



DOCK BRANCH NEIGHBOURHOOD Masterplan Report

June 2024



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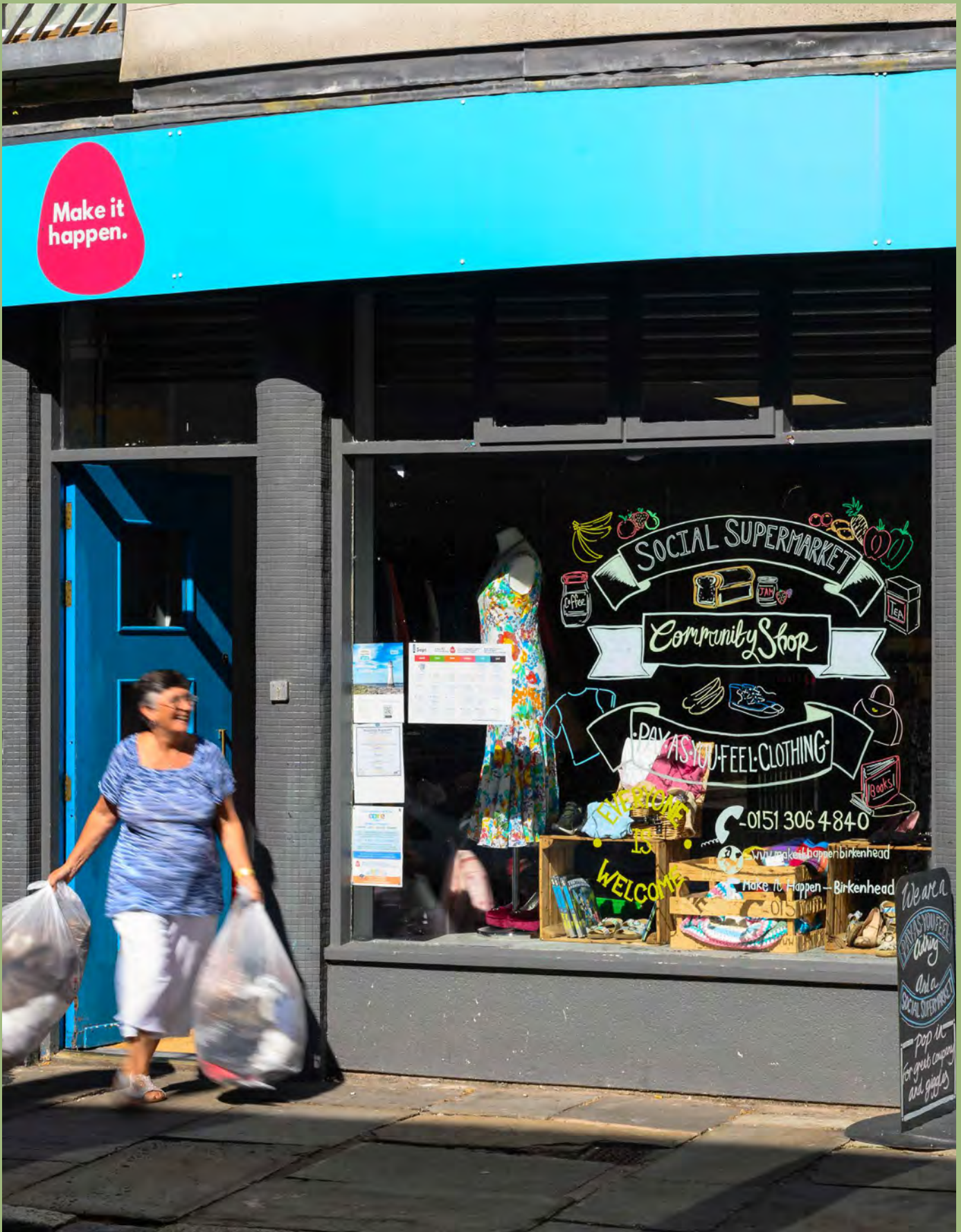
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Make it happen., Market Street – Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the role of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan, how it will create a framework for good growth to guide the evolution and regeneration of the area, and the status of this document.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Purpose and role of the masterplan

Purpose and role of the masterplan

The Birkenhead 2040 Framework sets out Wirral Councils vision, and the wider opportunities, for the transformational regeneration of Birkenhead. The Birkenhead 2040 Framework establishes a twenty year plan, and identifies nine different neighbourhoods which each have delivery programmes. The Framework identifies Dock Branch Park as a ‘catalyst’ project, and the area surrounding Dock Branch Park as new neighbourhood having the potential to deliver around 1,200 new homes in next 5-15 years. The masterplan interfaces with the Dock Branch Park; however, the Park design is commissioned separately.

The masterplan establishes a vision and a spatial framework for the long-term evolution and transformation of the Dock Branch area into a new neighbourhood. The masterplan has further refined the indicative capacity identified in the 2040 Framework to approximately 990 dwellings, supporting

Wirral Councils ambition to deliver the transformation of the area into a thriving residential-led mixed use urban community at the heart of Birkenhead.

The overarching objectives for the Dock Branch Masterplan Study include:

- Establish an overarching vision for the Dock Branch;
- Create a masterplan which will establish a new community;
- Support the comprehensive and ambitious regeneration of Dock Branch;
- Informing the delivery strategy to realise the masterplan vision over time;
- Informing any business and funding cases, including the identification of infrastructure requirements;
- Inform as necessary Wirral Borough Council emerging Local Plan policy.



Dock Branch cutting

1.1.2 Masterplan boundary

The study area cuts through two key Neighbourhood Framework Areas – Birkenhead Waterfront and Central Birkenhead. The Dock Branch Neighbourhood area follows the land either side of a disused rail corridor which forms Dock Branch Park, and runs from the junction of Canning Street and Rendel Street to Conway Street in the South.



Location plan

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.3 The Councils approach to Neighbourhood Frameworks and Masterplans

Local Plan Spatial Strategy

The Councils emerging Local Plan sets out the overall spatial strategy for the Borough which is to focus on the regeneration of Birkenhead and the wider regeneration programme for the 'Left Bank' of the River Mersey, stretching from New Brighton to Bromborough. The Local Plan identifies 11 Regeneration Areas and 19 Masterplan Areas. The Council has been working on a series of documents to support these designations and to assist the delivery of the regeneration strategy for the Borough. All of the documents can be found on the Council's web pages at

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

Birkenhead 2040 Framework

The Birkenhead 2040 Framework is a 20 year strategy that defines the vision and ambition for the transformational regeneration of Birkenhead. The document has been adopted by the Council as its Interim Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and provides a comprehensive regeneration framework for Birkenhead as a low carbon, sustainable waterfront garden 'city'. Eight of the Regeneration Areas lie within the Birkenhead 2040 area. The three remaining are designated at Liscard, New Brighton and New Ferry. Each of the Regeneration Areas has a specific policy approach included within Part 4 of the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Frameworks

Neighbourhood Frameworks are primarily regeneration strategy documents. They provide further information on each Regeneration Area, building upon Birkenhead 2040. Neighbourhood Frameworks will also help to inform the development of Masterplans and site specific proposals.

Masterplans

Local Plan Policy WS 6.3 - Masterplan Areas requires proposals within defined Masterplan Areas to be in general conformity with a Masterplan which has been endorsed by the Council.

The policy identifies 19 Masterplan Areas where Masterplans are required to guide site specific proposals.

Policies WS6.2, RA1, RA2, RA3, RA4, RA5, RA6, RA7, RA9, RA10, RA11, WP4.2 and WP6.3 of the Wirral Local Plan set out requirements for development within a series of Masterplan Areas to conform with Masterplans which have been endorsed by the Council. With the exception of the Masterplan for West Kirby Concourse, all Masterplan areas fall within Regeneration Areas.



Engagement event in February 2023, introducing the draft vision and priorities for the masterplan strategies

1.1.4 Public engagement

Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan has been shaped by an iterative process of public engagement. Three stages of consultation have taken place, with emerging ideas and concepts shared at each stage to test to help refine the proposals. A summary of the process and stages of engagement can be seen below.

Process

In-person engagement ran in three stages with each one based in 'BirkenEd's Place' urban room in Birkenhead Town Centre. The engagement was delivered by PLACED and each stage featured bespoke activities and methods for eliciting feedback from members of the public. In each stage additional engagement events took place to facilitate both targeted engagement and raise awareness of the project. Stages 1 and 2 were supported by online engagement delivered by Wirral Council.

Stage 1: Understanding experiences, perceptions and aspirations

- Objective: to raise awareness of the project and understand attitude towards Dock Branch at the moment, aspirations for the future and desirable features of both the neighbourhood and new homes.
- Informing: the masterplan baseline and priorities for the masterplan
- Duration: 23 November to 03 December 2022
- Contributions: 280 in-person (approximately)

Stage 2: Shaping the neighbourhood vision

- Objective: raise awareness of the project, present the emerging vision and gain inputs on the priority 'ingredients' that should feature in each vision theme.
- Informing: the draft masterplan vision and emerging masterplan strategies
- Duration: 08 February to 20 February 2023
- Contributions: 320 in-person (approximately)

Stage 3: Testing the frameworks and character areas

- Objective: raise awareness of the project, share and gain feedback on the draft frameworks and character area proposals
- Informing: the draft masterplan
- Duration: 31 July to 11 August 2023
- Contributions: 150 in-person (approximately)

Findings

Findings at each have informed the masterplan development, with the design process aligned to deliver engagement at key junctures. A summary of five key priorities and how these have shaped proposals can be seen below.

Priority 1: Streets and spaces that feel safe

- The most common priority is for streets and public spaces to feel safe and welcoming. The masterplan response includes maximising building frontage to directly overlook streets, public spaces and Dock Branch Park. The masterplan reintroduces homes to Central Birkenhead that will establish natural surveillance through eyes and ears in the day, evening and night time.

Priority 2: Local heritage must be valued

- Local heritage is an essential part of Birkenhead's special identity and the masterplan celebrating this. The masterplan response includes a wide ranging heritage strategy that includes guidance on views and landmarks, adaptive reuse of heritage buildings and appropriate architectural characters.

Priority 3: A real mix of homes

- A mix of housing is considered a priority with specific emphasis on affordable housing and alternative delivery models. The masterplan includes a mix of housing types and sizes and advocates for innovative models that can deliver affordable homes including co-housing, community land trusts and Modern Methods of Construction.

Priority 4: Bringing nature into everyday life

- Improving access to nature is considered a priority. The masterplan response maximises tree planting, sustainable urban drainage and green roofs to establish a multi-functional green infrastructure network, for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Priority 5: Spaces for the local communities

- Access to community spaces and affordable workspace is a local priority. The masterplan response includes the identification of low threshold enterprise space, ground floors dedicated to community use. These spaces are designed to be flexible in use and affordable in perpetuity, offering fertile space for community empowerment and innovation.



Coffee Aroma, Brunswick Court, Price Street – Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo

2. CONTEXTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

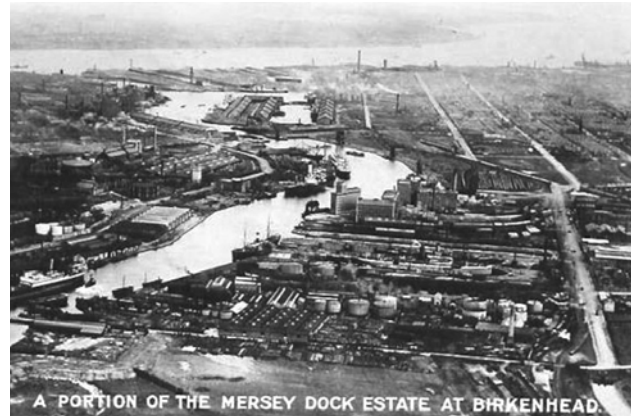
This chapter introduces the different location, heritage, socio-economic and ecological contexts that set the scene for the masterplan. A series of internal and external opportunities influencing the masterplan now and in the future have been captured and taken into account.

2.1 CONTEXTS

2.1.1 Strategic location

Historical importance

Birkenhead is the principal town within Wirral, sitting at the heart of the 2040 Framework and within the borough's major LeftBank regeneration programme. Located on the Wirral Peninsula the town is defined by its geographic and economic relationship to water, nestled between the natural waterfront of the River Mersey and the vast dock system of basins comprising the Great Float, Egerton Dock and Morpeth Dock. Indeed, it is the town's easy access to water that led to it becoming an internationally significant hub for shipbuilding, manufacturing, food processing and trade, itself driving both the town's rational Laird Grid layout and the juxtaposing Dock Branch rail cutting that intersects it.



An aerial view of West and East Floats

Contemporary importance

Today Birkenhead's regeneration continues to be driven by its strategic location, with the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone and Liverpool City Region Freeport seeking to utilise the River Mersey, its water assets and brownfield land to stimulate economic growth. A variety of existing and planned transport infrastructure improvements continue to improve the ways in which people and goods move, including active travel routes and the Wirral Mass Transit system. With the potential for up to 20,000 new permanent jobs to be created in maritime, energy, manufacturing and research industries, new homes are an essential ingredient in unlocking Birkenhead's regional and national potential. Therein lies the role of Dock Branch Neighbourhood in creating a joyful, resilient and liveable neighbourhood for Birkenhead.



Wirral Waters is a designated tax site within the 45 kilometre Freeport Zone

Dock Branch Neighbourhood

Dock Branch Neighbourhood is strategically located within Birkenhead itself. Straddling Central Birkenhead, the neighbourhood is well placed to take advantage of close proximity of services and amenities in the town centre, whilst establishing its own distinctive offer to complement wider regeneration plans. With Dock Branch Park at its heart and improvements to better connect the waterfront with the rest of the town, quality leisure and amenity space will be on the neighbourhood's doorstep. Home to a range of designated and undesignated heritage assets, the neighbourhood interfaces with Hamilton Square Conservation Area, as key consideration for driving thoughtful, quality design that will further reinforce local distinctiveness amongst the wider regeneration occurring within Birkenhead.

2.1.2 Heritage context

Origins

Birkenhead has a rich and layered history that maintained its largely humble agricultural character for a sustained period. Prior to the 19th century Birkenhead has mostly known for the Benedictine monks who operated a ferry across the river to Liverpool. Founded in 1150 and rebuilt over the centuries, Birkenhead Priory the oldest standing building in the Liverpool City Region.

New Town

All this changed in the 1820s with the arrival of regular steam ferry services across the river and the beginnings of shipbuilding along the river's west bank. In 1825 William Laird, the industrialist behind Cammell Laird shipbuilders, commissioned James Gillespie Graham to lay out a New Town with a grid iron pattern of streets and a range of grand Georgian townhouses and tenements, with the centerpiece of Hamilton Square at its heart, set to emulate the success of Edinburgh New Town.

Industrialisation

Despite the grand vision progress building the New Town was slow, with much of the grid remaining empty and a gradual decrease in quality of built stock. The integrity of the grid was further undermined through the increasing industrialisation of the docks and the arrival of the Dock Branch rail line in 1838, a rail cutting beneath street level and running diagonally from Egerton Dock to Rock Ferry railway station in the south.

