

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

CABINET - 16 JUNE 2005

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL INITIATIVE - NORTH BIRKENHEAD MASTERPLAN

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's endorsement of the Masterplan for the North Birkenhead Area which was recommended for approval by the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee at their meeting on 1 June 2005.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 GVA Grimley in association with Social Regeneration Consultants and Brock Carmichael Architects were appointed by the Council in February 2004 to prepare a Masterplan for North Birkenhead which sets out a ten to fifteen year vision for the area.

2.2 The Masterplan area is shown on the attached plan. The area benefits from a number of inherent strengths, which include good accessibility and transport links provided by the local rail network and direct access to the motorway; a variety of local services and amenities including Birkenhead Park, Bidston Hill and the Bidston Moss Nature Reserve. Despite these strengths, there are clear examples of Housing Market failure, population loss, higher than average levels of unemployment and deprivation.

2.3 The Masterplan follows on from the Strategy for Inner Wirral, which identified the priorities for the regeneration of the area through the Housing Market Renewal Initiative. Within the Strategy for Inner Wirral, Birkenhead is identified as one of five priority neighbourhoods, including also Tranmere, Rock Ferry, South Seacombe & Egremont and Poulton.

2.4 The purpose of the Masterplan is to set a vision for the area which can then be delivered over the next 10 to 15 years and it therefore is seeking to agree a framework for regeneration at this stage.

2.5 The framework for regeneration does not propose detailed interventions for individual streets or properties within the Masterplan area as this is not its purpose. This can only be done when financial resources are confirmed for HMRI by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and when further detailed consultations have taken place with local residents.

2.6 It is however important to agree the vision for the area to enable funding bids to be made.

3.0 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

3.1 An extensive programme of community and stakeholder consultation has taken place in relation to developing a Masterplan for the area. This programme, run by Social Regeneration Consultants, consisted of:

3.2 *Stakeholder Consultations (April-June 2004)*

A total of 17 stakeholder interviews were held, involving 26 individuals and representing over 20 different organisations/agencies. A further five sessions were held with community organisations.

3.3 *Neighbourhood Workshops (June 2004)*

In June 2004, four workshops were held across the neighbourhood, to gauge the level of intervention that residents thought was most appropriate for their neighbourhoods. The workshops attracted a total of 131 people including residents (73%), local agencies (26%) and local councillors.

These sessions were informal discussions regarding priorities for the area. Residents tended to focus on problems at a street level such as presence of private landlords and anti-social behaviour, with those in streets experiencing very high levels of market stress requested action to redevelop their street with new housing. There was a broad acceptance of the case for intervention.

3.4 *Outreach (June-July 2004)*

Five outreach sessions were held to enable people who do not normally attend formal meetings to become involved in the consultation process. In total 57 people attended the outreach sessions.

3.5 *Household Survey (August 2004)*

The Household Survey was undertaken in August 2004. 465 completed interviews were obtained with adult residents of the six neighbourhoods over the course of the first two weeks of August 2004. The key findings of this survey were as follows:

3.6 *Neighbourhood Drop-ins (September 2004)*

Neighbourhood drop-ins were held in four community locations throughout the Masterplanning area in September 2004. The drop-in sessions presented initial ideas concerning the focus for physical intervention within the neighbourhood. An exhibition provided background information on the emerging views, funding opportunities for the area including the Housing Market Renewal Initiative, feedback on consultation which had happened so far and the ideas for developing and improving the area in the future.

Overall there was 85% support for proposals outlined in the draft masterplan. In response to proposals, residents asked for a number of initiatives to be implemented in line with the regeneration programme, including initiatives around private landlords, dealing with drug use, anti-social behaviour and youth disorder.

3.7 *Study Trip (September 2004)*

The study visit to Speke and Garston in Liverpool took place in September and involved the South Liverpool Housing group. This enabled residents to see some of the improvements which have been undertaken in similar areas.

3.8 *Final Drop-ins (February 2005)*

At the Final Drop-In events questionnaires were completed by the residents that attended, the findings were produced in a publication entitled "A Proposed Masterplan for North Birkenhead and Bidston". The main findings are set out below.

Of the 484 residents from 79 different streets who participated in the questionnaire survey, all of who were residents of the Masterplan area:

- The overwhelming majority of residents (83%) agreed with the need to take radical action in the area.

- Overall 78% of residents consulted agreed with the proposed Masterplan strongly or to some extent.
- There were concerns raised about demolition of property, community cohesion, concern about falling property values and the need for more information.
- 97 residents felt that the proposed Masterplan would influence them to stay in the area.

3.9 *Further Consultation (Ongoing)*

The development of the Masterplan, which sets the vision for the area, has resulted in an increasing number of requests for, and meetings with, groups of residents (for example those in Hoylake Road) to discuss specific streets and roads.

It has been explained at these meetings, that at this time the Masterplan is seeking to set the vision for the area and that only when this has been done and when the financial resources are known, can more detailed discussion take place with individual residents about specific areas within the Masterplan boundary.

