.



Building and Frontage Upgrades Plan



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Precedent Images



Summary

- Retention / refurbishment of former HSBC bank and former Manweb / Beer Keg buildings.
- Community / commercial uses to ground floors.
- Community / commercial / residential uses to upper floors c18 apartments.
- Upgrade of building frontages / shop fronts on Seaview Road, Liscard Road, Mill Lane, Wallasey Road and Liscard Way.



7

URBAN VILLAGE



PROJECTS FOR A MORE 'LIVED IN'
TOWN CENTRE

UV01 - Seaview Road Car Park



What is the project?

It is proposed to develop the Seaview Road car park for housing development. This proposal also includes the vacant Municipal Buildings and community centre and could be extended to include the adjacent Tesco Metro block on Liscard Village.

Why is this project proposed?

The Seaview Road car park has very low levels of use compared to other car parks in the town centre. It is considered that this is due to its relative isolation from the town centre core. This underused site along with the vacant Municipal Buildings and community centre is therefore a significant development opportunity. Housing within this location will help to increase the local population, generating more spend and activity in the town. Incorporating the Tesco Metro block can increase the amount of housing and enhance the link between the site and Liscard Village.

What will the project deliver?

The site can bring a significant amount of new housing into the town. Ideally the Municipal Buildings should be retained for conversion to residential, preserving this interesting heritage building, as well as providing distinctive housing accommodation. The type of housing accommodation would primarily be apartments aimed at smaller households, but there is also scope for larger apartments and mews / town housing. There would be some residential car parking, but at a reduced level to standard housing schemes. Any replacement development on Liscard Village should retain a ground floor commercial use.



Summary

- Redevelopment of Seaview Road car park for residential.
- Refurbishment of Municipal Buildings for residential.
- Potential redevelopment of Tesco block at Liscard Village.
- Total homes c.100-130 apartments.

Existing site condition



Redeveloped site



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Precedents



UV02 - Burns Avenue



What is the project?

This site is currently occupied by two automotive businesses. It is proposed to redevelop the site for new housing should these current uses cease operation in the future.

Why is this project proposed?

The Burns Avenue site is of a comparatively significant size and if it were to become available for redevelopment, housing is considered to be the best use of the site. The site presents an opportunity to provide much-needed homes in a sustainable location, close to local amenities. Redevelopment of the site will also provide the scope to enhance the frontage to Seaview Road (a key gateway into Liscard) with new high quality development.

What will the project deliver?

It is likely that the redeveloped site would predominately accommodate apartments, but there may also be some scope for family housing.



Existing site condition



Potential development



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Precedents



Summary

- Redevelopment of automotive uses.
- New homes c.70.

UV03 - Capitol Buildings



What is the project?

Capitol Buildings is a prominent town centre building with vacant land to the rear. In 2019 an application to redevelop this land was refused on the basis of the poor amenity provided by the scheme. As part of the wider redevelopment of the Seaview Road car park there is scope to consider an alternative residential development proposal for this site that complements the wider regeneration of the Seaview Road / Municipal Buildings site.



Why is this project proposed?