Infrastructure

The opening of the Mersey Railway tunnel in 1886 and the Queensway road tunnel in 1934 continued to reinforce Birkenhead's status as an industrial centre and in turn driving inward migration to Birkenhead. The town was well established by the mid-20th century with a market, theatres and music halls and was known as 'a town of firsts' with the first tramway in Europe and the world's first publicly funded park in Birkenhead Park serving the growing population. Major infrastructure projects continued to roll out in the late 20th century with prominent road flyovers and the opening of the Pyramids Shopping Centre transforming the complexion of the town even further.

Birkenhead today

Today Birkenhead is best understood as a patchwork town shaped by eras of development from the Industrial Revolution to early 21st century suburbanisation. Whilst the Laird Grid street pattern remains largely in-tact, the infill of the grid comprises a mix of Victorian terraces, Georgian townhouses, inter-war and post war suburban housing alongside pockets of heritage and contemporary industrial buildings. Hamilton Square Conservation Area encompasses a large swathe of the remaining quality Georgian and Victorian development of the New Town. Hamilton Square is itself home to the highest concentration of Grade I Listed Buildings outside Trafalgar Square, London.



1844 map of the New Town with the masterplan boundary overlaid



Wirral Transport Museum is home to a collection of heritage street trams that still run from Woodside ferry to the museum

2.1 CONTEXTS

2.1.3 Socio-economic context

Population

Birkenhead is home to over 90,500 residents as of 2020, equating to approximately 28% of Wirral's population. Population projections to the year 2043 forecast an expected increase of only 4.1% in Wirral, with this growth driven by those over the age of 65, whilst the working age population is set to decrease. However, this predict and provide approach does not take into account the Borough's ambitious growth agenda. Indeed, the 2040 Framework is planning to deliver 21,000 new homes to support an additional population of over 46,000 in Birkenhead alone. Within these new homes a real mix of type, size, tenure and model of living is necessary to create real choice and diversity; distinguishing Birkenhead with an attractive and regionally distinctive housing offer.

Employment

Over 37,500 people were in employment in Birkenhead in 2021, accounting for almost 35% of all the jobs in Wirral. The largest employer sectors include public administration; wholesale and retail; automotive repair; health and social work; and professional, scientific and technical activities. These sectors account for over 60% of Birkenhead's economy and provide a basis for strengthening, whilst encouraging diversification through the nurturing of smaller but growing sectors, such as the creative and cultural industries.

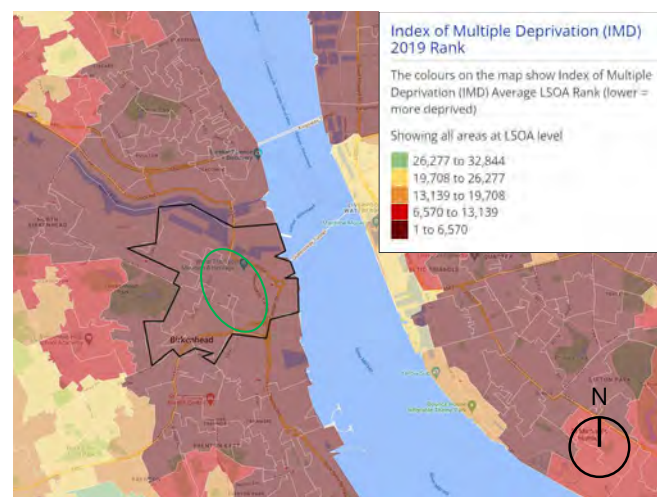
The 2040 Framework plans for over 6,000 new jobs with many across both established and smaller growth sectors. This ambition is matched by recent trends that demonstrate growing entrepreneurialism in Wirral, with sustained growth in new business start-ups and business survival rates. Creating a mixed type, size and model of workspace provision will be critical to encouraging this growth and economic resilience, with this particularly true for supporting Birkenhead's micro and small sized businesses that comprise over 95% of businesses. Throughout this growth, careful consideration is needed to maintain Birkenhead's historical balance of production and supply chain activities over consumption.

Deprivation

Birkenhead Central is ranked within the 10% most deprived areas in the country, with income, employment, health, education and crime identified as challenging indicators. Meaningful regeneration in Birkenhead that can deliver improvements in these areas will be critical to achieving inclusive growth, with the built environment a focus area for leveraging betterment, particularly in health, safety, crime and living environment. Likewise, improving employment opportunities through access to skills and training is an important consideration, requiring enduring cross-sector collaboration to deliver, such as the existing partnership between Wirral Council and Wirral Metropolitan College.



Community gardening at MAKE Hamilton Square



Index of Multiple Deprivation⁴ in Birkenhead, with Dock Branch Neighbourhood circled in green. ([Indices of Multiple Deprivation \(2019\)](#)).

2.1.4 Ecological context

Strategic landscape character

The natural landscape character of beaches, bushy headlands, rolling hills and green rural pastures characterise much of the Wirral Peninsula, bounded by 25 miles of coastline. Formerly characterised by fields, marshes and commons in the medieval period, Wirral is peppered with sites of biological importance and local nature reserves.

Birkenhead's urban character

Today Birkenhead's hard urban landscape is in direct contrast to the wider natural landscape of Wirral. Swathes of roads, car parks and other hard standing are interspersed with little in the way of quality green space, with highways verges, small private gardens and sparsely distributed street trees forming the most common natural features. Indeed, less than 2% of Birkenhead Central is classified as having access to green and blue space.

Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Park are of course the exception and provide high quality open green spaces performing important ecological and amenity functions. However, they are let down by a lack of connected green and blue infrastructure network across the town. This absence leaves Birkenhead susceptible to a number of climate challenges including urban heating, poor air quality, a lack of biodiversity and flood risk, with those living in and around the town centre disproportionately impacted.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood

Dock Branch rail cutting itself provides the most densely vegetated part of Central Birkenhead, having undergone a process of rewilding since its abandonment in the early 1990s. Largely inaccessible, the cutting has remained undisturbed and has become home to a range of wildlife, operating as a strategic habitat and natural drainage system in parts. Transformation of the rail cutting will require careful consideration of its existing ecological functions, whilst increasing the environmental and ecological performance of the corridor, delivering habitat and air quality benefits as well as water management potential.

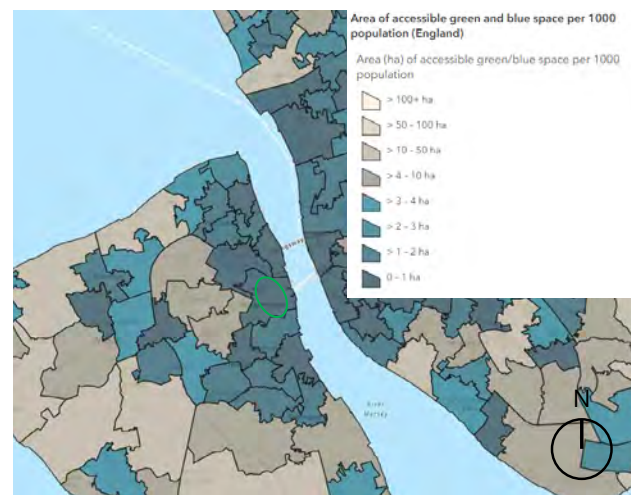
Indeed, Dock Branch Park presents a catalytic opportunity to expand the rewilding of the cutting up to street level, to increase the volume natural surfaces and form the centrepiece of a multifunctional, interconnected green and blue infrastructure network.



View of vegetation looking along the Dock Branch rail cutting from street level



View of vegetation from within the Dock Branch rail cutting, approximately 4.5m below street level



Area of accessible green and blue space per 1000 people in the Wirral, with Dock Branch Neighbourhood circled in green (Rivers Trust, 2021).

2.1 CONTEXTS

2.1.5 Birkenhead qualities and characteristics

Birkenhead is a dynamic and evolving place with a multifaceted identity. To summarise one aspect of its unique character is to do it a disservice, yet to comprehensively capture all of its special qualities is almost impossible. Birkenhead can be defined by its unique combination of people, townscape, activities and pioneering spirit that collectively make the town such a vibrant and enticing destination.

People

The crafters, the fabricators, the residents, the artists, the innovators, the curators, the business owners, the restorers, the artisans, the musicians, the designers, the manufacturers, the tradespeople, the carpenters, the volunteers, the engineers. These are the people that make Birkenhead so special.



Common Good event taking place at Future Yard in Birkenhead, July 2022

Ambition

Birkenhead is an ambitious place with a firm vision for the future. A number of priority projects and infrastructure are being set in place to unlock the potential of the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone and the Liverpool City Region Freeport, reinvigorating the town with high quality homes, jobs, streets and spaces.



Wirral Met College's Wirral Waters Campus, sitting within the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone

A town of firsts

From the country's first public park in Birkenhead Park, Europe's first street tramway running from Woodside to Birkenhead Park, the world's first tram to train interchange at Birkenhead Dock railway station and the world's first tunnel to be built under a tidal estuary with the Mersey Railway Tunnel, Birkenhead truly is a town of globally significant firsts.



Birkenhead Park, the world's first public park

Unconventional

Birkenhead has a track record of doing things differently. Its creative and cultural sectors are dominated by niche micro and small businesses, carving out their own path in unconventional pursuits. Forward-thinking voluntary and third sector organisations embody Birkenhead's 'DIY mindset', creating lasting social benefit and change.



Ron's Place in Birkenhead - a home for outsider art saved for auction by community campaigning

Diverse mix

An industrious town of different commercial activities, Birkenhead has long been and will continue to be a hotbed for innovation. Concealed behind warehouse and workshops doors, a diverse mix of activities take place that reinforce the town's rich heritage of production in engineering, manufacturing, creative and cultural industries, food and drink processing and health care.



Birkenhop - a new beer released by Wirral-based Brimstage Brewery with hops grown locally in Birkenhead

Townscape

Birkenhead's urban fabric is composed of many elements that define its unique townscape. The grid street pattern, the long views, the Georgian proportions, the stone and brickwork, the consistent datum, the punctuated ventilation towers and the architectural details combine to create a rich and varied palette.



Shore Road Pumping Station, a Grade II Listed Building located within the Hamilton Square Conservation Area

2.2 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS

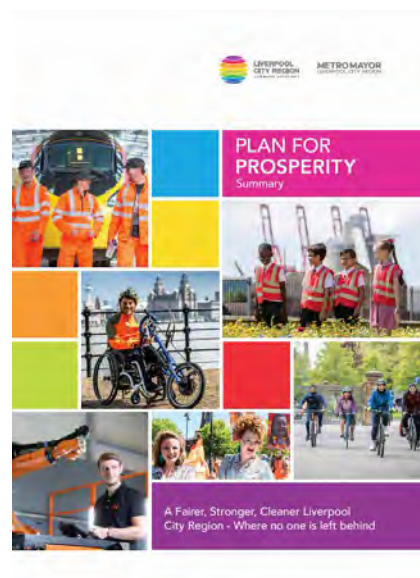
2.2.1 Internal drivers

The growth and regeneration agenda for Birkenhead is being driven by a number of internal and external forces. Internal drivers include the strategies, policies and initiatives that are directly setting the aspiration and steering investment and change at the regional and local scale. External drivers are perceptible but intangible forces that are dynamic and evident through changing societal behaviours, attitudes and expectations, driving change at the national and global scale. A summary of internal and external drivers are found below.

Liverpool City Region

Wirral sits within the Liverpool City Region, a Combined Authority that encompasses the local authorities of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. The Combined Authority enable cross-boundary co-operation and collaboration at a regional scale, coordinating infrastructure projects and driving investment for the benefits of local communities. The Liverpool City Region has a number of focus areas including transport, energy, the environment, economic growth, housing and spatial planning. Whilst the Spatial Development Strategy is yet to be finalised, a series of cross cutting themes have been set out. These include:

- Climate Emergency and Environment – committed to being the cleanest, greenest city region in the country
- Health and Well-being – encouraging active and healthy lifestyles
- Prosperous and Inclusive Economy – committed to creating a high-skill, high-value economy
- Placemaking, Communities and Housing – promoting good design with new, affordable and energy efficient homes
- Social Value – a commitment to equality social justice, inclusiveness, fairness, rewarding and promoting fair and ethical business



Liverpool City Region Plan for Prosperity, 2022

New draft new Local Plan

The new draft Local Plan (Reg. 19) sets out the strategy, policies and proposals for meeting Wirral's development needs in a sustainable and transformational manner, covering a plan period from 2021 to 2037. The document includes a series of strategic objectives focused on driving sustainability, improving health and well-being, reinforcing local distinctiveness and supporting thriving, mixed-use developments.

The successful regeneration of Birkenhead is central to the plan's strategy, with the plan setting out the vision and spatial strategy for ambitious change. As a part of this spatial strategy, a series of Regeneration Areas and Masterplan Areas have been identified with a suite of supporting policies. Central Birkenhead Regeneration Area (Policy RA 4) and Birkenhead Waterfront (Policy RA 3) sit at the heart of the strategy, recognised as critical to defining the sense of place, identity and health of the wider town and communities.

2040 Framework

The new draft Local Plan is itself largely underpinned by the 2040 Framework - a holistic and practical regeneration framework responsible for the most transformational proposals for Birkenhead since the 1947 Town Plan. The framework identifies the potential to deliver 20,000 new homes over the next 20 years but recognises viability and market perception is a central challenge to overcome.

Sitting within the disused Dock Branch rail cutting, Dock Branch Park will be a new world-class linear park and active travel corridor that straddles both Regeneration Areas. It is identified as a catalyst project for creating the right conditions for investment and value growth in Birkenhead.

A strategic priority for the Council, a boundary for the Dock Branch Park (Northern section) Masterplan Area (Policy MPA-RA4.3) has been drawn, identifying approximately 8 hectares of underutilised brownfield or vacant land either side of the new linear park. Earmarked to become a new mixed use residential-led neighbourhood, the masterplan will steer development and drive meaningful regeneration in Birkenhead.



Wirral new draft Local Plan, 2022



The 2040 Framework spatial vision, 2021

2.2 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS

2.2.2 External drivers

Climate resilience

With the climate and biodiversity emergencies well recognised and the destabilising threats they pose to the planet, climate resilience has never been more essential. Nature based solutions are required to create places that can adapt to and mitigate the effects of the climate emergency, using green and blue infrastructure to promote urban cooling, improve air quality, reduce flood risk, boost habitat creation and sequester atmospheric carbon.



The Grey to Green SuDS scheme in Sheffield has boosted flood resilience in the city

Social inclusion and participation

Growing social isolation across all demographic groups poses a distinct risk to our health and well-being, with reports of loneliness significantly contributing to early death. In an increasingly divided world it is critical places are designed in ways that encourage social interaction and active participation in society. Buildings, streets and spaces must be designed and stewarded as platforms for blending between residential, business and third sector communities.



Community event at MAKE Hamilton Square providing opportunity for socialising across generations

Flexible and adaptable homes

As we've all experienced in recent years through the pandemic, it is important that our homes are flexible and adaptable to changing needs and behaviours. Homes need to be well proportioned and designed in such a way that rooms can be used for a variety of different activities from home working, to exercise to childcare. Likewise, homes should be designed for changing lifestyles, with limited alteration needed to accommodate ageing parents or growing families.