4.0 **KEY ELEMENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR REGENERATION**

4.1 The key elements of the Framework for Regeneration include:

- Encouraging the redevelopment of vacant and underused sites along the Laird Street/Hoylelake Road corridor and Beaufort Road to promote vitality.
- Providing high quality housing to meet the needs of the community and to attract new residents to the area by diversifying tenure and property values.
- Encouraging the retention and enhancement of sustainable employment opportunities and promoting the provision of appropriate new opportunities.
- Resolving inappropriate industrial and commercial land uses.
- Improving the quality of and providing new public realm, urban green spaces and pedestrian linkages.
- Rationalising the linear shopping areas but improving local shopping provision by creating a core area of activity.
- Creating a cluster of community and educational facilities around the St James Centre on Laird Street.
- Improving Ilchester Square and Gautby Road for recreation and leisure.
- Providing a new network of green spaces within the new residential areas that link to Birkenhead Park, Bidston Moss and Bidston Hill.

5.0 **PETITIONS**

5.1 Following the conclusion of the consultation phase for the Masterplan (reported above), a number of petitions have been received from local residents and these are as follows:

- **Corporation Road**
The Council received a petition from the majority of residents on Corporation Road on the even side of the road between numbers 126-174. The petition opposes the demolition of any of their homes.
- **Hoylelake Road/Compton Road**
The Council also received a petition from the majority of the residents from the even side of Hoylelake Road between numbers 120-222, Compton Road and the wider area which “insists that the Council stop all the development for this area until we have been consulted and our ideas counted.”

- Treetops Drive
Treetops Drive is situated on the Bidston Rise estate. A petition was received from the majority of residents in this street, opposing any proposed demolition of their homes.
- Some areas (such as Solway Street) have requested that the Council take action to demolish their properties.

5.2 It is important to note the concerns expressed in these petitions, but also to note, that at this time, the detailed stage to discuss individual streets and properties has not been reached. The Masterplan set out in this report is seeking to set the framework for regeneration over the next 10 to 15 years.

6.0 REALISING THE MASTERPLAN

6.1 The Masterplan is a long-term vision for the area, and provides a 'Framework for Regeneration of North Birkenhead' which is projected to be realised over a fifteen year time period. The delivery of the vision will be subject to available funding over the duration of the programme and will be determined following further consultation with the private sector developer partner (once appointed) the community and other stakeholders including Wirral Partnership Homes who now have responsibility for the former Council housing stock in due course.

6.2 There is broad acceptance of the need for selective clearance and redevelopment of housing, together with the rationalisation/relocation of some commercial property in the area. The Masterplan recommends phased regeneration, which involves construction of properties in advance of clearance to allow where possible existing residents the choice to be moved into new homes.

6.3 Within the Masterplan area work has already begun on one clearance scheme, Station Road and Tyrer Street. Some acquisitions have already been made and negotiations are under way for the remaining properties on this scheme. Once all properties are acquired the land can then be cleared to make way for new development in line with the final recommendations of the Masterplan. In addition, a Group Repair scheme to improve more than 400 terraced properties in the area between Norman Street and upper Brassey Street known as 'The Triangles' is now underway.

7.0 FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Newheartlands HMRI Scheme Update will be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in July 2005 and will set out the resource requirements up to March 2008 to realise the first phase of the Birkenhead Masterplan. The funding allocation is likely to be announced in the final quarter of 2005 after which time a delivery plan for the area will be determined. In addition to funds from Newheartlands, the Council will be committing other funds to the overall programme such as Housing Capital Programme and English Partnerships.

7.2 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 It is intended that Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme will have a positive impact on one of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Wirral. The wider HMRI programme will be subject to a rolling programme of Equality Impact Assessments

to ensure that there is equal opportunity for everyone affected by the proposals and that no-one is socially excluded as a result.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Housing Market Renewal will improve the quality of living environments and environmental standards throughout many parts of Wirral. New high quality, decent homes with enhanced energy efficiency standards and better use of renewable building materials will contribute towards our Local Agenda 21 priorities.

10.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The North Birkenhead HMRI Area lies in the Bidston and St James Ward.

11.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Having access to a decent home is a basic human right to which HMRI significantly contributes.

12.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The project will result in some clearance of poorly designed, unsafe or obsolescent areas and the creation of safer, more secure living environments.

13.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

13.1 HMRI aims to bring about a fundamental change in the character of some of the most deprived areas of the Borough. Proposals for new development will be brought forward with the assistance of Masterplanning which will be integrated with the Council's UDP and, in time, the Local Development Framework, as either Supplementary Planning Documents or Development Plan Documents. The UDP is currently under review and will be amended as necessary to reflect the HMRI proposals.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 The results of the public consultation exercise were used in the preparation of this report.

15.0 RECOMMENDATION

15.1 Cabinet endorse the Masterplan for the North Birkenhead area as contained in this report and that the Director of Regeneration continues consultations with local communities and individuals as the proposals develop.

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Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by David Ball, Head of Housing and Regeneration who can be contacted on 691 8395.



Metropolitan
Borough of Wirral

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