

GREASBY VILLAGE LOCAL CENTRE ACTION PLAN



By 2019, Greasby Village will be thriving like never before. An improved shopping area, providing choice and convenience in retail and services, will be at the heart of the unique offer. Local residents and communities will have contributed to this success, and will be proud to play their part in sustaining improvements and in promoting Greasby to increasing numbers of visitors.

INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of the action plan?

This action plan provides a framework for the Council, businesses and the local community in Greasby Village to work together towards the shared vision for their centre. It belongs to everyone who has a stake in the future of the area.

The plan sets out activities and potential improvements which will build on the existing assets of Greasby Village to shape the regeneration and management of this local centre.

The plan shows how the Council, businesses and the local community will come together to deliver these activities and potential improvements. The many active traders and community and voluntary groups in Greasby will have a vital role to play in championing the vision and gathering local support.

Part 1 of the action plan sets out what Greasby Village is like now.

Part 2 of the action plan sets out the vision for Greasby Village.

Part 3 of the action plan sets out the work programme which will make the vision for Greasby Village as a local centre a reality.

Part 4 of the action plan provides contact details and further information about those organisations involved in delivering the plan.

How has the plan been developed?

The Greasby Village Retail Action Plan builds on the Wirral Town, District and Local Centre's Study and Delivery Framework 2011 ("2011 Town Centre Study") which is a broader strategy for the regeneration and growth of the Borough's 23 local, district and town centres outside Birkenhead. This in turn updated the Wirral Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure produced for the Council by Roger Tym & Partners ("the RTP report") in 2009. Detailed analysis and consultation work was undertaken in producing the 2011 Town Centre Study, including wider consultation at a strategic level (Core Strategy) and more focused consultation with key stakeholders and traders.

The findings and conclusions of this work form the starting point for the Greasby Village Action Plan.

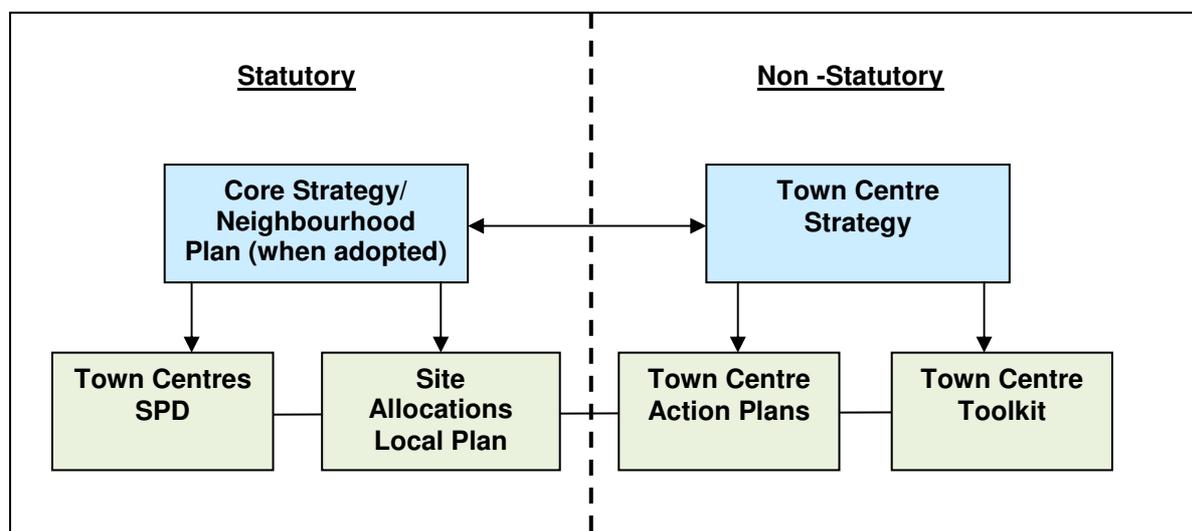
In producing the latest version of the plan further consultation work has been undertaken with key stakeholders and traders in the area, providing the opportunity for their input into the plan. The consultation responses and feedback have been captured within the Action Plan and have helped to inform the key issues identified.