Homes must support home working and child care simultaneously, amongst other demands

Mixed workspaces

A variety of workspaces are needed to support diverse economies and local innovation, with workshops and offices forming important parts of mixed use neighbourhoods. Different types and models of workspace can bring different users and activities into neighbourhoods at different times of the day. Co-locating these uses with residential, particularly at ground floor, can help animate streets and promoting safety through the natural surveillance of many eyes and ears.



Mixed workspace offers within urban centres and neighbourhoods add vitality and economic resilience

Ageing population

Whilst people continue to live longer, they are also bucking trends and choosing active lifestyles that favours access to a diverse set of services, amenities and infrastructure. New types and models of residential development are needed to meet this latent demand, with mixed use neighbourhoods ideal locations for retired communities looking to invest their time and money in leisure, culture and environmental causes.

Walkable neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods must be designed in such a way that walking and cycling is the preferred mode of travel for short journeys, be that shopping for groceries, going on the school run or running an errand. A high quality network of streets and spaces is integral to this, as is a compact approach to planning with having the right mix of transport, jobs, shops and services in close reach of your home.

Circularity and local production

A circular economy of sharing, reusing and restoring is needed to eliminate the concept of waste and promote the decoupling of economic activity from the consumption of finite resources. The integration of different commercial and civic society activities can enable the circulation of energy, resources and goods. Likewise, a concerted approach to local produce and consumption can shorten supply chains, leverage inward investment and boost local distinctiveness.

Leisure and recreation

Leisure and recreation in urban centres has continued to evolve alongside the restructuring of conventional high street offers. Competitive socialising concepts, such as 'Escape Rooms', have injected new life into the leisure sector, whilst an increased focus on health and well-being has seen a rapid expansion of active leisure uses, such as Crossfit centres and climbing walls.



LGBTQ+ affirmative retirement communities provide new models of older age living



Streets and spaces that encourage walking and cycling as the preferred mode of travel



Farm Urban is a social enterprise backed by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority



Active leisure activities including climbing walls adds a diversity to the leisure economy offer

2.3 REGENERATION CONTEXT

2.3.1 Major projects

Town Centre (Commercial Centre)

A major redesign and redevelopment of Birkenhead town centre is a flagship regeneration programme for Wirral Council. Creating a new office quarter, development of over 800 new homes on town centre sites, high quality public squares and spaces, and development of a new permanent indoor market, something fundamental to the history, character and spirit of Birkenhead. This town centre programme has been developed following extensive consultation and engagement with local residents, businesses and stakeholders who have consistently said that revitalisation Birkenhead town centre is one of their biggest priorities.

Wirral Waters

The principal example of the “Left Bank” regeneration vision is Wirral Waters. Led by Peel Land and Property (L&P) and located in the heart of Birkenhead, this programme alone is one of the largest regeneration projects in the UK. It will transform over 200 hectares of docks in Birkenhead over a 30-year timeframe. The programme seeks to create a new, internationally recognisable, sustainable destination that will create many thousands of new jobs and deliver many thousands of new homes. Wirral Waters has Freeport status and is a critical building block of the regeneration strategy for Birkenhead. It is not just its scale which makes Wirral Waters a major driver for Birkenhead’s regeneration, but the quality of design and holistic place-making approach being adopted.

Hind Street

The Hind Street Urban Village offers a unique opportunity to create a sustainable, market changing, low carbon exemplar urban village of up to 1,000 new homes. Major landowners, including the Council, have collaborated to produce a comprehensive masterplan and public consultation has been undertaken leading to a planning application that has now been submitted. The implementation of the Birkenhead Landing project will be an important context as it will include the removal of the two flyovers currently dissecting the site and creating a hostile road environment separating this future community from Central Birkenhead.

The project will enable the creation of this new neighbourhood which will include: an exemplar and innovative low carbon urban village, creating a new residential offer with scale and potential for inter-generational living; highly accessible, well-located, high-



The new Mallory and Irvine offices in the town centre



Visualisation of the plans for Wirral Waters

quality accommodation for families which can help to underpin diversification of the town centre including an enhanced food and drink and leisure offer; new open greenspace, linked to the delivery of the second phase of Dock Branch Park; and new social infrastructure – including specific potential to deliver an innovative and modern urban school to meet wider need across Birkenhead.

Waterfront

The Mersey River waterfront represents Birkenhead’s most underutilised asset but the vision as set out in the Birkenhead 2040 Framework Strategy will change that. Wirral Waters is transforming the dockside waterfront and the masterplan for the Waterfront will expand the transformation to the Mersey riverfront. Inspired by riverside towns and cities across the globe which have used their waterfront location to focus regeneration, over the next



Visualisation of the vision for Dock Branch Park

20 years we will create a greener, more active waterfront environment that celebrates the views across to Liverpool and encourages vibrancy and life along this historically closed off environment. Birkenhead's own Graces – iconic architecture and spaces designed for people to visit and linger – will form a new skyline vista to complement Liverpool's.

These connected spaces will flow together and encourage movement along the waterfront with activity at every stop. Birkenhead waterfront will include: a canvas for world class architecture; residential-led mixed use neighbourhoods; a globally recognised arts destination as the climax of the cultural axis connecting Central Birkenhead to its waterfront; and a celebration of the heritage of the area and the role the waterfront has played in the fortunes and evolution of Birkenhead and the wider Liverpool City Region.

Dock Branch Park

This is a truly iconic and transformational project for the town. It will see the creation of a beautiful new linear park and active travel corridor along the disused Dock Branch Railway, one of the earliest railways in the country. It will bring to life a neglected gem of Birkenhead's heritage and link three key development areas: Wirral Waters, the Town Centre and Hind Street Urban Village. The park will become the centrepiece of a new neighbourhood through creative use of the surrounding sites. Dock Branch Park will provide much needed greenspace within the heart of the town, with an emphasis on wildlife, nature and play. The project will involve working with community groups to identify opportunities for community ownership from the outset, building on the Community Wealth Building principles which are core to Birkenhead 2040 delivery.



Market Street – Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo

3. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The vision sets out the guiding narrative for nurturing and fostering a liveable neighbourhood.

The overarching principles provide a summary of key strategic moves necessary to seed good growth and steer inclusive, regenerative and redistributive transformation.

3.1 A LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

3.1.1 Wider vision

The vision for Dock Branch Neighbourhood to be a happy, healthy, fun and inclusive place that is known as much for its buildings and spaces as it is for the vibrant communities who live and work there. This is to say, it will be liveable place that is as ecologically generous to its air, water, soil and natural systems, as it is socially magnanimous to its diverse communities of residents, businesses and visitors. This liveable vision is shared at the town-wide and neighbourhood level, set out within the draft Birkenhead Design Guide, and the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan set out here.

Liveable Birkenhead Doughnut

The draft Birkenhead Design Guide creates a vision for Birkenhead's transformation that integrates the concept of Doughnut Economics with Liveable City Principles. It envisions the future Birkenhead as a liveable and enjoyable place, which raises the social foundation of the community and fosters equitable access to opportunities while remaining within the ecological ceiling of what the climate of the planet can take. The outcome is a socially and ecologically just vision integrated with progressive and robust design principles.



Liveable Birkenhead Doughnut

3.1.2 Dock Branch Neighbourhood vision

The vision for Dock Branch Neighbourhood is organised into a series of overarching aims and a subset of interlinked themes and principles, working in synergy to embed liveability and resilience at the heart of the neighbourhood.

The principles provide a framework of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ measures to achieve the vision aims; guiding the stewardship planning, design and delivery of the neighbourhood. Hard measures can be described as material, spatial and physical interventions that are

masterplan-oriented, such as building and street design. Soft measures can be described as programmed, managed and operational interventions that require collaboration between a diverse set of actors, such as community stewardship and innovative leasing strategies. Neither in isolation can deliver the transformational regeneration for Dock Branch Neighbourhood and both must be committed to in order to realise its full economic, environmental and social potential.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will be

Economically inclusive

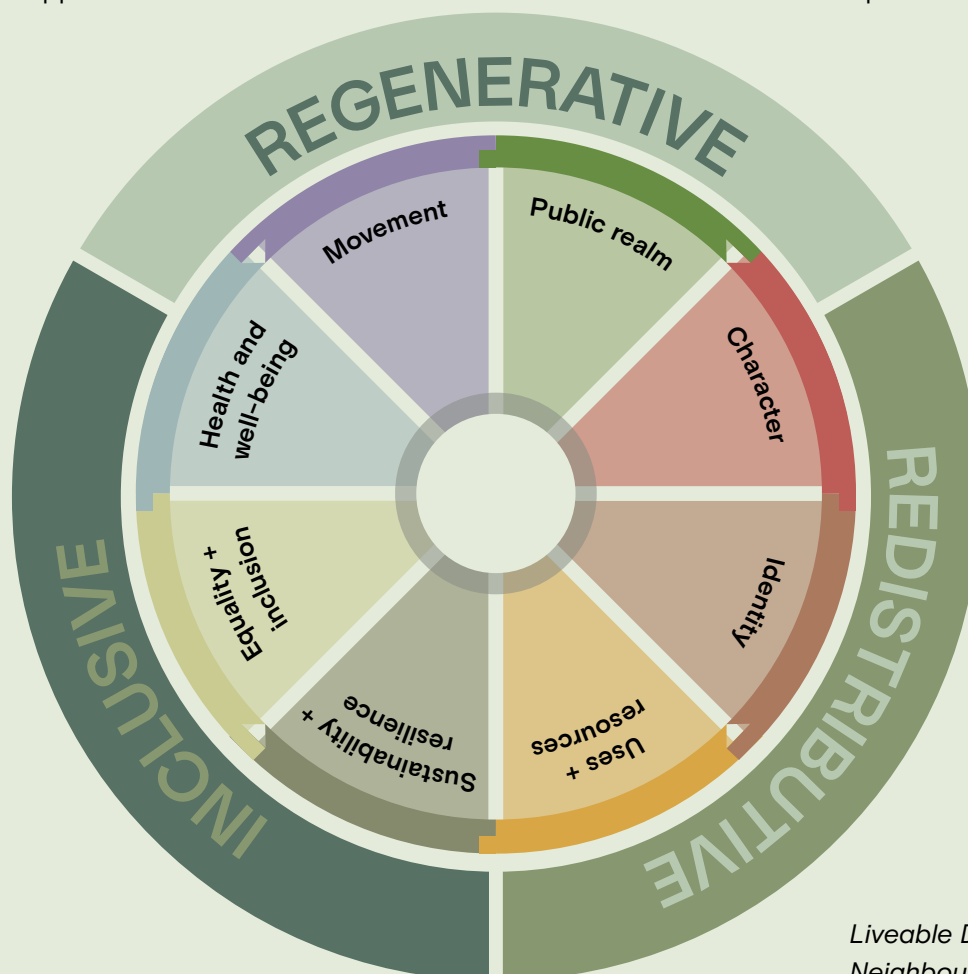
- A diverse range of industries and flexible workspaces will be found within the neighbourhood, supporting Birkenhead’s established and growing sectors and providing access to local employment opportunities.

Environmentally regenerative

- Natural and human systems will be in harmony, prioritising natural capital that upholds ecosystems services and delivers a variety of benefits at the local, regional and global scale.

Socially redistributive

- Civil, commercial and political interests will converge to break convention. Progressive models of delivery and stewardship will empower local people to address local issues and opportunities with place-based solutions.

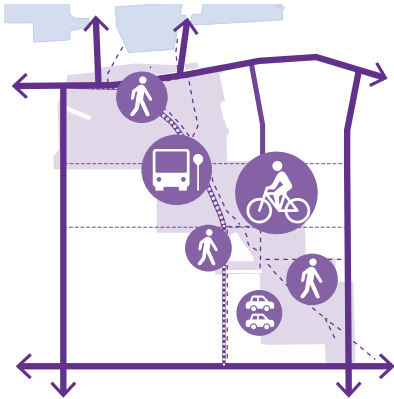


*Liveable Dock Branch
Neighbourhood Doughnut*

3.1 A LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

3.1.3 Vision principles

Movement

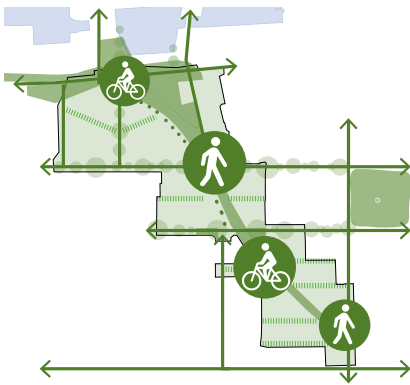


M1 Create direct connections to local destinations including Birkenhead Town Centre, Birkenhead Commercial District, Wirral Waters and the Waterfront

M2 Promote active travel and public transport as the easiest, safest and most convenient way to travel for people of all ages and abilities

M3 Create a legible environment that is easy to navigate by reinforcing the character and function of the street hierarchy within the Laird Grid

Public Realm



PR1 Maximise opportunities for green and blue, nature-based infrastructure to shape a climate resilient public realm that contributes to the health and well-being of the population

PR2 Create a connected network of streets and open spaces of different sizes, characters and functions with Dock Branch Park at its heart

PR3 Create a multi-functional public realm that is cost effective to maintain and able to accommodate different events and activities throughout the daytime, evening and night time throughout the year

Character

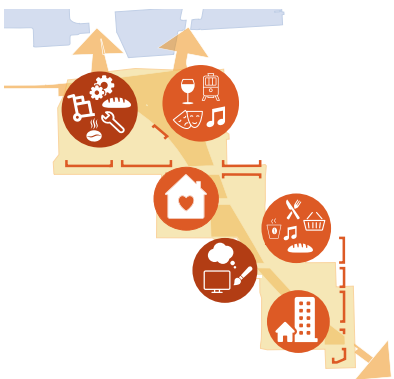


C1 Celebrate Birkenhead's rich historic environment through adaptive reuse and retrofit of everyday heritage assets and obvious monuments

C2 Utilise a mix of building typologies in a compact urban form, respecting the prevailing low and mid-rise height to preserve the role and setting of the ventilation towers as dominant visual anchors

C3 Encourage new development that considers the colour palette, materials, rhythm, scale and massing of Birkenhead's rich Georgian and Victorian vernacular

Uses and resources



UR1 Add to Birkenhead's mix of commercial, leisure, creative and community uses to return activity and intensity to the neighbourhood through the day and into the evening

UR2 Maintain the balance of production and consumption, taking a proactive approach to retaining and intensifying activities through the re-provision and co-location of compatible uses

UR3 Curate a mix of uses and resources to establish a resilient liveable neighbourhood that works for residents and businesses alike, with Argyle Street at its heart

UR4 Deliver different types, sizes and tenures of home that are easily adaptable and affordable to run, providing real choice communities

Identity



I1

Create a celebrated visitor economy with an exciting programme of events and attractions to complement and promote Birkenhead's independent cultural, leisure and heritage offer

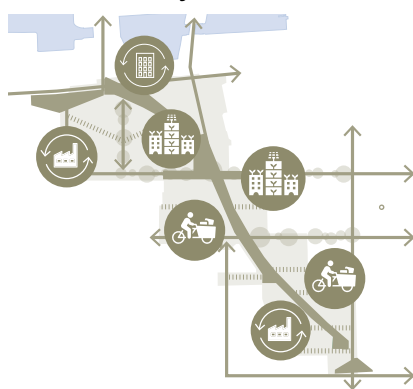
I2

Reinforce Birkenhead's role as a global town of 'firsts', continuing its legacy of innovation and industriousness through spaces that support the conception, testing, growing and thriving of new ideas