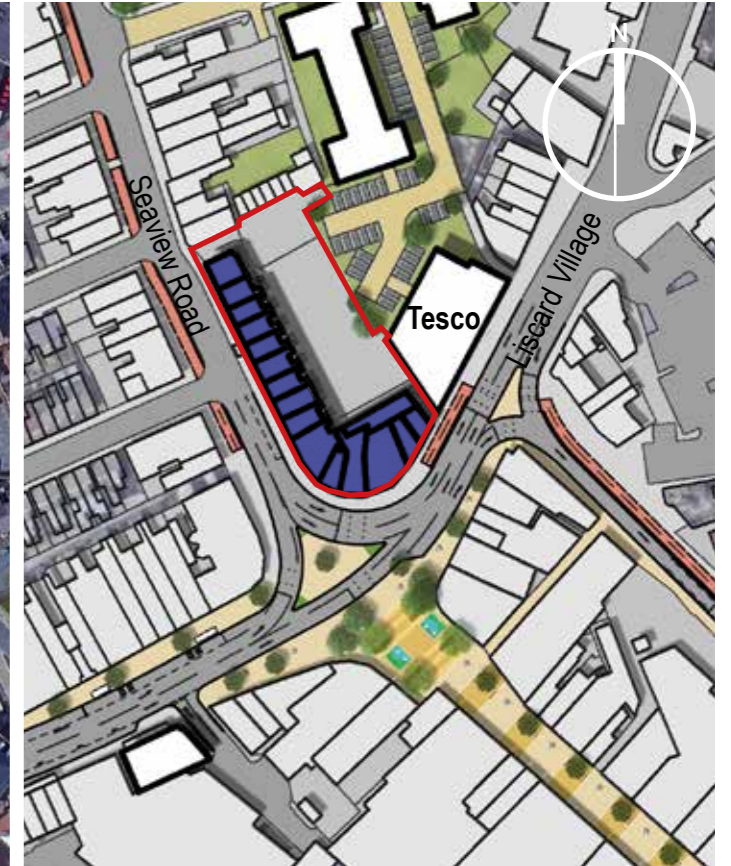
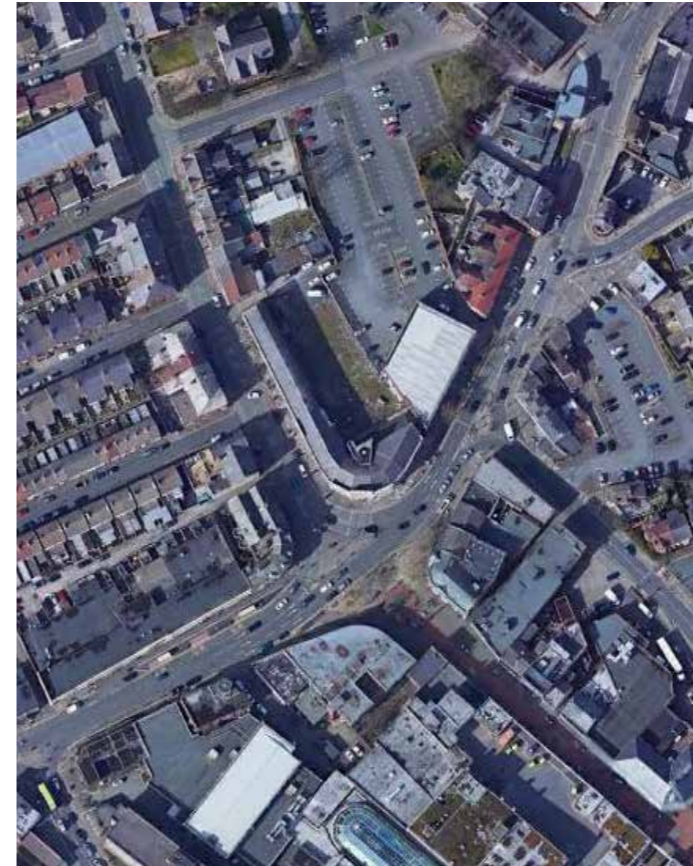
The Seaview Road car park / Municipal Buildings site is identified as a key residential development site. As part of this development there is an opportunity to consider incorporating adjacent underused land to create one cohesive development that can overcome the issues raised with past development proposals. The incorporation of this currently vacant land will bring it into productive use and create more scope to increase the town centre population.



What will the project deliver?

It is likely that the redeveloped site would predominately accommodate apartments.

Existing site condition



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Precedents



Summary

- Development of vacant land to the rear of Capitol Buildings.
- Development to integrate with proposals for Seaview Road car park.

UV04 - Residential Conversion



What is the project?

Along the main arterial routes into Liscard (particularly on Seaview Road) it is acknowledged that long redundant commercial units may be proposed for conversion to a residential use. This project aims to ensure that this is handled sensitively in terms of the overall coherence of the town centre and the quality of residential accommodation created.

Why is this project proposed?