How does this document link to other plans and strategies?

The Action Plan is related to and should be read in parallel with a number of other strategic planning documents, including the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the emerging Core Strategy. It will also provide an evidence base to inform more detailed aspects of the Local Plan for Wirral, including the proposed Site Allocations DPD and a potential 'Town Centre SPD'. The Action Plan for Greasby will not be adopted as a Development Plan Document and will remain non-statutory, but it will be used to shape the future of the area and inform the key priorities emerging from the development of the Constituency Plan for Wirral West.

Further information regarding these documents can be found via the following link:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/evidence-base>



The Retail Action Plans are integral to Wirral Council Plan: A 2020 vision and will underpin the small business pledge *“to improve local high streets and our town centre economy”*.

The Greasby Village Local Centre Action Plan sits alongside the Traders Toolkit which provides helpful information to town centre businesses on a range of issues such as planning and licensing. This publication can be viewed at:

www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/business/investment-strategy/investing-places/town-centres

1. WHAT IS GREASBY VILLAGE LIKE NOW?

This section sets out what Greasby is like now in terms of:

- Identity, sense of place and the streetscene
- Retail and services offer
- Accessibility and transport links
- Local events and marketing activities

Theme 1: Identity, sense of place and the streetscene

Greasby Village is a new addition in the retail hierarchy with a good mix of retail and service uses, which are predominantly independently owned. Though relatively small, the centre has a distinct 'village' feel to it, showing positive signs of use and vitality. It appears to be functioning well and meeting the needs of the community it serves.

Essentially the village comprises a main retail frontage on the southern side of Greasby Rd and a range of civic facilities on the northern side, including a library, community centre and health centre. These facilities are bordered by large, well maintained landscaped areas. To the west of the village there is a secondary area, comprising a number of commercial premises and a small retail parade. The primary and secondary areas are divided by residential properties which creates the impression that they function independently of one another. Consequently pedestrian linkages and flow between the two areas is poor. Constrained by the residential properties the visual impact is minimal and there is no natural draw between the two areas.

The area benefits from having a clean and well maintained physical environment and the high quality landscaped areas, character buildings and wide footways on the southern side of Greasby Rd create a strong sense of place overall. The Village benefits from low vacancy levels, so as a result there are few areas of inactive frontage.

The strong sense of 'community spirit' and 'civic pride' within the village is also testament to the commitment of groups such as Greasby Community Association, Friends of Greasby Library, Green and Blooming Greasby, Knit 4 Greasby Group and Greasby Outdoor Activity and Leisure (GOAL). These groups share a common purpose in supporting the regeneration of the village via aesthetic, social and economic means, in order to maintain a vibrant place for local businesses to flourish.

Theme 2: Retail and services offer

The 2011 Town Centre Study identified the centre as being dominated by service uses (62% of the total number of units), with the comparison offer running at 10% and convenience provision at 12%. The percentage of units given over to services was though well above the study average (50%) at the time. Whilst comparison retailing was well below the study average of 19%, conversely convenience retailing was marginally above the study average (10%).

In relation to upper floor uses, the most prevalent use was residential (74%) followed by offices related to ground floor businesses (19%) and offices separate to the ground floor businesses (6.5%).

A resurvey in 2016 suggests that there have been some minor changes to these uses in the intervening period – a marginal decrease in the number of service related businesses (60%), the comparison offer having increased to 18%, with the convenience offer now representing 15% of all uses across the Village.

Convenience retailing is centred primarily on a Co-op supermarket on the southern side of Greasby Rd and a Sainsbury's Local on the opposite side of the road. The range of services across the village currently include card & gift shop, solicitor, estate agencies, chemists, butcher, florist, a barber, veterinary practice and an array of health & beauty salons. These are complemented by hot food takeaways, a restaurant, bistro/café and three thriving pubs, two of which have their own restaurant facilities. All of these businesses in turn help support a thriving and successful evening economy in Greasby.

In common with a number of other retail areas in the borough, there are no longer any banks or building societies in situ, with only the post office still able to offer any 'paying in' facilities. There are three ATM cash machines located within the village, two within the vicinity of Co-op and Sainsbury's respectively and one on the outside of the post office's frontage.