I3

Establish a distinctive new neighbourhood that is widely known as an inclusive, vibrant and joyous place

Sustainability and resilience



SR1

Champion the circular economy through all aspects of design by complying with the principles of longevity, adaptability, flexibility, disassembly and re-use

SR2

Prioritise early adoption of new technologies and approaches to local resource and energy generation, storage, efficiency and management

SR3

Adopt a fabric-first approach to design that limits energy demand through passive measures and efficient building fabric

SR4

Design a compact liveable neighbourhood that encourages low carbon lifestyles through close proximity of services and amenities

SR5

Maximise opportunities for greening and habitat creation, bringing nature and biodiversity into everyday life

Health and wellbeing



HW1

Design buildings, streets and spaces that support sociable and active lifestyles, enabling the built environment to contribute to good physical and mental health

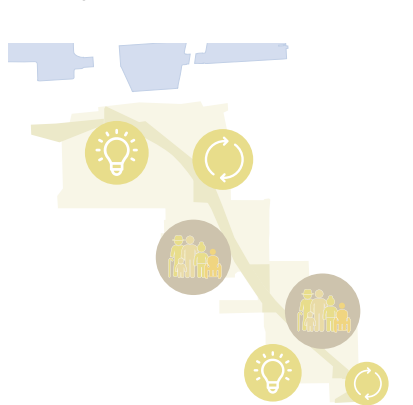
HW2

Develop strategies to establish, monitor and maintain good levels of air quality, noise pollution and thermal comfort

HW3

Promote healthy lifestyle choices through access to local food growing spaces to support community cohesion, tackle social isolation and secure access to low-cost, high-quality nutrition

Equity and inclusion



EI1

Commit to engaging and collaborating with Birkenhead's existing communities to empower citizen-led action

EI2

Design the built environment to support a social, accessible and secure neighbourhood that can engenders a sense of safety throughout the daytime, evening and night time

EI3

Design flexible spaces that take into account different and changing needs, interests and behaviours

EI4

Maximise opportunities for local supply chains wherever possible, across the design, construction and programming of spaces

EI5

Reinforce and encourage a diverse and resilient daytime, evening and night time economy that exists in harmony with new homes



The masterplan strategy seeks to join up isolated clusters of heritage, such as this former shop at the corner of Lord Street and Cleveland Street, with new quality buildings and streets – Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo

4. MASTERPLAN STRATEGIES

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will be regenerative and distributive by design: a place where heritage is celebrated and revitalised, and where people and nature thrive.

4.1 SUMMARY FRAMEWORK

4.1.1 Key spatial moves



Connecting the park to the docks

Introducing a new high-quality park running through the neighbourhood brings a myriad of benefits. Beyond enhancing the area's nature and outdoor public space, it serves as a hub for community, fostering social connections and a sense of belonging and provide opportunities for active travel links. The redesign of Tower Road as an urban street will reduce its highways domination and provide for increased active travel movements will bring meaningful connection between green and blue infrastructure, becoming a truly multifunctional corridor in its ecological and social services.



A street level active promenade

A active travel promenade along the park is a pivotal urban feature that enriches the experience of the new park. It encourages walking and cycling, reducing reliance on vehicles and promoting sustainability. The promenade has the potential to boost local businesses interfacing the park, attracting foot traffic and stimulating economic growth. By merging recreation with connectivity, the pedestrian promenade can become a vibrant artery, breathing life into the neighbourhood and enhancing its overall liveability and sustainability.



Establishing a positive park edge

Deliver a new high quality park as part of a wider vision for improving access to green space and public realm, with a focus on providing active travel opportunities. A combination of mixed use residential and recreational plots establishes a active relationship between built form and the park edge. The active edge towards the park also provides overlooking and passive surveillance.



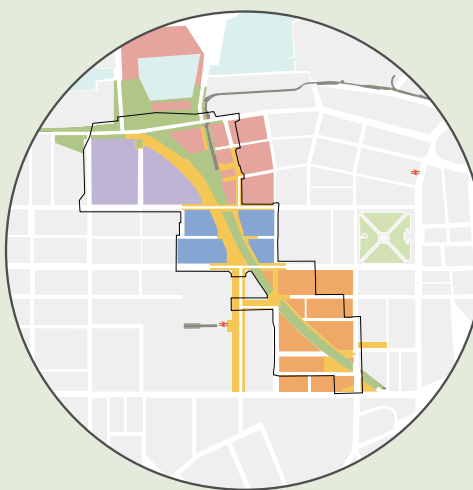
Using the park to stitch the neighbourhood together

Creating green and wild streets and connecting these straight to the park creates an urban landscape with the park at its centre. This allows residents to access the neighbourhood's key asset: Dock Branch Park. This interconnected design fosters accessibility, encouraging more people to embrace sustainable transport options and access to nature and outdoor recreational space. Embracing the importance of this linkage, we not only create an urban sanctuary but also promote greener, more cohesive communities.



Reinstating the Laird Grid

The inherited Laird Grid is reinstated through comprehensive and infill development, using consistent building lines and frontage to define the perimeter of urban blocks. This confident edge condition enhances the formality and legibility of the grid, telling a story between the existing and new development and establishing a coherent urban fabric throughout.



A neighbourhood of many characters

Four distinctive character areas with a unique mix of buildings types, land uses, streets and open spaces creating a highly legible and varied place. United by their relationship to Dock Branch Park Argyle Quarter, Trinity Gardens, Egerton Point and Dock Branch Works all possess unique qualities and characteristics that respond to their different settings to establish a positive evolution in Birkenhead's character.

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.1 Overview

The Uses and Activities Mix Strategies relate closely to the Character and Townscape chapter, with character areas defining locations for concentrations of different uses across the Dock Branch Neighbourhood. The masterplan focuses on a rich mix of uses, seeking to reinforce existing strengths and unlock opportunity found across the study area and its environs.

Retail and leisure will be concentrated on Argyle Street and Market Street strengthening their existing role as a local centre of convenience shopping, specialist retail, food and beverage, leisure and community infrastructure. Promoted as Argyle Creative Quarter in the Local Plan, workspace will be targeted towards creative and cultural industries as well as traditional manufacturing, making and administrative activities.

Employment uses will be clustered on Cleveland Street, maintaining its focus as a commercial street frontage for industrious activities including automotive and marine engineering businesses. An industrious campus, this area will seek to 'add to' rather than replace, establishing a critical mass of other employment activities found within Birkenhead, including wood and metal work, wholesale and distribution and food and drink processing.

Cultural and leisure activities will be clustered in pockets on Argyle Street and Taylor Street, reinforcing existing anchors of Future Yard and Wirral Transport Museum, as well as taking advantage of the future opportunity presented by the new public realm and landscape design of Dock Branch Park.

Residential uses will be found across the Dock Branch Neighbourhood, bringing day to day activity and life back into Central Birkenhead. Different types of homes will bring people of all walks of life to the area, happily co-existing in a vibrant, urban neighbourhood alongside active commercial and employment uses.

Key moves informing land uses are:

- Maintain Birkenhead's economic balance towards production and supply chain activities over consumption, reinforcing diverse types of economic activity through different forms of employment space.
- Drive innovation and economic convergence between sectors and industries by encouraging a mix of industrious and commercial activities to find a home in Dock Branch Neighbourhood.
- Promote the Agent of Change principle where new development is responsible employing mitigation strategies to ensure established uses can remain in operation without unreasonable restrictions e.g. noise. See Local Plan policy WS 7.3 for more detail.
- Focus comparison and specialist retail on Argyle Street and Market Street to foster a distinctive, local catchment that supports a growing population, working to complement rather than compete with the town centre.
- Support Birkenhead's economic base by growing employment opportunities within target sectors and industries including creative and cultural production, engineering and manufacturing, health and well-being, and food and drink processing.
- Focus creative and cultural industries in Argyle Creative Quarter including digital and media, artisanal craft and making and performing arts and events.
- Build off the cultural, leisure and evening and night time economy offer that will be catalysed through creation of Dock Branch Park as a world class landscape, including live music, food and beverage, heritage, art and recreation.
- Successfully co-locate homes within this rich mix of activity to create a harmonious, vibrant and mixed use urban neighbourhood.



Land uses and activities framework

— Masterplan boundary

Use

Residential

Commercial: retail / office / leisure / community

Industrious: workshops / wholesale / employment

Flexible: residential / industrious / commercial

Low threshold enterprise space

Mixed use with residential on upper floors

Argyle Street Local Centre

Public realm

Hard public open space

Dock Branch Park

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.2 Unlocking innovation

Unlocking innovation

With its mix of businesses and workspaces, Dock Branch Neighbourhood is well placed to contribute to this growing culture of innovation, encouraging industries to expand beyond their traditional silos and birth an 'economy of convergence'. However, it is not the business ecology and workspace in isolation that can drive innovation, but a much wider series of 'hard' and 'soft' ingredients that are needed. The masterplan seeks to set these key conditions in place and are summarised as follows:

A mix and choice of homes

Dock Branch will provide a choice of different types of home. Local housing in a range of dwelling sizes, types and tenures to appeal to a broad range of demographic and socio-economic groups is a key component of a vibrant place. Variety and choice in the housing market enables people to stay in the area as they navigate career shifts, grow a family, downsize or couple up. Importantly, this will include different ways of living and accessing housing – including later living, co-housing, custom housing and community land trusts. These alternative housing models and products can diversify the existing housing offer and embed mixed communities from the outset, avoiding homogeneous and ghettoised neighbourhoods.

Vibrant mix of jobs, leisure and culture

A mix of employment, leisure and cultural activities are an essential part of making a resilient, lively place that boosts place appeal. Introducing these complementary uses to urban neighbourhoods, an inclusive and distinct offer can be curated that breaks down barriers between sectors, residential and business communities, giving rise to innovative initiatives. For instance, dual use includes the opening up of workspace and venues as common platforms for after-hours community use, helping keep a place alive into the evening, whilst giving something valuable back to citizens.

Meanwhile uses

The delivery of regeneration is phased over a long period and there is widespread acknowledgement of the value of meanwhile projects bring for economically inclusive and socially redistributive growth, alongside commercial benefits of raising footfall and awareness of what is to come. Rather than sitting vacant and dormant, meanwhile projects should activate sites and buildings with initiatives that engage local people and businesses, building a sense of momentum and catalyse collaboration between diverse sets of actors. The best examples can be considered 'worthwhile' projects that are locationally specific and seek to address gaps in local provision, including access to nature, education, training and skills, arts and culture and enterprise space. Such meanwhile uses could extend to an engaging programme of events throughout the year that utilise the spaces within the Dock Branch Neighbourhood and attract a broad audience.

New stewardship models

Meaningful regeneration is a long term process that requires patience and commitment and new forms of stewardship are essential ingredients in steering this process. Agile governance includes a blend of public, private and third sector collaboration – providing the right combination of vested interest and long term vision to coordinate, co-invest and sequence growth over time, as the place matures and develops. New forms of stewardship can include Neighbourhood Forums, Business / Community Improvement Districts, Community Land Trusts, landowner campuses / estates etc. These partnerships between actors often benefit from access to diversified funding streams and are typified by long-term value-added growth that focus on initial upfront investments that yield a slower, but greater return over time.

Robust public realm and diverse landscape

The public realm is the essential binding agent of the urban fabric, where connectivity, permeability and walkability can stitch previously dislocated areas back into their surroundings. Reducing physical barriers and permitting access can grant areas a dynamic purpose beyond their immediate use, functioning as integral parts of the wider urban area. They can be democratic and inclusive places to explore, linger and meet – unlocking opportunities for people from different walks of life to meet, spurring chance encounters, social connections and creative exchange. The public realm is also the platform to amplify urban greening and with it, biodiversity and climate resilience. Green infrastructure has innumerable co-benefits that include habitat creation, improved air quality, reduced noise disturbance, drainage and water management, alongside improved physical and mental health and well-being – particularly important for dense urban areas.

Affordable workspace

Different types of workspace are essential to establishing a diverse employment base. Dock Branch Neighbourhood is uniquely placed in Birkenhead to act as a base for cultivating new business. Its collection of small workspaces can act as an important rung in the ladder of accommodation needed to support SMEs from start-ups to moving on space for growing businesses. Securing the affordability of workspace in perpetuity is particularly important to secure inclusive economic growth, supporting the retention and creation of locally accessible employment opportunities that may otherwise risk being displaced. This usually involves public sector intervention to initiate different mechanisms including public ownership, social value leasing strategies, low specification spaces and collaboration with registered workspace providers.

Repurposed and revitalised heritage

Dock Branch Neighbourhood is blessed with a variety of heritage buildings and structures. Breathing new life into these buildings with adaptive reuse projects should be a priority, alongside new development. Heritage adds meaning and identity to new developments, injecting moments of surprise and a richness that create interest in the urban grain. As well as having embodied carbon and social history benefits, they often provide opportunity for diversifying the types of work and community spaces. High streets, such as Argyle Street, tend to be fine grain and offer a high density of smaller spaces; establishing a high surface area of accessible, good value space. This can prove fertile ground for interaction between business and civil society, often bringing resilience to local communities and acting as a platform for new patterns of living and working.

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.3 Retail

The migration towards online shopping, increasing shift towards hybrid working as a result of Covid-19 and the sustained popularity of out-of-town retail shopping have continued to structurally reshape the retail market. Many traditional high street locations, such as Birkenhead, have continued to struggle with reduced footfall and increased retail voids and as such the 2040 Framework seeks to deliver the transformational regeneration of the town centre including the removal of surplus retail space and the provision of a new market hall, leisure and hospitality, residential and office space. Therefore, any demand for traditional retail uses should continue to be focused and consolidated in the town centre to support its regeneration, rather than within the urban edge area of Dock Branch Neighbourhood.

Whilst there does remain a role for retail within the neighbourhood, it is critical that the retail type, size and mix plays a complementary, rather than competitive role to the town centre. Indeed, locations able to provide a differentiated, convenience 'shop local' and specialised independent offer have continued to fare well.

Designated as a Local Centre within the Local Plan, Argyle Street and Market Street play an important role in meeting the needs of an immediate residential and business population – catchment and demand that is likely to increase as the Dock Branch Masterplan and wider regeneration of Birkenhead is delivered. Independent convenience and specialist retail should be concentrated in these locations, accommodated within the ground floors of infill development and existing building stock, with active uses suitable on upper floors for the latter, such as storage, office or residential use.

Historical streets for commerce and trade, they are characterised by small ground floor units found within older building stock. This type and specification of space are often key ingredients in providing fertile ground for independent convenience or specialised retail, which are unsuited to larger commercial premises or do not have the scale or strength of covenant to support new build development. Further, their heritage townscape can create additional added value through unique character.

Specialist retail therefore has a role to play along these frontages, particularly those within the arts selling bespoke and craft items. This taps into both Birkenhead's growing economy of cultural production and the promotion of Argyle Creative Quarter in the Local Plan, seeking to encourage agglomeration of similar creative industries. Similarly, as the number of homes increases within the neighbourhood and Central Birkenhead more widely, demand for convenience retail is likely to grow and should be concentrated along these key frontages, alongside related everyday services such as hair salons and barbers, cafés, pharmacies etc.