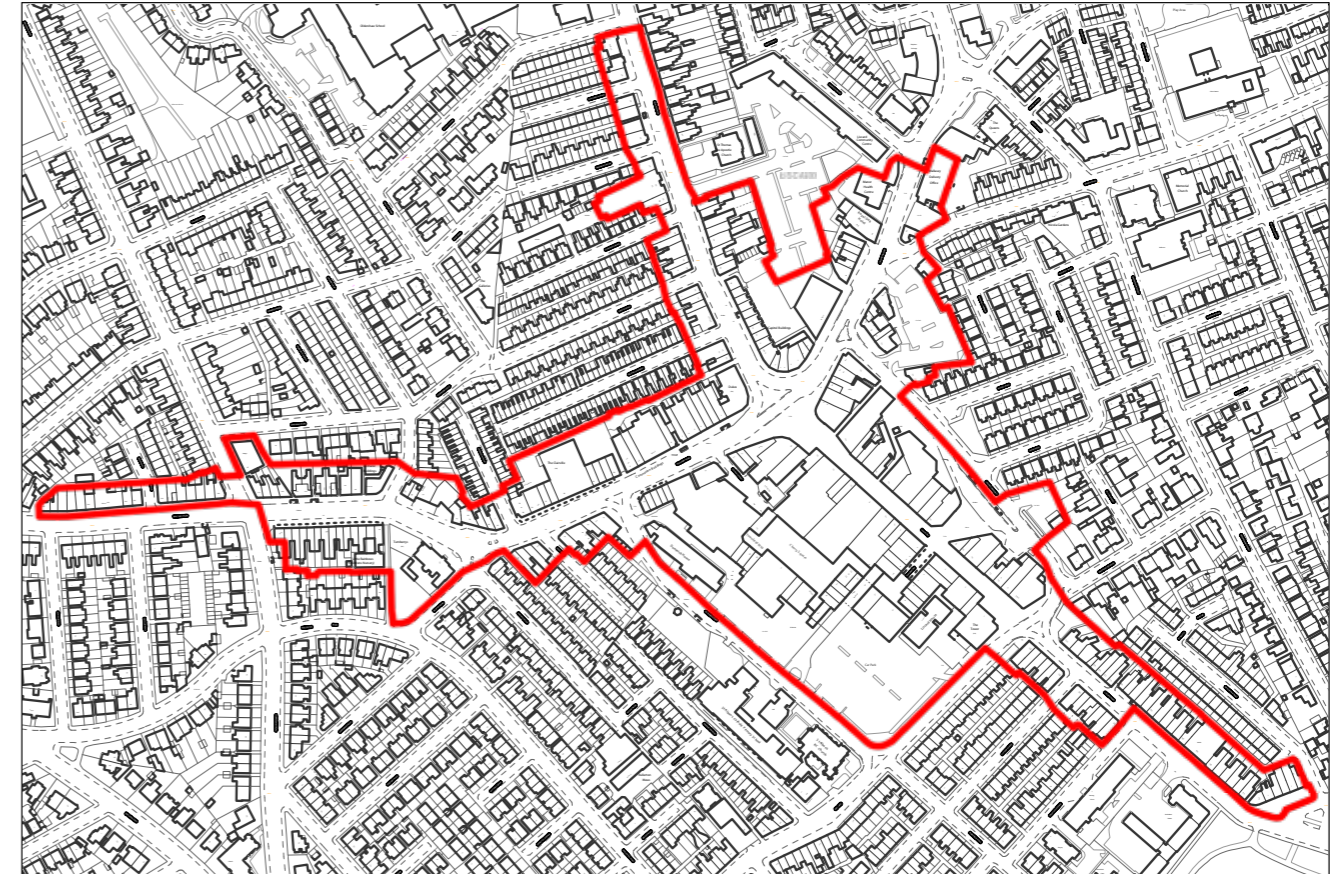
Seaview Road and Liscard Road currently have a fair number of vacant retail units, which has a negative impact on the look and feel of the town centre. It is considered that on this basis there is a need to reconsider the town centre boundary to retain a commercial focus within a tighter area that can sustain its vitality. By shrinking this area it is likely that vacant property outside of the town centre core may be proposed for conversion to residential uses but the quality of residential conversions needs to be of higher standard – often residential conversions can create a poor interface with the public realm and the amenity of occupiers is compromised.

What will the project deliver?

The refocused town centre boundary provides the opportunity to consider the conversion / redevelopment of redundant commercial units on Liscard Road and Seaview Road. The successful restructuring of these areas will rely on creating some critical mass – the conversion of single units (particularly within the centre of a parade of shops) should be avoided. Redevelopment, as opposed to conversion, is preferred as this will provide higher quality purpose built residential development, as well as creating the opportunity to maximise the full depth of the site and the potential height of development (up to three storeys). It is likely that type of development will commonly provide apartments as opposed to family accommodation.



Refocused Town Centre Boundary



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Design Principles for converting retail units to residential



Summary

- Contraction of town centre boundary on Seaview Road.
- Conversion / redevelopment of commercial properties outside of town centre boundary on Seaview Road and Liscard Road.



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COMMUNITY HUB



PROJECTS FOR A TOWN CENTRE FOCAL POINT

Community Hub



What is the project?

There is an aspiration to establish a community hub in the town centre. While every community hub is different, most community hubs host different partners in one or more buildings to deliver a wide range of services to the local community that meet community needs. Typically, community hubs are run and managed by a dedicated community organisation, but in other instances they may be owned or managed by a public agency such as a housing association, or local authority but with substantial input and influence from the community.