The 2011 Town Centre Study highlighted that the percentage of vacant units in the area was 3%, which was well below the borough average of 12% at the time. In the period since then the resurvey has identified that the level of vacancy rates has remained static. Indeed at the time of writing, there was only the former children's centre unoccupied, which sends out a strong signal as to how well the retail area is performing in the current economic climate.

Whilst upper floor uses are predominantly residential and offices, as yet no ground floor units have been converted exclusively for residential purposes.

Theme 3: Accessibility and transport links

Greasby Village is well served by public transport and has a resident population of approximately 5,700 people located within a 10 minute walk of the centre. The Village lies on a main bus route with excellent direct links to Birkenhead, Liverpool City Centre, Chester, Bromborough and Liscard.

The widely used 437 cross river service between West Kirby and Liverpool operates a frequent (every 10 minutes) service during the day and every 20 minutes in the evening.

Parking in the Village presents a number of key challenges, not least in that the number of spaces is at a premium. Free on road parking is a combination of unrestricted and restricted waiting provision. Time limited parking provision of 1 hour maximum operates outside the businesses on the south side of Greasby Rd (approximately 6 spaces). Unrestricted on road parking provision exists outside the parade of shops by the junction of Well Lane and in the bay by Coach and Horses public house.

Off road provision is generally more plentiful. There are free parking spaces to the side and rear of the Co-op supermarket and until recently these were unrestricted. However, since the new Sainsbury's development was built opposite a two hour limit has now been introduced and these are rigorously monitored by enforcement officers appointed by Co-op.

On the northern side of Greasby Road there are substantial unrestricted parking spaces in the shared car park belonging to Sainsbury's and The Red Cat. Whilst these are supposed to be for the sole use of patrons of these two establishments, there is no signage in place and they are regularly used by shoppers using the other businesses in the village. The library at the rear of Sainsbury's has about a further dozen spaces (no restrictions in place) and there is additional substantial parking available outside the Health Centre (accessed from Frankby Road), though signage indicates they are exclusively for patients and staff, there is currently no enforcement presence.

Additional on street parking (albeit very narrow) also exists along the service road that runs parallel to Frankby Road, between Well Lane to the west and Greasby Rd to the east. In recent times the area of road closest to the traffic signals at the junction of Frankby Rd and Greasby Rd has become a second hand car 'forecourt,' with upwards of 6 vehicles at a time being advertised for sale on the highway.

Cycle links to Greasby are generally good, but there is no separate provision for cyclists along Greasby Rd. There are a significant number of designated cycle racks on the large footway, but these are generally underutilised.

Theme 4: Local events and marketing activities

Greasby Village has a strong sense of 'community spirit' and 'civic pride', with a number of community groups in existence working for the "greater good" of the village. They include Greasby Community Association, Friends of Greasby Library (FOGL), GOAL, "Knit 4 Greasby" Group and the newly formed "Green and Blooming Greasby". Activities include improving the green spaces in the Village, reviewing planning applications, implementing various youth activities, organising festive Christmas lighting and decorating lamp-posts and trees with colourful woollen collars.

The recent closure of the Children's Centre along with a reduction to the opening hours to the library has begun to have a profound impact on footfall to the Village in general. As a result the excellent work undertaken by FOGL in promoting the library and in organising events has been brought sharply into focus. "Friends of Coronation Park Playground" formed by a group of local mums have recently established a new community action group too, dedicated to improving play facilities in Greasby's only park.

The Greasby Centre (former "Community Centre"), library and health centre are a focal point for the Village. The Centre run predominantly by volunteers, but with some paid staff is now managed independently and is a valuable community resource which continues to flourish in difficult economic times. The competitive hire charges of the rooms within the Centre make it an ideal venue for a wide range of community, social and recreational events. Current uses include various fitness pursuits, karate, zumba, yoga, line-dancing, along with art and craft classes. It is also plays host to the local MP's surgery once a month and is home to a burgeoning Over Sixties Club.