Some limited convenience retail is currently found on Freeman Street and is an important resource, within walking distance of a growing population of students at Wirral Met College (Wirral Waters Campus) and employees at the both The Hythe and Kingsgate Tower Wharf buildings, amongst other employment uses around the docks. A small but significant role, the retail offer in this location should be supported albeit at a scale appropriate to the future business and population growth of the area, for example as a ground floor use to a residential building.

Wholesale forms an important part of Birkenhead's wider economy of goods flows, with a number of units on Tower Road servicing construction and property and manufacturing and fabrication industries. Benefitting from good access to the strategic movement network, these businesses should be retained but their setting transformed, to maximise their adjacency to Dock Branch Park. Operating from trade counters and specialising in sales of paint, electrical supplies, windows and flooring etc. the operations of these businesses can be compatible with residential co-location if carefully managed. New mixed use development in this area could reprovide floorspace at ground floor for these businesses, with residential accommodated above.

Retail key moves:

- Reinforce convenience and independent retail on Argyle Street and Market Street, in accordance with their Local Centre designation in the Local Plan.
- Protect building stock on Argyle Street and Market Street that offer small, good value ground floor retail units as an important resource for encouraging independent, specialist retail.
- Ensure new and expanded retail uses are differentiated within the Dock Branch Neighbourhood so as not to directly compete with the established town centre and its transformational regeneration programme.
- Support the existing convenience retail on Freeman Street and encourage enhancement as the residential, student and business population grows;
- Support economic continuity by re-providing space for wholesale businesses on Tower Road, accommodating these as active ground floor within wider mixed use development



Make It Happen - community hub, retail shop and social supermarket on Market Street, September 2023. Photo credit: © PeteCarr

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.4 Leisure, culture and evening and night time economy

The leisure and cultural offer in Dock Branch Neighbourhood is established with some key anchor uses including a number of live music venues such as Future Yard, Molly's Chambers and the Northern Power House, alongside the Wirral Transport Museum that acts as a key heritage and visitor destination. Pockets of leisure activity exist within the neighbourhood and its hinterland including gyms and fitness centres, virtual reality sports and escape rooms, alongside restaurants, bars and pubs that fall within the evening and night time economy more widely.

This existing offer demonstrates a modest but palpable market for leisure and culture that is likely to grow following the transformation of Dock Branch Park, itself a major visitor attractor for those in Birkenhead, Wirral and the wider north west region.

Whilst any large scale commercial leisure development e.g. bowling, gyms etc. should be focused within the town centre, opportunity exists to enhance the neighbourhood's offer with wider, complementary independent leisure and cultural activities such as small scale climbing centres, e-sports gaming and performing arts. These uses should be concentrated principally within existing building stock on Argyle Street and Market Street within the Argyle Creative Quarter, as well as clustered around the existing operators on Taylor Street. The latter provides a particularly appealing setting as this part of Dock Branch Park itself will be able to host some outdoor events and activities including outdoor cinema, street food and various markets, art installations and live music performances. A well curated programme of events throughout the year could appeal to a broad range of audiences, bringing people into Birkenhead and making best use of the enhanced outdoor space.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood is home to a limited evening and night time economy that comprises restaurants, bars, pubs, hot food takeaways and live music venues. Growing this offer will be a key component of successfully transforming Dock Branch's image into an appealing destination to live, work and visit. The evening and night time economy should be diversified towards a small scale, independent culture-led offer to include uses such as an independent cinema, boutique hotel, pop-up restaurants, food hall, exhibition space and performing arts venues; concentrating these on Argyle Street and Market Street. Food and drink operators benefit from complementary retail, employment and community uses and can be

particularly effective at extending the hours of activity and vibrancy into the evening. Likewise, innovative leasing strategies can help increase diversity in the offer and reduce operator outgoings, such as shared agreements between cafés that operate through the morning and afternoon, before operating as a bar or restaurant offer in the evening and night time.

Combining the world class landscape of Dock Branch Park, an enhanced leisure and culture offer and a diversified evening and night time economy provides real opportunity for linked trips and the cultivation of a truly distinctive and dynamic visitor economy. This has potential appeal to tourism at a regional and national scale, as well as the growing student and business populations around the docks seeking space to socialise after class and work.

Leisure, culture and evening and economy key moves:

- Enhancing the existing leisure and culture activity, concentrating these principally on Argyle Street and Market Street within the Local Plan Local Centre designation
- Reinforce existing clusters of leisure and culture found on Taylor Street, adding complementary uses that capitalise on the world class landscape of Dock Branch Park as a visitor destination for leisure, recreation and amenity
- Diversify the evening and night time economy towards a culture and experiential-led offer, concentrating these principally on Argyle Street and Market Street within the Local Plan Local Centre designation



*FestEvol music festival at Future Yard on Argyle Street.
Photo credit: © Robin Clewley*

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.5 Community uses and infrastructure

Community uses in Dock Branch Neighbourhood are currently found in parts of Argyle Street, Market Street and Cleveland Street and includes Future Yard CIC, Hamilton Medical Centre, Make It Happen, The Spider Project, Make Hamilton Square and Wirral Metropolitan College. These organisations comprise a mix of community-oriented arts, culture, health, education and skills activities and contribute significantly to the well-being of Birkenhead's diverse communities.

The proposed land use mix seeks to complement this existing offer by co-locating complementary uses to existing hubs of activity; and adding additional floorspace to expand and diversify the community-oriented offer.

Complementary uses include adding residential and commercial uses to increase the critical mass of people living, working and visiting the area. Increasing footfall and visitation can help grow the offer and raise awareness of existing community uses, in turn helping sustain their activities. This will particularly be the case for Argyle Street and Market Street, where concentrating retail and leisure uses will strengthen the existing local centre of community infrastructure.

Additional floorspace is proposed in the form of Low Threshold Enterprise Space (LTES), ground floors or car barns dedicated to community use. As well as providing active frontage onto streets and spaces, they are structurally flexible and basic in specification, intentionally so to 'lock in' their affordability. LTES should respond to the needs of communities but could include functions such as:

- Childcare nursery and play space
- Circular economy hub for recycling and repair
- Open access resources e.g. Library of Things
- Fitness and well-being hub
- Community event hall
- Renewable energy hub

LTES will be distributed across the neighbourhood at the ground floor of car barns on Adelphi Street, Cleveland Street and Corporation Street, approximately 50m from different parts of Dock Branch Park. This close proximity will encourage a close relationship and coordination between community activities within LTES and the park itself e.g. storage of community gardening equipment.

As well as providing physical space for community innovation, LTES should be operated by a community stewardship model, such as a community interest group. This collective ownership and stewardship will encourage community empowerment, acting as a vital conduit for existing and emerging communities to integrate and self-organise.

As regeneration in the neighbourhood is phased over time there is opportunity to make use of development plots for community-oriented initiatives. Rather than sitting vacant and dormant, meanwhile projects should activate development sites and buildings. Initiatives should be community-led and locationally specific - addressing gaps in local provision such as access to nature, education, training and skills, arts and culture and enterprise space. Meanwhile initiatives could be used to pilot similar uses that could form part of the long-term mix, such as those found within LTES. Meanwhile initiatives could include:

- Mobile allotments and nurseries
- Affordable workspace, studios and workshops
- Repair shop and Library of Things
- Community kitchen and cafe
- Rehearsal and performance space
- Skills and employment hub

Community uses and infrastructure key moves:

- Support existing community uses and infrastructure by growing resident, employment and visitor density in Dock Branch Neighbourhood
- Add complementary uses including retail and leisure, principally on Argyle Street and Market Street to support the Local Plan Local Centre designation
- Create Low Threshold Enterprise Space across the neighbourhood to increase floorspace dedicated to community use and stewardship
- Promote community-led meanwhile uses on development sites during the regeneration process



Fore Street Living Room Library provides a library, workstations, workshops and hosts performances, talks and advice surgeries. © Jan Kattein Architects



Angel Yard provides a meanwhile activation in the form of business incubation and lettable community space on a former garage site. © Jack Hobhouse



Artistic impression of Joy Well-being centre. Image credit: © Open Door Charity / Architectural Emporium



Make it Happen's 'Offering Opportunities' employment programme. Image credit: © Make it Happen

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.6 Nurturing Birkenhead's local economy

A distinctive local economy

Birkenhead is an industrious place with a proud heritage of production and innovation, including a number of historically strong industries within the maritime sector. It is strategically important at the regional scale, with Wirral Waters a part of the Mersey Waters Innovation Zone and sitting within the Liverpool City Region Freeport designation, whilst the 2040 Framework identifies maritime, modular construction and creative industries as growth sectors.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood's proximity to Wirral Waters and the fact it is home to a number of businesses within the economic ecology of maritime engineering, construction and creative industries (amongst others) means employment activity must continue to be an essential part of the land use mix. It is important that Birkenhead continues its historical balance of production over consumption, reinforcing its economic base and resilience by future-proofing the built form through inclusion of employment floorspace within the masterplan.

The neighbourhood can contribute to Birkenhead's economic resilience through continuity and diversity. That is to say, the masterplan supports the retention and reprovision of employment floorspace to enable the continued operation of established local businesses, whilst promoting additional types of space to diversify the types of businesses that can contribute to its sense of vitality and vibrance.

Detailed business engagement will be needed to understand the full suite of spatial and operational requirements of existing businesses on site. Where residential and mixed uses are proposed a detailed co-location strategy will be necessary to enable the successful mitigation of potential conflicts. The Local Plan Agent of Change policy WS 7.3 should also be used to place the onus on new development to ensure that established uses can remain in operation without unreasonable restrictions e.g. noise.

Productive and supply chain activities

Birkenhead is home to a rich ecology of commercial activities with many falling within the local sector strengths of health and well-being, manufacturing and engineering, food and drink processing and creative and cultural production. A number of established, growing and nascent businesses exist within these sectors and are frequently well integrated within the local and regional economic network of goods, services and labour flows. These tend

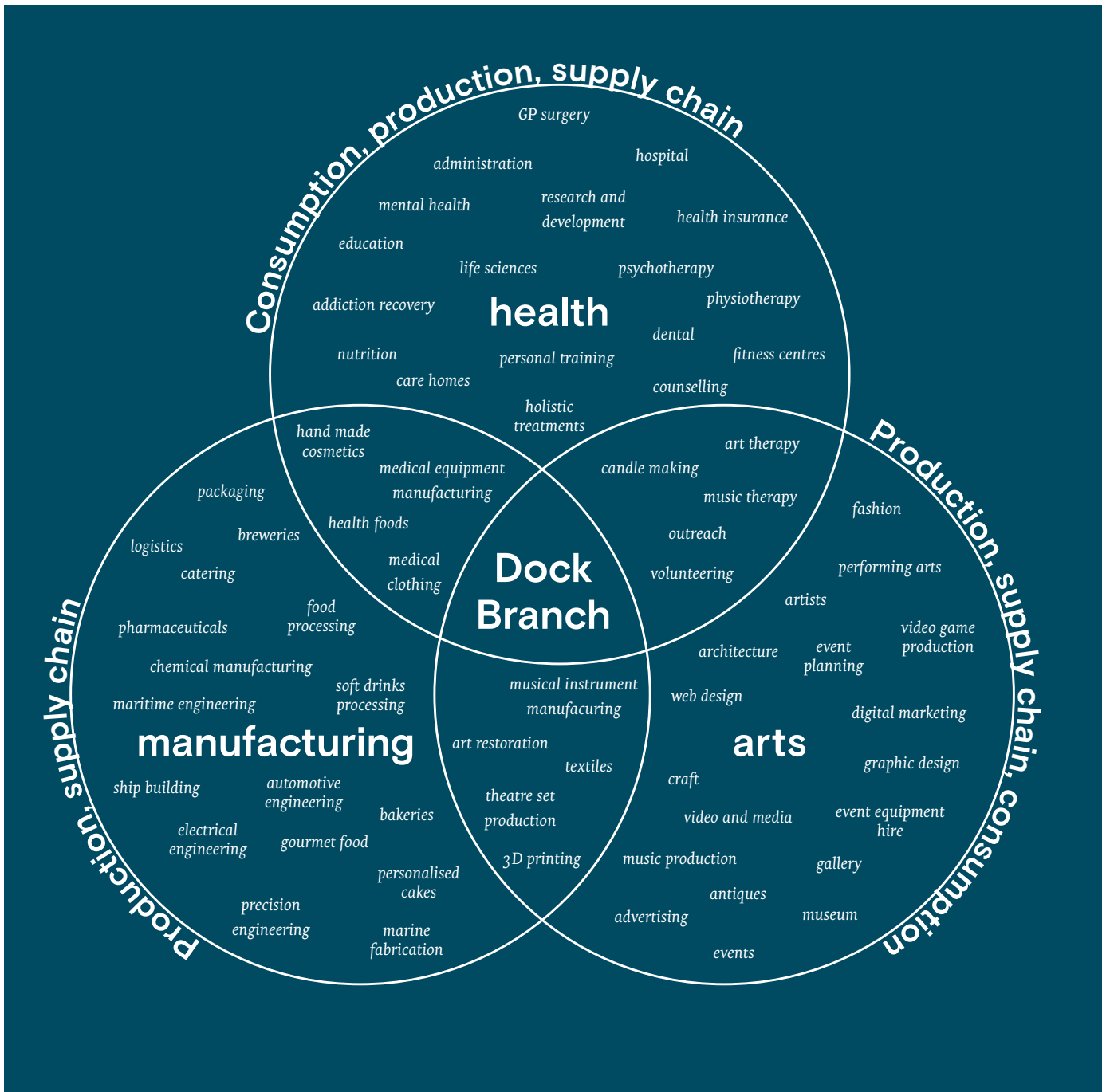
to be businesses that largely fall within the production and supply chain of goods and services, focusing on business to business trade rather than direct public-facing consumption.

Whilst by no means the primary employment location in Birkenhead, by targeting occupiers of these industries, Dock Branch Neighbourhood has a role to play in contributing to this momentum and is well placed to position itself within the wider economic strategy of Wirral and Liverpool City Region. Industrious workshops and flexible commercial workspace in the neighbourhood can provide a good value offer for micro and SMEs that would work well as a part of a vibrant urban neighbourhood mix, but might otherwise end up dispersed in isolated industrial estates or cottage industries due to a lack of suitable, available space. Clustering industries within the neighbourhood not only adds to the diversity of user and activity but offers economic possibilities of inter-industry collaboration and convergence that struggles to occur in silo.

Businesses within manufacturing sectors are likely to be attracted by the proximity of large scale anchor businesses at Wirral Waters and along the Left Bank and the opportunity for spin off work. Industries within the arts are likely to be drawn by the clustering of similar activities under the Argyle Creative Quarter. Industries within the health and well-being sectors are likely to be drawn by the specialisms of Wirral Met College and the transformation of Dock Branch Park as a destination for active and healthy lifestyles. Whilst general administrative industries can be accommodated within the neighbourhood, the town centre should be the primary destination for larger scale office based work.