Why is this project proposed?

The re-imagining of the town centre from a commercial centre to civic centre will put more emphasis on the need for spaces where people can come together with a common purpose, but there is currently little civic and community infrastructure in Liscard. The hub would provide a much needed focal point for local people and would contribute to enhancing community life in Liscard. The location of the hub is also strategically important, as it should help to drive beneficial footfall in the town centre.

What will the project deliver?

The range of services that the hub could host will reflect local need, and may be delivered by local people, other organisations, or public agencies. The model, can in particular, help to underpin an enterprising and resilient community organisation. The community hub could host health and wellbeing activities, employment support, childcare facilities, cultural and learning activities and advice and information services amongst others. Depending on the needs of these activities, the hub could include meeting rooms, IT facilities, offices and training rooms, sports and arts facilities, play areas, exhibition space and catering facilities (potentially a community café). There may even be a need for more than one community hub.

No site has been formally identified for the hub – this will depend on the needs of the facility. It may be that the hub initially occupies a ‘meanwhile’ space such as an empty shop unit. As the hub becomes established the hope is that a new landmark facility can be delivered in the heart of the town centre core.

Potential Community Hub Locations



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Summary

- A focal point for people to meet and access services in the town centre.
- Accommodation and location to be defined in line with community need.
- Potentially beginning as a meanwhile use in a vacant shop unit.
- Eventually a new landmark facility in the town centre core.

Precedents



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DELIVERY



Introduction

The Integrated Masterplan represents an ambitious programme which, if substantially implemented, will radically transform the town centre of Liscard. It concentrates on physical development activity as this is the role of this study and it will need to be coordinated with the implementation of the Left Bank Programme and the other ongoing regeneration programmes of Wirral, to ensure that education and skills development and business support and other vital services are improved in tandem.

Regeneration is a challenging activity. Early-stage development is cost intensive and little value is generated for a considerable period. Successful transformation will happen, but can only be truly achieved through the attraction of appropriate private sector investment. The public sector needs to create the conditions that will de-risk early-stage development and give confidence to developers and investors.

The fundamental aim of this masterplan is to create a positive investment climate for those investors considering whether to enter the market. We are aware of developers who are interested in attracting investors to the town, but this will only happen if Wirral Council and its partners are demonstrating that they are there with them for the long run.

As well as the guidance provided by this masterplan, the Council can use its influence in several ways. It can use its covenant strength to enhance viability, it can acquire strategic sites and use its land holdings as an intervention tool to help stimulate investment. Transferring land at nil or low cost in the short term can help to give competitive advantage to the area as it seeks to compete with sites in neighbouring areas.

Market Positioning

Liscard is an intriguing proposition in market terms. It is an existing retail and service centre for Wallasey and has performed reasonably well during the pandemic; yet it has underperformed in recent years and there is a feeling that the town centre has been neglected. It has the potential to do much better and with targeted investment in can thrive as the service centre at the heart of Wallasey.

In contrast to many town centres, land ownership is not a hugely complicated patchwork of ownerships with multiple layers of interests. The Council owns the freehold of several opportunity sites in the town centre and as such, it can control many of the factors that can make it a successful, sustainable and viable concept.

The Council has developed this strategy to achieve long term structural change and with a strong emphasis on quality and aligning the town centre to the needs of a target audience. Liscard can move beyond retail and diversify the mix of town centre uses to maintain and improve vitality and viability. This can be achieved by introducing a wider range of town centre uses, including residential, independent food and drink, leisure, community uses and co-working space, alongside core retail (A1) provision. The result can be a fully integrated town centre that can act as an exemplar to other towns with a similar size and locational context.

Liscard will continue to serve the wider Wallasey area and be a lively, attractive place to live, work and spend leisure time in. It can also attract more people from the wider area. To make this strategy a reality, there needs to be significant and sustained public sector investment in infrastructure, land assembly and regeneration to create a platform to catapult the area forward during the next decade.

This vision is dependent on creating an environment of exemplar quality (green spaces and good design) with excellent connections (including ICT) plus public transport and attractive walking and cycling routes through the area. It also needs to be perceived as a safe town centre and one where facilities (including community uses, leisure amenities and shops) are excellent.

Phasing

There are a number of 'early win' projects that need to be progressed immediately. They are required to 'set the scene' for new development in Liscard. Some of the other proposals will require several months and years of preparatory, investigative and design work before new homes, buildings and public realm can be delivered.