The above groups are all extremely proactive in promoting the village through use of websites and Facebook pages. A community newsletter, the Greasby Messenger is produced quarterly, providing a useful source of helpful information on local issues. Circulated to 4,500 homes and businesses in the Greasby and Frankby area it is now completely self-financing. In addition the community notice board located on the footway outside the butchers/delicatessen is widely used to promote events and activities taking place locally too.

2. WHAT IS THE VISION FOR GREASBY VILLAGE ?

Greasby has a large and relatively affluent residential catchment surrounding the Village and this socio-economic profile continues to provide reasonably strong support for the centre as a whole and its role for key service uses.

Whilst the new Sainsbury's and Vets for Pets development continues to draw increasing numbers of customers into Greasby, there is evidence that these "convenience" shoppers aren't necessarily taking the opportunity to utilise the range of other services on offer within the Village. Traders have indicated that this is particularly prevalent during the day and this will need closely monitoring in order that this doesn't work to the detriment and ultimately the

closure of existing independent retailers. In stark comparison, the evening economy continues to flourish and has become a mainstay for the Village, thanks in no small part to the variety and quality of the food and drink offer.

The overall environmental quality is clean and welcoming and the wide footways and large expanse of green open spaces helps to create a “village” feel and create a strong sense of identity and place. Whilst the public realm on the southern side of Greasby Rd is generally in good condition, the seating areas and bike racks are generally underused and more could be done to promote effective use of the facilities in a bid to create some vibrancy to the area.

The “Knit 4 Greasby” group have been instrumental in introducing innovative activities (woollen tree collars) to help revitalise the look and feel of the Village, by adding a touch of colour to the streetscape. In addition an emerging “Green and Blooming Greasby” group comprising local gardening enthusiasts, have embarked on a number of planting activities to enliven the public realm and open spaces, with community groups and local businesses being actively encouraged to play their part in maintaining displays or adding their own. With Greasby Rd benefitting from having generous wide pavement areas, considerable scope exists therefore to improve the environment further.

With the primary and secondary areas of the Village separated by residential properties, Greasby continues to have a feel of functioning in two parts. The need therefore to provide greater connectivity between the retail area at eastern end with those at western end (Mill Lane and Well Lane areas) remains. This could be addressed through the provision of improved signage or better use of the community notice board.

Greasby is a small shopping centre within the Primarily Residential Area (as designated on the Wirral UDP Proposals Map) subject to Policies SH4 and HS15. The triangular-shaped open space to the east of the Health Centre is designated as Urban Greenspace on the UDP Proposals Map. The emerging Core Strategy lists Greasby as a “Local Centre” in the new hierarchy of retail centres proposed in Policy CS25. A boundary for the centre will be defined on the Proposals Map of a future site-specific Local Plan (likely to be based on the working boundary used in the 2011 Town Centre study).

In the 2011 Town Centre study Greasby was identified as one of a handful of retail areas deemed to be functioning well in spite of the disproportionate number of service and non-retail uses within the centre. Future change in this area will be monitored through the rolling programme of surveys undertaken in all the borough’s centres.

The increase in traffic congestion in the Village, due in no small part to the Sainsbury’s development has led to a clamour in some quarters to adopt a “Living Streets” solution, in striving to make Greasby more accessible and attractive for pedestrians and cyclists. This could include measures to improve the connectivity between either side of the busy main road. Alternative options could include the provision of traffic calming measures i.e. the introduction of 20mph zone through the Village. Any such proposals though would be subject to the availability of resources at the time.

Free on road car parking spaces are at a premium, with only a handful of restricted or unrestricted places available. Whilst off road parking is more plentiful, recent restrictions regarding the use of spaces within Co-op car park has placed a strain on parking in general, with evidence that this is causing motorists to disperse to residential areas or in some cases park unlawfully on double yellow lines. To illustrate the point in the past year alone over 40 Penalty Charge Notices (PCN’s) were issued in respect of parking violations on Macdonald Drive. Due to the physical layout of the Village opportunities to create new parking spaces are limited. Scope could exist to make use of the plentiful space afforded by the large

footway in front of the shops on Greasby Rd, but the significant re-engineering costs involved would be prohibitive for the Council in the current climate.