Economy key moves:

- **Scale** – smaller space requirements for micro businesses and SMEs
- **Affordability** – good value, more affordable offer than Liverpool
- **Flexibility** – non-specialist, flexible space that can adapt to different occupier requirements, as well as flexible terms for short term leases
- **Connectivity** – digital connectivity and physical connectivity to transport infrastructure
- **Proximity** – to supporting services, facilities, infrastructure and related industries
- **Quality** – good quality, attractive environments to encourage face to face engagement, build culture, inspiration and creativity



All of these activities are found in Birkenhead, Wirral and the Liverpool City Region. They are generally weighted towards production and supply chain industries, with a number of activities coalescing between sectors. To continue Birkenhead's balance of production over consumption, we want to attract a rich mix of uses in the right locations, reinforcing the economic base and promoting inclusive growth opportunities for existing and emerging communities.

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.6 Supporting Birkenhead's economy

Industrious space

Industrious activities in Birkenhead include marine engineering, precision engineering and fabrication, automotive industries, carpentry and metalwork, commercial catering, coffee roasting, breweries, food and drink processing, handmade cosmetics, textiles and fashion, art and furniture restoration, handmade musical instruments, music recording and production, 3D printing, rapid prototyping and more. The majority of these businesses tend to be from the SME sector and are focussed upon smaller to mid-sized units that are relatively affordable and fit for purpose in terms of building quality.

These activities often find themselves hollowed out from urban areas undergoing transformation and are usually location specific, helping to reinforce local distinctiveness in a way that makes places attractive to live, work, visit and invest in. Their authenticity can be invaluable in that they are often highly embedded and committed to the local area and its supply chains, making them attractive to investors in a way that more footloose businesses in more generic regeneration opportunities may be, despite their sometime weaker covenant strength.

Given this rich ecology of industrious uses and long proud heritage of production in Birkenhead, small good quality workshops could be well suited to businesses within the local sector specialisms of food, health and marine manufacturing and engineering. Further, there currently appears to be a shortage of suitable available premises of this scale across the Birkenhead area, suggesting the potential for latent demand.

In contrast, some of the heavier industrious uses currently occupying sites and premises within the Dock Branch area currently detract from the physical environment, take up large plots of land and offer more limited economic value in terms of jobs and other benefits. Such uses include scrap yards and open storage. The Masterplan should seek to relocate such 'dirty uses' to appropriate sites outside of the Dock Branch area, recognising that they are likely to create conflicts with future proposed mixed use development whilst also occupying larger plots of land that could significantly contribute to the transformational regeneration of Birkenhead.

Incorporating suitable industrious uses into mixed use urban neighbourhoods not only reinforces economic resilience but contributes to animating the street at different times of the day with different types of users. This is a key component in making neighbourhoods feel safe and active, which may otherwise risk a sense of dormancy. A detailed co-location study will be necessary to identify strategies for mitigating any potential conflicts arising from mixing residential and industrious uses, including noise, air quality, odour, vibration etc. This should account for the effective stewardship, planning, design and delivery required to successfully overcome any such conflicts.

These industrious uses should be concentrated on Cleveland Street, reinforcing its character as an important mixed use spine route in Birkenhead, as well as in Dock Branch Works more widely to form an industrious campus. They should be accommodated within existing workshop buildings with access to shared service yards, as well as a long term aspiration in the ground floor of mixed use residential buildings where appropriate. These buildings need to be deep enough to accommodate a range of internal configurations, adaptable to support the changing needs of different occupiers. They can also be concentrated in selective parts of Argyle Street and Market Street where existing building stock exists, as part of a diverse commercial mix alongside retail and community uses.

However, the challenge will be viably delivering such spaces, particularly in new build development. Most occupiers are opportunistic and will take the most suitable and affordable space available at the required point in time for their business needs. SMEs will rarely deliver their own space unless their requirements are very specialist. A potential route forward could include collaboration with an operator of managed industrious space, providing flexible sub-leasing space to smaller businesses to minimise risk and maximise the benefits of agglomeration. It is likely the public sector will need to take a leading role in any such initiative, including the acquisition of suitable land or premises. The public sector is well placed to take a long term view to return on investment in terms of inclusive economic growth, opportunities to leverage social value, attract private sector investment and gradual increase in asset value.

Industrious uses key moves:

- Seek to relocate heavier industrious uses that detract from the physical environment and utilise large land parcels
- Concentrate uses on Cleveland Street and within Dock Branch Works, forming an industrious campus
- Some uses can be concentrated on Argyle Street and Market Street as part of a commercial mix
- Principally direct uses within existing building stock but explore opportunities to accommodate uses in ground floors of new mixed use development where conflicts can be effectively managed
- Concentrate front of house activities on building frontages to create active ground floors
- Effective stewardship, design and delivery is needed to enable harmonious co-location with residential and other types of uses e.g. soundproofing, access strategy, hours of operation, behaviour charter etc.



Coffee roasting is one of the industrious activities found within Wirral

Photo credit: © Adams & Russell Coffee Roasters

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.6 Supporting Birkenhead's economy

Commercial workspace

Technological and infrastructure advancements, increasingly globalised businesses and changing socio-economic trends have resulted in a significant structural shift of office demand. This has moved away from out of town business parks and secondary locations, such as Birkenhead, to large town and city locations offering the best opportunities for sectoral clustering and employee attraction and retention via good public transport accessibility and a wider amenity offer. Therefore, Dock Branch Neighbourhood is not best placed to support new build office development, which should be focused within Birkenhead Town Centre as part of its transformational regeneration.

However, Birkenhead is home to a mix of businesses that occupy commercial workspace within existing building stock, with legal, administrative and creative and cultural industries well represented. The latter includes activities including advertising and marketing, software and games development, digital media, music recording and production, architecture and design and more. These businesses are typically start-ups and SMEs that are suited to managed workspaces, providing access to small, good value office and studio workspace, flexible leasing, access to high quality facilities and close proximity to related industries.

These uses should be concentrated on Argyle Street and Market Street. Clustering such uses in this location will contribute towards the Argyle Creative Quarter, as designated within the Local Plan, and maximise the benefits of close proximity to related industries, offering opportunities for collaboration and networking. This should be principally accommodated within the adaptive re-use of existing building stock on ground and upper floors. Some public sector support may be required to provide flexible space and terms that can appeal to a wide variety of occupiers.

Notwithstanding commercial viability challenges, such uses can work well on the ground floor of new residential buildings as are much less likely to create conflicts in respect of noise and services than more industrious uses, whilst also serving to create footfall and vibrancy throughout the day. However, this should only be of a small scale that avoids direct competition with the emerging offer of the town centre.

Commercial workspace key moves:

- Flexible commercial workspace should be concentrated within Argyle Creative Quarter, particularly on Argyle Street and Market Street frontages
- Target industries include legal, administrative and creative and cultural industries
- Adaptive re-use of existing building stock should be the principal destination for flexible commercial workspace
- Promote opportunities for managed workspace and other models of affordable workspace, providing good value options for start-ups and SMEs



International House, Brixton is owned by the public sector and operated by a not-for-profit workspace provider, where every desk or space bought by a business, another desk is given away free of charge to a community organisation, charity or experimental/innovative enterprise. Photo credit: © International House / 3Space



Bell's Hair and Beauty Training Academy - a different type of ground floor commercial activity, providing alternative education from their base on Argyle Street, September 2023. Photo credit: © PeteCarr

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.7 Homes

As a sustainable urban location, Birkenhead and the Dock Branch Neighbourhood are well placed to play an important role in contributing towards Wirral's identified future housing need. Indeed, 6 of the 11 Regeneration Areas identified within the Local Plan that form the strategic focus of future housing allocations are located within the Birkenhead 2040 Framework Area. The Framework itself states that there will be over 21,000 new homes delivered in Birkenhead supporting an increase of 46,000 people, with over 2,700 new homes coming forward within the Central Birkenhead area.

Residential will form the principal land use across the mixed use Dock Branch Neighbourhood, delivering the new homes much needed across Birkenhead. A key aspect of the residential strategy focuses on how to accommodate the right type of housing in different locations, whilst carefully integrating it with other uses where appropriate. Dock Branch Neighbourhood presents a unique opportunity to provide and test a broad mix of residential options in terms of type, size, tenure and model that diversifies and enhances the local offer. The key will be to create a distinct offer that complements the wider residential-led regeneration opportunities in Birkenhead.

The following provides an overview of the area-wide strategy, for more information on specific recommendations across the neighbourhood please see the Character Areas chapter.

Type and tenure

A variety of typologies are appropriate for Dock Branch Neighbourhood including urban terraces and townhouses, stacked maisonettes and apartments within new build development, as well as conversion of some existing buildings. In some locations residential development should be single use and in others it will be appropriate to accommodate homes above non-residential active ground floors. In all cases, it is essential for homes to have well designed individual or communal front doors on to streets, taking care not to break up commercial frontages where relevant.

The neighbourhood falls largely across the Urban Core and Town Centres Density Zone, with a smaller area north of Cleveland Street sitting with the Waterfront Density Zone. The Local Plan stipulates a minimum density requirement of 60 and 70 dwellings per hectare, respectively. However, the 2040 Framework suggests that densities could be much higher in some areas where there is a clear design rationale. These optimum densities can be accommodated by efficient use of space, using infill and comprehensive development to define perimeter blocks and utilise shared amenity and servicing space within the blocks. Indeed, the target densities additionally support the need for mixed use development in the right locations, with residential sitting above active ground floors.

The Malings, Newcastle-upon-Tyne is a mixed neighbourhood of different housing types and outdoor spaces. Cycle stores, recycling areas and communal allotments are seen as opportunities to promote informal encounters between neighbours.



Dock Branch Neighbourhood is well placed to deliver a real mix of dwelling sizes across a diverse mix of typologies, creating real choice in the local market through a different but complementary offer. The Local Plan requires all new housing development to deliver a minimum of 30% of units with minimum of 3 bedrooms within Regeneration Areas, including across flats, maisonettes, townhouses and terraces. The residential strategy seeks to deliver this requirement across the entire masterplan area, rather than individual buildings or plots in order to best respond to specific market and character conditions. However, each phase of delivery will include a proportion of family sized homes (3 bedroom+), alongside 1 and 2 bedroom homes to encourage mixed communities.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood should deliver homes across a mix of tenures, taking a 'tenure neutral' approach where there is no discernible change in space standards, quality of housing, storage, private amenity space and public realm between tenures. The Local Plan states a target of 10% affordable of which 25% should be First Homes. The remainder of homes within the neighbourhood can be split across market housing for owner occupation and the private rented sector, whilst both present commercial viability challenges, both are considered higher value uses to some alternatives.

Specialist Residential

It is widely acknowledged that there is a national trend towards an ageing population. Wirral's population is projected to grow between 2018-2043 by 1.4% and see a 33.3% increase in those aged 65+. In terms of housing for an aging population, there are a number of 'sub-sectors', though common requirements include easy access to public transport and amenities (shops, health facilities, post offices, social and leisure etc.), and a safe living environment. There is an increasing emphasis on quality of provision, in terms of design, facilities and on-site services and Dock Branch Neighbourhood is well placed to respond to these needs – particularly in regards to specialist providers of accommodation (with care staff on-site providing some or full specialist care) where there could be a gap in the market.

Despite being a comparatively more affordable location, Birkenhead is unlikely to see demand as a destination for student accommodation as most are seeking the full student experience of city life and investors remain focused on sites within easy walking distance of campus. Wirral Metropolitan College and sees the majority of its students as Wirral based adults within existing housing provision and therefore do not generate significant student accommodation demand.

As Birkenhead continues its regeneration and becomes an increasingly desirable destination to live, work and visit, the student population may grow alongside wider residential trajectories. In this scenario, whilst Dock Branch Neighbourhood is likely to be an attractive proposition for students (owing to its appealing mix of good value, leisure and culture), there is unlikely to be sufficient demand for a new student accommodation facility and this demand will be met by the private rented sector provision.

4.2 USES AND ACTIVITIES MIX FRAMEWORK

4.2.7 Homes

Housing Models

Dock Branch Neighbourhood should see a diverse mix of innovative housing models coming forward, including alternative solutions to delivering affordable homes. The following case studies illustrate successful models of housing delivery that could be considered and their potential role for delivery in the neighbourhood.

SME developers

Little Kelham, Sheffield by Citu

- SME developers and housebuilders can offer routes to delivery of new homes. Often regionally based, SME firms tend to focus on smaller sites and play an active role in local communities and their economies through investing in infrastructure and supporting employment through recruitment and training schemes. They can often be more agile and willing to take on and deliver smaller sites early, which may otherwise take longer to unlock. There are increasing options to reduce barriers to entry for SMEs and opening up of access to funding, including Homes England providing targeted development finance.
- Potential: short to medium term, opportunities for collaboration with Merseyside SME developers and housebuilders.



Little Kelham, Sheffield by Citu

Modern Methods of Construction

New Islington, Manchester by Urban Splash

- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) provide opportunities to increase delivery by reducing costs and construction time needed on site, in turn reducing costs passed onto the buyer. There are also numerous indirect benefits including local supply chains and reduced environmental impacts both onsite and through transportation. Making use of modular construction is particularly relevant as a growth sector for the Liverpool City Region, alongside the specialisms being offered in Wirral Metropolitan College and its partnership with Wirral Waters.
- Potential: medium to long term, opportunities to collaborate with Wirral Metropolitan College in the delivery of training and skills, plus procurement clubs that bring together several local authorities and MMC solutions to scale up volume and reduce costs further.



New Islington, Manchester by Urban Splash

Co-housing

Hive Living, Sheffield

- Individual dwellings have access to shared amenities such as common rooms, kitchens, dining spaces, play space, guest bedrooms, courtyards and gardens. These shared facilities offer a flexible, communal way of living that can reduce the need for specific uses in individual dwellings that may otherwise be surplus or underutilised. Residents shared responsibilities for the running and management of shared facilities and contribute financially through a service charge.
- Potential: medium to long term, requires identification of suitable land, developers, designers, funding and engaged prospective occupants.



Hive Living, Sheffield by Grantside

Community Land Trust

Citizens House, Unity Way, Lewisham

- Ability to provide genuinely affordable homes in perpetuity by linking the sale price of homes to average local incomes, using innovative covenants require residents sell on at a similar level, giving new local people a chance to buy a home they can afford.
- Potential: medium to long term, requires public sector intervention to identify, acquire and transition ownership of land to an operational Community Land Trust.



Citizens House, Unity Way, Lewisham by London CLT / Lewisham Citizens

Custom housing

Blenheim Grove, London by Unboxed Homes

- As opposed to self-build plots, custom housing can be delivered at volume including apartment buildings. Custom housing can include several products such as 'raw shell fit out' that delivers habital homes complete with electricity, heating and a basic bathroom. By limiting the fit out to these basic specifications, prospective homebuyers are able to access high street mortgages and deliver a personalised finish at their own pace.
- Potential: short to medium term, suitable for pioneer residents but can be switched to full specification homes should demand not take off.



Blenheim Grove, London by Unboxed Homes

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.1 Dock Branch Park

Dock Branch Park has undergone thorough design and appraisal throughout RIBA O1 and into RIBA Stage O2 at which point a landscape design report was produced.