The interlinked nature of the Masterplan means that the broad phasing programme is linked to a number of related projects. The other main phasing issue relates to financial performance. The cash-flow of the development will benefit generally from the earlier delivery of the most profitable elements such as the pre-let schemes, leisure, retail and more attractive housing projects.

A separate Action Plan has been prepared which identifies a series of quick wins and short-, medium- and long-term actions which the Council can take the lead on.

Working In Partnership

Whilst the Council is a major landowner in the area, delivery of the Masterplan will require ongoing partnership working with other stakeholders. This provides a strong strategic foundation for more focussed and project specific partnerships that will be required in and around Wallasey. Key partners are likely to include:

- Wirral MBC;
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority;
- Homes England;
- West Bromwich Building Society and Colliers International (Cherry Tree Centre); and
- Other land owners.

Funding Sources & Mechanisms

In the current financial climate, there is scarcity of funds for site acquisition and capital enabling works. There are severe restrictions on local authority budgets and this is likely to remain so for a considerable time to come. In addition to these issues, there are major difficulties for private sector developers gaining access to development loan finance for schemes where there is a market in transition. This is particularly true for speculative commercial development and this will need to be considered.

Local Authority investments to control assets and generate revenue

The principle on 'Invest to Earn' is being embraced by many local authorities looking to adapt to the new public-sector funding landscape. Property acquisitions can generate new revenue streams and can address the funding gap in areas of marginal viability to boost regeneration and to add value, both economic and social; by supporting the creation of new jobs and generating additional revenue from Business Rates. The income from these investments can then be reinvested in the local area, or to fund local services.

Local Authority investment to facilitate regeneration

The use of Local Authority covenants to help facilitate viable development is an increasingly common occurrence. There are numerous examples of this practice across England and Wales. There are current examples of this practice being used by smaller authorities, as well as large metropolitan cities and boroughs.

There are several potential options that are available to the Council and future development Joint Venture Partners that would enhance viability of new development in Wirral. In recent times, the Council has agreed to intervene in this way with Peel Land and Property at Wirral Waters and with Muse Developments (Wirral Growth Company) in Birkenhead Town Centre.

One such example is when the Council enters into a lease over the development. The amount of space that the Council leases or the level of commitment is dependent on the degree of viability of the project.

Councils can borrow at beneficial interest rates through the Public Works Loan Board. The Council can therefore undertake direct development of capital projects, with savings on borrowing and other overheads, such as developer's profit. This can be done as a standalone project with a separate Design and Build contract; but it would be beneficial if done as part of a complementary programme of targeted interventions.

Liverpool City Region

It would seem fortuitous timing that in June 2020 the government launched a Brownfield Land Release fund to support brownfield development, estate regeneration, development

on public sector land and self and custom-build serviced plots in coming forward. It was allocated “for pro-development” councils and ambitious mayoral combined authorities with the aim of creating more homes by bringing more brownfield land into development.” Liverpool City Region was allocated £45M and this is funding that could be used to help unlock the regeneration of Liscard.

Wirral Growth Company

Wirral Growth Company (WGC) is a 50:50 joint venture partnership between Wirral Council and Muse Developments. WGC has an option agreement over a number of Council owned sites throughout the Wirral and is initially looking to bring forward development and regeneration on priority sites in Birkenhead town centre, Bromborough and Moreton. The partnership will be looking to bring about physical, social and environmental improvements through a range of regeneration projects across the borough over the next 10-15 years.

The Seaview Road car park and former Municipal Building are in the WGC’s business plan as a Stage 2 project. It is likely that the major projects described above will be the priorities for the short to medium term. It will be a decision for the Council whether WGC is the appropriate delivery mechanism.

Homes England

Wirral Council is working with Homes England on the development of the Brownfield Register to access the funding in the Brownfield Land fund. Previously developed sites that are in the new Local Plan will have the opportunity to receive funding.

Another possible funding scheme from Homes England will be the Home Building Fund. This is a fund that is aimed at small and medium sized house builders to upscale and tackle larger developments. Homes England is working with a Wirral-based developer that has expressed interest in developing a Build to Rent model aimed at Key Workers in Liscard Village.

The government is encouraging councils to ensure that appropriate numbers of family homes come forward, with the right mix of home sizes, types and tenures for local communities.

Future High Street Fund

A new round of the £675 million Future High Streets Fund was announced by the Minister of Housing Communities and Local Government in December 2020. £24.6 million of funding has been confirmed for Birkenhead to support the delivery of 186 new homes, road safety improvements and a permanent new space for the historic market. A provisional funding offer of £3.2 million has also been received to support the renewal of New Ferry.