By far the biggest concern recently has been the increasing number of cars being advertised for private sale in the service road that runs parallel to Frankby Rd. Working with DVLA the Council's Highway Enforcement Team have had some modest success in having untaxed vehicles removed, but for those cars legitimately taxed and insured enforcement action isn't always feasible. One option open to the Council could include the introduction of limited waiting restrictions in this area to act not only as a deterrent, but to free up valuable spaces. Officers however believe that this would only serve to disperse these 'nuisance' vehicles to other more built up residential areas nearby.

Anecdotal evidence exists that some parking spaces are being used by commuters using the frequent and reliable bus services to Birkenhead and Liverpool. One potential option to mitigate this could be to make more effective use of the plentiful, yet underutilised parking spaces available within Coronation Park. This would however require some substantial investment from the Council to resurface and mark out designated spaces. Notwithstanding this the area in question is prone to flooding on a regular basis and so the costs alone could prove inhibiting.

The Village is well served by public transport and benefits from a large residential catchment within easy walking distance of the centre. Increased usage of the centre by cycle allied to the introduction of traffic calming measures could be beneficial over time and help reduce traffic congestion in the area.

Whilst the number of community groups working for the "greater good" of Greasby continues to rise, there is currently no formal business/trader led organisation in existence taking ownership for helping improve business and economic prospects. The recent arrival of Sainsbury's has emphasised the need to introduce an improved and more balanced retail offer and the addition of new niche retailers and uses over a period of time will be critical. The formation of a new business led group could be pivotal in accomplishing this.

The role of the library, community centre and health practice as a focal point for the Village cannot be underestimated and their continued presence will be critical to the centre's future in the short term. The Greasby Community Association's (GCA) experience and proven track record in relation to asset transfer could be invaluable in identifying alternative uses for the former Children's Centre. Greasby Library continues to be one of the most widely used facilities in the borough. In conjunction with GCA, FOGL are exploring whether it would be possible to increase the opening hours for the library through other means, for example the use of volunteers. Their success in achieving this will ultimately be pivotal to increasing footfall in the Village.

There are opportunities to promote the offer of shops and services in the centre through an annual programme of events and activities. Plans are underway to hold a *Celebrating Greasby* event in Coronation Park on 11 June 2016, which will showcase the range of leisure activities that Greasby has to offer. It will also build upon the success of the *Celebrate Greasby Day* in October 2015 and similar events held in the park in previous years. Community planting and litter picks have also become regular activities at various times in the year.

GCA are extremely proactive in promoting the Village through its website and quarterly publication, Greasby Messenger. The community noticeboard is widely used too as an alternative medium to help promote Greasby and to try and encourage linked trips to the Village, that drive footfall and help support local businesses. Similar opportunities exist for local businesses and the wider community to exploit Greasby's unique offer. The need for

continued communication and co-operation between businesses and community groups in general will therefore be critical to the future sustainability of the Village.

Consequently the Village core is not in need of significant change. It does however need to build on its many positive features and its unique ambience to re-establish itself as a refocused, but much improved important local centre that can continue to be self-sustaining and prosperous in its own right.

Taking all this into account the vision for Greasby is that:

By 2019, Greasby Village will be thriving like never before. An improved shopping area, providing choice and convenience in retail and services, will be at the heart of the unique offer. Local residents and communities will have contributed to this success, and will be proud to play their part in sustaining improvements and in promoting Greasby to increasing numbers of visitors.