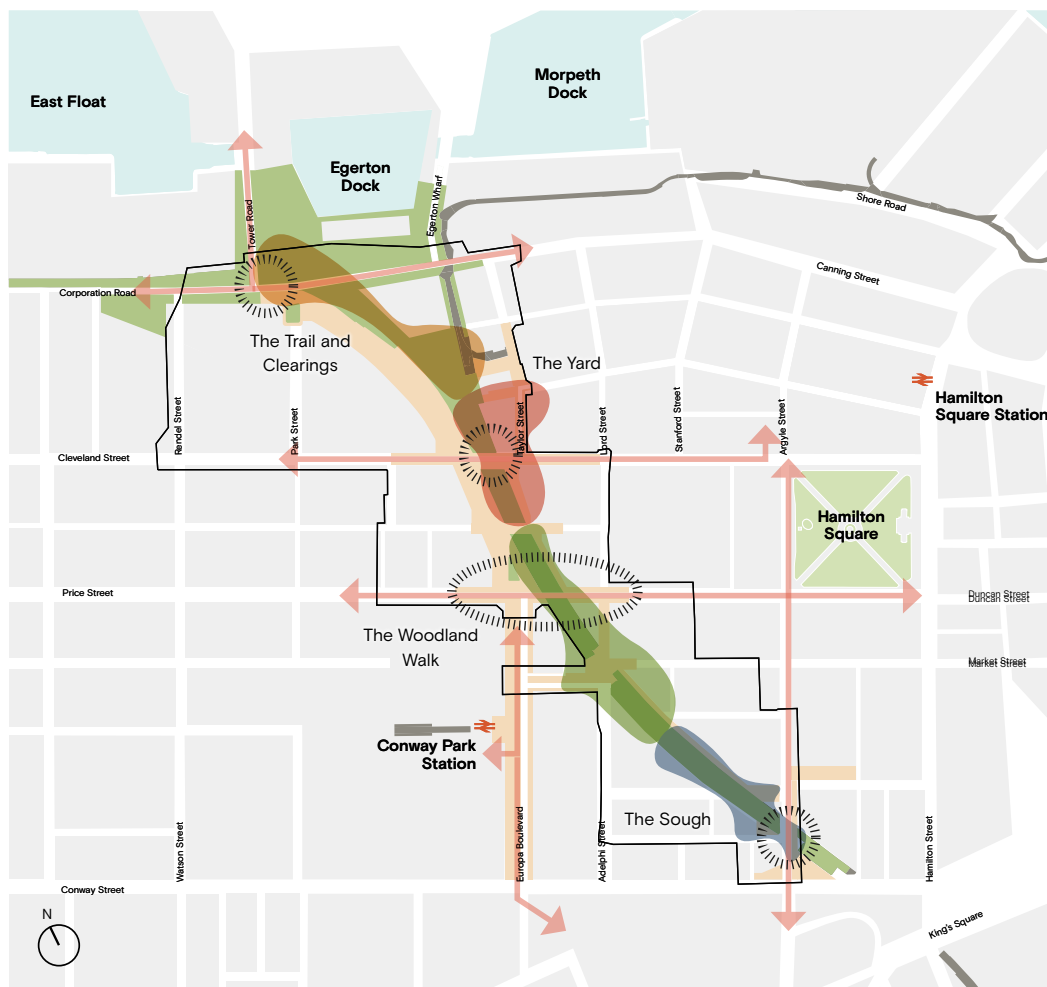
The design for the park is currently being refined with Wirral Borough Council and the design team, with public consultation having taken place in July 2023. This work will feed into design development of the park at RIBA Stage O3.

The park will have its own characteristics and spatial principles which have influence over the design of the surrounding streets, spaces and neighbourhoods.

The adjacent plan shows:

- Main character areas of the park:
 - The Trail & Clearings
 - The Yard
 - The Woodland Walk
 - The Sough
- Key strategic connections providing access
- Gateways / thresholds / reveals at the interface with the park

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| — Masterplan boundary | ■ The Woodland Walk |
| ➔ Key Strategic Connections | ■ The Sough |
| ☼ Gateways & Thresholds to park | ■ Hard public open space |
| ■ The Trail and Clearings | ■ Dock Branch Park |
| ■ The Yard | |



Dock Branch Park character area framework

4.3.2 Public realm

Running from north-west to south-east, Dock Branch Park is a significant new piece of public realm, linking major regeneration projects including Wirral Waters, Dock Branch Neighbourhood, Birkenhead Town Centre and Hind Street Garden Village. Alongside the park is The Promenade, a hard landscape public space and movement corridor, running parallel with the park before meeting the top of Europa Boulevard. Weaving their way across these are two primary street types - Tree Streets and Wild Streets.

The interfaces between these street typologies where they connect through with Dock Branch Park and The Promenade are key drivers for defining the landscape character of these spaces.

Besides Dock Branch Park and The Promenade, Tree Streets are the primary movement corridors through the neighbourhood. They provide direct connections between homes and community facilities along established routes. Their defining characteristic will be avenues of tree planting and structural landscaping which provides enhanced definition and enclosure to the streetscene, and emphasises key views.

Wild Streets are secondary to Tree Streets and are therefore generally comparatively informal. They provide opportunities to relax, meet, play and take time away from the day. The character of Tree Streets and Wild Streets will ultimately be influenced by adjacent use of the surrounding context.

- Masterplan boundary
- Dock Branch Park North
- Tree Streets
- Wild Streets
- The Promenade
- Green link to Wirral Waters
- Neighbourhood Spaces
- Hard public open space



Public realm framework

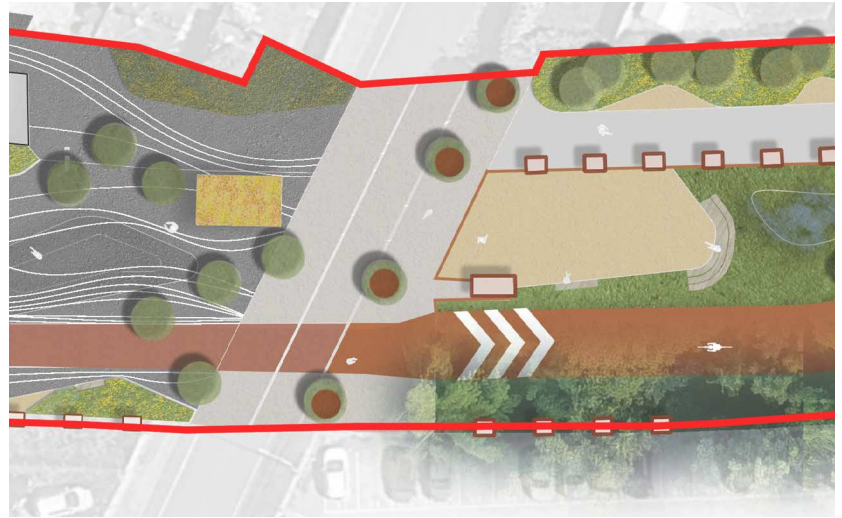
4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.2 Public realm

Dock Branch Park

Dock Branch Park will embrace the existing wilderness of the railway cutting whilst sensitively integrating the infrastructure required to develop an exciting, accessible and unique destination parkland for the people of Birkenhead and beyond.

The park forms an important new active travel route connecting Wirral Waters with Birkenhead town centre and opens up connectivity with the surrounding street network.

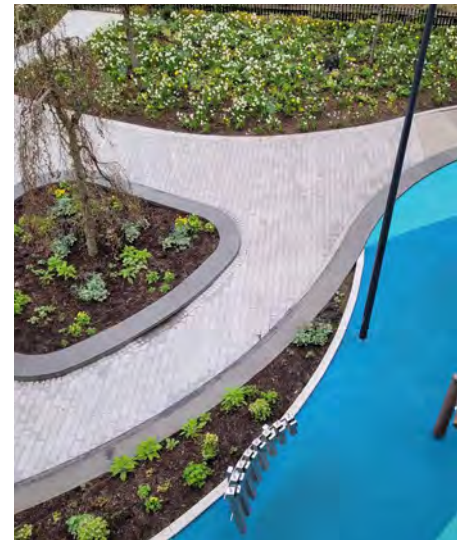


Excerpt of draft Dock Branch Park design

The Promenade

The promenade will provide a highly accessible route that provides a safe north / south connection to the western edge of the park. It will tie into the surrounding street grid, walking and cycling networks and local bus and train stations.

Raised viewing platforms, walkways and planted terraces will make this a destination space as well as a key component of the active travel network.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Neighbourhood Spaces

Neighbourhood spaces will combine hard and soft landscaped elements to create multifunctional spaces that facilitate informal amenity and recreational use.

The spaces will provide features such as community growing containers, outdoor dining, edible planting, nature trails and educational elements to foster a sense of ownership and encourage interaction. The spaces will host planned and ad hoc community events throughout the year.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Tree Streets

Tree Streets are the key movement corridors through the neighbourhood.

Whilst the Tree Streets will support vehicular movement, street design will promote pedestrian and cycle movements, as well as maximising tree canopy cover.

Tree Streets will be lined with trees to reduce urban heating and provide opportunities for rest or outdoor recreation at regular intervals.



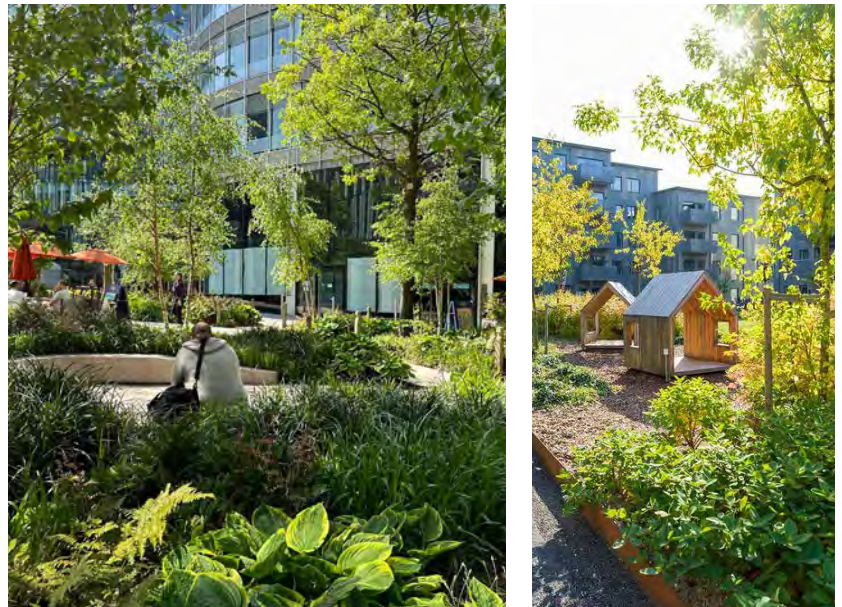
Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Wild Streets

Wild Streets will have a more informal character and form spaces where activity is promoted over the use of cars.

Recreation, play and biodiversity are important aims for Wild Streets.

As suggested by the name, these streets will feel 'wild' and will be well-vegetated by native and non-native species. Materials and planting will be used to create a series of intimate spaces which facilitate a range of activities.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.3 Enhanced and connected habitats

Streets as wildlife corridors

The Tree Streets and Wild Streets will form important corridors which connect fragmented pockets of existing habitats, notably Dock Branch Park, Hamilton Square and Europa Boulevard. Pocket green spaces distributed throughout new streets and neighbourhood spaces will form strategic habitat stepping stones which link to larger areas of green space in the local area such as the Docks, Mersey Estuary, Birkenhead Park, Mersey Park and Victoria Park.

Impactful wildflower planting along streets will encourage pollinators by adding colour and interest to the route. Swathes of wildflowering grassland and a range of planting typologies in larger amenity areas will be allowed to naturalise over time.

Mosaic habitats

There will be numerous complimentary habitat areas of varying scale and character throughout the neighbourhood. The design of each space will take inspiration from nature and natural systems and prioritise locally important biodiversity. Biodiverse swales, raingardens, linear wetlands and ponds will provide sustainable storm water management, whilst providing varied ecological environments for wildlife.

New neighbourhood spaces

All spaces will have an ecological function and encourage positive contact between people and nature. Form and layout will balance social and ecological functionality, including biodiversity, play, recreation and education.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Dock Branch Park neighbourhood positively responds to the requirement for biodiversity net gain through the retention and enhancement of existing high-value biodiversity assets (including retained trees and vegetation within the park and tree avenue along Europa Boulevard). Where loss of habitat is required to facilitate development, mitigation/compensation measures will be delivered within areas of enhanced open spaces throughout the neighbourhood.



Wildlife and habitat framework

- Masterplan boundary
- ▨ Retention of existing habitats
- Tree Streets
- ||| Wild Streets
- Habitat stepping stones
- New neighbourhood spaces
- Dock Branch Park
- Hard public open space

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.3 Enhanced and connected habitats

Existing trees, woodland and ground flora

Existing trees, woodland and ground flora will be retained where possible, and managed and enhanced with complimentary planting.

Existing trees will be supplemented with complementary planting to create ecologically rich spaces that attract wildlife.



Precedent illustrating indicative planting design

Naturalised areas

Space will be made available to create a variety of habitat types which will be allowed to naturalise and flourish to support a range of wildlife. A more relaxed management in selected informal areas will allow habitat types to reach their full ecological potential.



Precedent illustrating indicative planting design

Wildflower meadows

Mixes will be selected to create urban meadows throughout the neighbourhood to enhance biodiversity. Wildflowering mixes will be distributed within grassed areas and along verges and swales to enhance habitat provision, aid storm water management and provide seasonal colour and interest.

The selection of native and non-native wildflowers and grasses will provide a range of habitats for birds and pollinators.



Precedent illustrating indicative planting design

Habitat hotels, houses and boxes

New insect hotels, bird houses and bat boxes in key locations will provide additional habitat for wildlife. These features will provide an excellent ecological and educational resource whilst contributing to the contemporary and colourful aesthetic demonstrated by the wider materials palette.



Precedent illustrating indicative planting design

Microforests

Microforests are areas of densely planted trees (3-4 per sqm) using species found in the local area.

The planting of microforests where space permits will help establish Dock Branch Neighbourhood as a leader in efforts towards climate resilience and biodiversity enhancement. They will draw on the character of existing tree groups, and absorb air pollution from adjacent roads.



Precedent illustrating indicative planting design

Roofscapes

The roofs of buildings offer a great opportunity to further enhance habitat provision throughout the neighbourhood.

There is potential to integrate native flowering meadow, sedum matting and self-seeding brown roofs with solar panels to maximise biodiversity and energy efficiency.

Provision of integrated bird and bat boxes will help provide nesting opportunities away from people and vehicles at street-level.



Precedent illustrating indicative planting design

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.4 Recreation, animation and play

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will provide an integrated network of multifunctional routes and spaces where recreation, animation and play will be focused. Recreational routes will provide dedicated footways and cycleways which are separated from traffic on key routes. Rest stops, seating areas and space for informal play will be provided to encourage active use. For additional guidance see Local Plan policy WS 5.2.

Destination play

A key aspiration for Dock Branch Park is the delivery of an exciting and interactive play space in a central location. Children and carers living within and moving through the neighbourhood will be encouraged to use Dock Branch Park as a destination play space.