As a central part of the government’s ‘Our Plan for the High Street’ measures announced in the 2018 Budget, the objective of the Fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability. Essentially, the Fund has been set up to help town centres facing significant challenges to respond and adapt to changes in the retail industry.

The Fund supports local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres, including funding a new High Streets Taskforce to provide expertise and hands-on support to local areas and it will also then co-fund with local areas’ projects. Wirral Council is hopeful of receiving an allocation in any future rounds of FHSF and Liscard is planned as one of the priority high streets.

Private Sector Funding

There are a number of ways in which private sector finance could be mobilised in order to regenerate Liscard. These are as follows:

Owner-occupiers / firm led development – driven by the need to expand or reconfigure their own premises or reduce accommodation by downsizing premises and selling / leasing or redeveloping surplus space as residential accommodation.

Orthodox Property Development – where development of new premises or the refurbishment of existing premises is undertaken by property developers who acquire sites, construct a building and let it out in the pursuit of a return on their investment (developer’s profit) that reflects the inherent risks of doing so. In some cases, the owners of sites are property companies who let out their premises or companies whose main source of business is trading in and developing land. Recycled land value – allied to orthodox

property development many elements of regeneration schemes have in the past been wholly or partly funded by revenues generated by the sale of land for high value use (typically retail and residential) that are effectively ‘recycled’ so that unviable elements are provided within a project. The actual mechanisms for achieving this vary, but include the public sector allowing internal cross subsidy (where they own the land) and through the use of planning agreements (where the private sector owns the land).

Special Investment Decisions – this expression is used to cover the possibility that some investors will be interested in sites within the study area for special reasons such as a soon to expire lease and potential relocation opportunities. In these cases, we believe that the private sector could be ‘guided’ to invest in the study area by the public sector pursuing a ‘joined-up’ approach to addressing the twin objectives of regeneration with targets for delivery of public services.

Private Rented Sector Funding

While the Private Rented Sector Funding (PRS) sector has grown over the last two decades, it has lacked the scale which is needed to provide high-quality housing and deliver professional management expertise in a cost-effective way. The last five years has a growing movement in the UK property market for Build to Rent (BtR) property, which aims to capitalise on the burgeoning rental market while providing renters with improved stability and quality. Build to Rent property developments are owned by institutional investors and property companies, and are rented out directly or through an agent.

The BtR model gives renters access to a choice of professionally managed property, which typically offers greater security and a higher level of management than they would typically expect from a small-scale amateur landlord. There have been several large high-rise city centre PRS schemes coming forward in the North West, notably in Manchester with others on site in Liverpool. Whilst Wirral (and Wallasey in particular) is not as high on the list of target areas; we believe that as this market matures, there will be pension fund investment into this sector.

Despite this, there were some developers consulted who had considered this issue and think that there is a role for PRS in Liscard.

Although this report is non-attributable, we are aware of developers who are keen advocates of affordable PRS in this location. This would be aimed at locally based key workers and young professionals. These developers feel that such a scheme would be ideal for generating momentum in Liscard. This will help to rapidly transform the area (and proper neighbourhood management will be in place from the start). The PRS units should mainly be one and two bedroom apartments.

Implementation

The Masterplan establishes a long term spatial framework to guide the future development of Liscard town centre, as well as providing further comfort to the proposers of the current pipeline development projects happening in the area. It identifies a series of interlinked development projects to achieve the vision and deliver the growth which will take the concept of a mixed-use future for Liscard going forward; strengthening its reinvention as a progressive, thriving 21st century sustainable community. The presence of a community hub and larger residential population in the town centre will also help to sustain the vitality and vibrancy of the town in the years ahead.

The establishment of a Steering Group will have an important coordinating and championing role to play in bringing forward the masterplan, particularly by providing a single focus, whilst working with public and private sector partners in stimulating additional investment across the area. In particular, the Project Steering Group will need to:

- Ensure the proposals are brought forward in a holistic and progressive manner through the public sector - through its regeneration, property, economic development, planning, transportation and social roles;
- Encourage developers to embrace the quality agenda required;
- Promote the need for coordinated public sector funding support to deliver key public realm and infrastructure projects required early on in the Masterplan proposals;
- Champion the complex projects that will initiate wider change in Liscard;
- Prepare projects which can then be taken on by private and public sector partners;
- Ensure that development and public realm proposals are of the highest design quality.