3. HOW WILL THE VISION BE DELIVERED?

The analysis undertaken as part of the Town Centre Study for Greasby and the work involved in developing the Action Plan have helped identify key issues, objectives and potential interventions, which if implemented can help the area maximise its potential. These are summarised within the delivery plan overleaf:

Theme 3: Accessibility and Transport Links

AIM	WHAT WE COULD ACHIEVE TOGETHER.....	HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE IT.....	BY WHEN & BY WHOM
<p>Improve visitors experience of the shopping area</p>	<p>Adopt “Living Streets” approach to make Greasby a more pedestrian & cycle friendly experience for users</p>	<p>Review measures to reduce traffic speed e.g. the introduction of traffic calming measures or 20mph limits</p> <p>Review locations of existing refuges and crossing points and re-engineer as necessary</p> <p>Introduce dropped kerb to improve access to the bus stop on Greasby Rd (opposite Wood Lane)</p>	<p>Wirral Council/Active Travel Forum/GCA (by March 2018)</p> <p>Wirral Council (by March 2018)</p> <p>Wirral Council /Merseytravel (by Dec 2016)</p>
	<p>Improved connectivity between two separate retail areas to the west and east of the Village</p>	<p>Review directional signage or enhance information provided within the community notice board for first time visitors</p>	<p>Wirral Council/GCA (by Dec 2016)</p>
	<p>Provide parking opportunities & improvements that balance the needs of businesses & shoppers</p>	<p>Improve existing parking provision within Coronation Park car park to support commuters and increase capacity for shoppers</p>	<p>Wirral Council/GCA (by Sept 2018)</p>
		<p>Review existing provision along Frankby Rd, to discourage use of this area for sale of used cars</p>	<p>Wirral Council/GCA (by Sept 2016)</p>
		<p>Work with DVLA to identify & remove untaxed/uninsured vehicles from highway</p>	<p>Wirral Council/DVLA (ongoing)</p>
		<p>Maintain visible parking enforcement presence in the village to mitigate misuse of valuable spaces</p>	<p>Wirral Council/NSL Services (ongoing)</p>

Theme 4: Local Events and Marketing Activities

AIM	WHAT WE COULD ACHIEVE TOGETHER.....	HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE IT.....	BY WHEN & BY WHOM
<p>Increase footfall visitors and spend to Greasby Village</p>	<p>A lively, interesting and useable retail area with improved vitality and providing a better visitor experience for shoppers</p> <p>Improved communication between local traders and other civic services and community groups</p>	<p>Introduce a range of incentives to promote the retail offer- ‘shop local’, loyalty cards etc.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for an annual Greasby event i.e. Greasby in the Park, to draw people into Village</p> <p>Explore opportunities to re-establish annual or seasonal events and activities on green open space between Greasby Rd & Frankby Rd</p> <p>Proactive use of existing websites, social media and community noticeboard to promote events & activities to encourage linked trips to the village</p>	<p>Local businesses/traders (by Sept 2016)</p> <p>Traders/Wirral Council/Event Organisers (June 2017)</p> <p>Traders/Wirral Council/Event Organisers (June 2017)</p> <p>GCA/ Community Groups/ local businesses (ongoing)</p>

4. KEY CONTACTS AND SUPPORT

Wirral Council

Neil Mitchell (Regeneration Team) - 0151 691 8423 / neilmitchell@wirral.gov.uk

Jane Morgan (Constituency Manager - Wirral West - 0151 929 7706 / janemorgan@wirral.gov.uk

The Wirral Events Advisory Group acts as a one stop shop to provide organisers of public events in Wirral with appropriate advice and guidance to enable events to take place safely. Tel (0151) 606 2290 or e-mail: events@wirral.gov.uk

Further information including a copy of the guide, *Organising Public Events in Wirral* is available from the Council's website via the link below:

www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/organising-outdoor-events

Useful websites

Association of Town Centre Management - www.atcm.org

100 Ways - www.100ways.org.uk/

British Retail Consortium – www.brc.org.uk

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills - www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-innovation-skills

Department for Communities and Local Government - www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government

Design Council - www.designcouncil.org.uk/

Living Streets – www.livingstreets.co.uk

Sustrans – www.sustrans.org.uk

All Council services (including lists of Ward Councillors) – www.wirral.gov.uk

Other local websites and contacts of interest:

The Greasby Centre – www.greasbycommunitycentre.org

Greasby on the Wirral Peninsula (local history site) -: www.greasby.btck.co.uk

Wirral Groups (Community What's on site) - www.wirralgroups.org.uk

Fiends of Coronation Park Playground (Facebook page) - www.facebook.com/FOCPP/