Fields In Trust (FiT) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play recommends that new homes should be within a 10-15 minute walk (or 1,000m) from a Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play. The entire neighbourhood is comfortably within 1,000m of this central location.

Equipped play spaces

A series of smaller formal spaces for play will be provided in green spaces and pocket parks at regular intervals throughout the neighbourhood. The FiT Guidance recommends that new homes should be within a 5 minute walk (or 400m) of Local Equipped Areas for Play. The 5 minute walk isochrone shown opposite is based on a radius of 400m, minus 120m - the assumed length of accessible ramps into Dock Branch Park from street level. This demonstrates a realistic 5 minute walk based on known constraints.

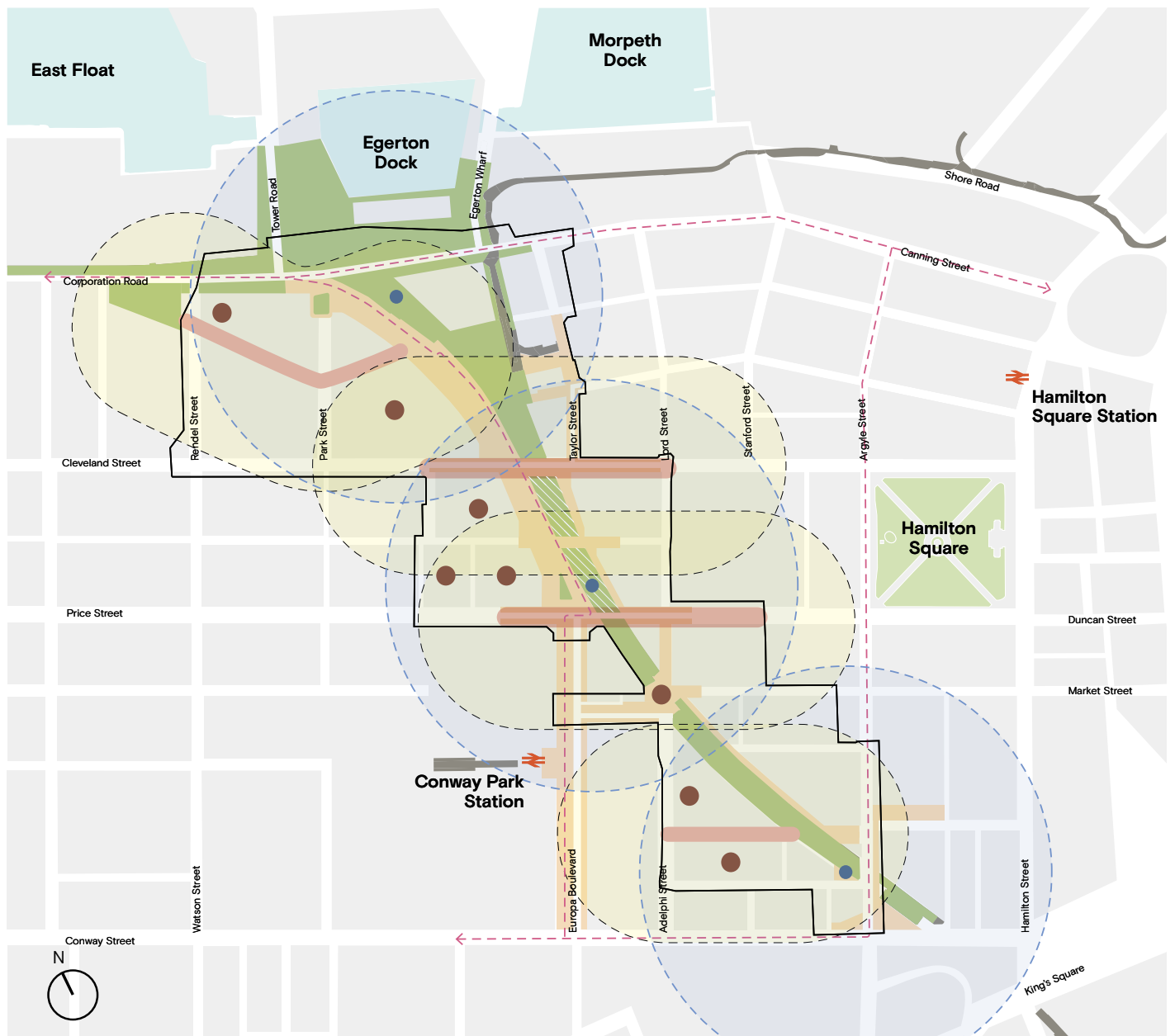
Key play streets / trim trails

These safe, active and inclusive spaces will be designed to encourage use by the local community. The 1-2 minute walk isochrone demonstrates a 100m offset from each play street / trim trail.

Overall it can be demonstrated that each home will be within a 1-2 minute walk of either a play street or equipped play space.

Community food production

Will be provided in a central and accessible location. This may include formal shared plots and space to meet and trade, and also informal foraging through planting of edible species.



Recreation and play framework

- Recreational routes
- ▨ Destination for Play
- Equipped play
- Key play streets / trim trail
- Community Food Production
- Up to 5 minute walk
- 1-2 minute walk

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.4 Recreation, animation and play

Recreational routes

Range of trails to provide active travel connections between community destinations and services along logical desire lines.

Footpaths and cycleways will weave through soft landscaped spaces and provide numerous opportunities to stop, meet, relax and play.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Community food production

Raised beds for communal use will be provided in a central location to maximise access by the local community. Space should also be provided to grow, buy, sell and interact.

Provision of 'edible streets' will encourage informal foraging for fruit, nuts, berries, vegetables and herbs that local people could use for cooking.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Key play streets / trim Trail

Play streets will function as informal spaces throughout the neighbourhood and will offer opportunities for small children and their parents / carers to stop and play on their journey along the route.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Destination play in Dock Branch Park

The destination play space will be designed to offer natural elements as play features for children to interact with – such as land form, rocks, fallen trees, vegetation and thickets. The concept offers greater imaginative play value for children allowing them to explore nature and tackle risks in a controlled environment.

High quality play equipment will be delivered within the space to allow children to swing, climb and slide. There is a great opportunity to deliver bespoke design and play features which reflect the area’s rail heritage.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Equipped play

Opportunities for incidental play will be provided in informal common spaces close to people’s homes. These spaces will be designed to appeal to all ages as a place for incidental play and social interaction.

They will be versatile spaces that are accessible to the whole community for a variety of uses, such as a meeting place for friends or taking a quick break during a walk home from school. They will include themed play equipment but should also provide natural and interactive play elements such as stepping / climbing logs, boulders, landform and sensory planting.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.5 Nature-based sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

The Dock Branch Park neighbourhood presents an excellent opportunity to create an integrated network of SuDS which meets the requirements for water quality and flood protection, including allowance for the climate emergency.

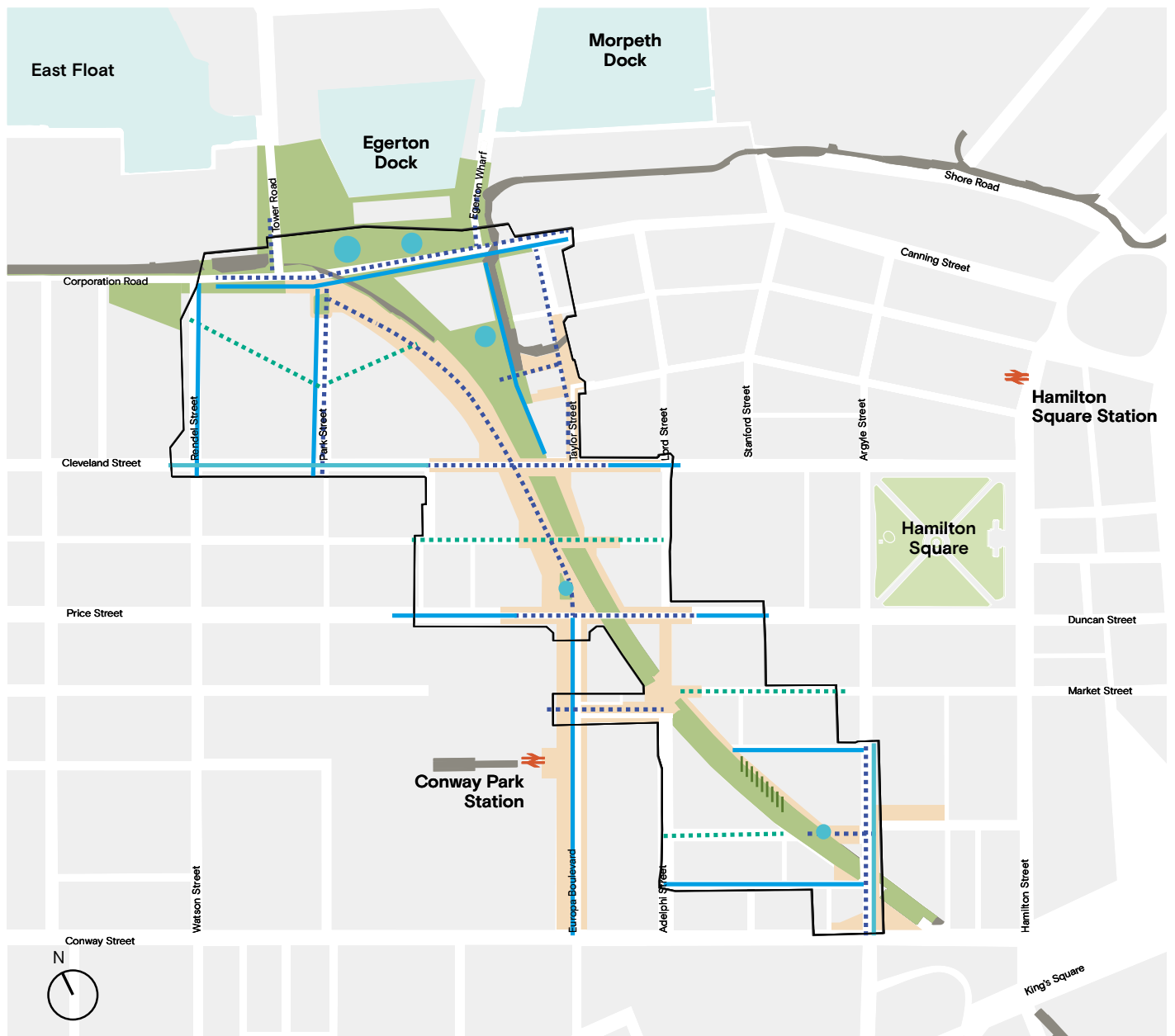
The SuDS network will form a natural drainage system, working with the topography and natural environment to shape how water will be conveyed and used. The relationship between street-level SuDS and drainage within the park will be explored as part of the development of detailed designs. Ultimately the masterplan seeks all attenuation to be done within public realm and network of green and blue spaces.

SuDS form a key part of the green infrastructure network of public open spaces and will become a character-defining placemaking feature which enriches the experience of those living within or passing through the neighbourhood. There is also opportunity for SuDS to form part of an educational programme for local schools.

A range of SuDS will be appropriate, including:

- Permeable Paving
- Rain Gardens
- Urban Swale
- Informal Swale
- Detention Basin

Precedents of each SuDS typology are set out overleaf. Further detail regarding SuDS character is provided later in this section.



Urban drainage framework

- Rain gardens
- Urban swale
- Informal swale
- Detention basin
- ➔ SuDS system to be delivered with Dock Branch Park
- ▨ Area of existing marshy grassland in Dock Branch Park
- Dock Branch Park
- Hard public open space

4.3 OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.3.5 Nature-based sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

Permeable paving

Pavement surface for vehicular and/ or pedestrian traffic which allows surface water to infiltrate into the underlying structural layers.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will provide a variety of permeable surfaces that are responsive to the envisioned character areas. This includes loose aggregate, resin-bonded aggregate, concrete block paving, stone paving and timber.

Materials palettes are provided later in this section.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Rain garden

Shallow landscaped depression that reduces runoff rates and volumes and treats pollution with engineered soil and vegetation.

Rain gardens offer an opportunity to provide structure and planting in predominately urban areas. They will be planted with a mix of ornamental planting that is able to withstand standing water and drought.

Rain gardens will generally be more appropriate in formal open spaces and Tree Streets.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Urban swale

Linear channel running alongside streets or paths conveying water along the management train.

Generally landscaped with close-mown grass with opportunities for long grass or planting at base of slopes.

Potential to provide pockets of ornamental planting, tree planting and hard elements such as retaining elements and boulders to encourage activity.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Informal swale

Linear vegetated channel running alongside built edges or within areas of open space; generally for short lengths or along Wild Streets where the envisioned character is less formal and geared towards habitat provision.

Naturalistic landscape character with less frequent management regime, mimicking natural elements and processes and comprising native wetland and marginal planting of local provenance.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

Detention basin

Open area of soft landscape that is normally dry, except after major storm events. Basins will generally grassed with some naturalised and marginal planting.

Basins should be multifunctional and facilitate recreation or play during dry periods.

Opportunities to provide permanent standing water, with vegetated slopes which allow for a rise in water level during or after heavy rainfall.



Precedent illustrating indicative public realm and landscape design

4.4 MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK

4.4.1 Street hierarchy

Street hierarchy

A clear street hierarchy will be established in the masterplan area. A 'superblock' approach has been applied to the area whereby key streets have been identified for vehicular traffic travelling through the area on primary streets. Between the network of primary streets, a well-connected network of secondary and tertiary streets provide movement corridors for local traffic. Secondary streets will provide walking and wheeling routes with more activity than the quieter tertiary routes.

Street design

Well-designed streets will reduce the speed of traffic along them, creating a more pleasant environment for walking, wheeling, and cycling. Street design will discourage through vehicle movements across the park, encouraging local resident and business access only to create an almost "car free" environment.

Street design elements that can calm traffic include:

- Narrow driving lanes (with the option for physically or visually narrowed lanes)
- Tighter geometry at junctions (reduced corner radii)
- Pinch points (reducing to one-way traffic over short distances)
- Raised tables at junctions and/or continuous crossings (less suitable on streets with bus routes)
- Gateway treatments (signage, surface treatment, or buildouts to indicate the entrance to a low-speed environment)

These design features can be implemented at relatively low costs, like using paint to visually narrow streets, installing simple buildouts to create pinch points, and through using simple signage at gateways.

Combining these design features with nature based sustainable drainage solutions will help improve amenity and biodiversity while managing surface water as well as calming traffic. Green infrastructure, including tree planting, could be used at gateway treatments and pinch points. Lane narrowing can be achieved using different surface materials, including using central medians. A central median can be designed so that it can still be overrun but it will visually narrow the carriageway.

Calm routes

Cleveland Street and Price Street are identified as calm routes, where street design will dissuade large vehicles from seeking to pass across the park, with the exception of buses, refuse collection vehicles and the emergency services. This will create a calm environment that promotes active travel users.

Servicing

The primary road network which passes along the northern and western boundaries of the masterplan area carry a notable percentage of goods vehicles, largely due to how those routes function to serve the docks to the immediate north. Service vehicles accessing the non-residential premises within the masterplan area will utilise the nearest points of entry from that established primary road network in order to access those non-residential uses.

An access and servicing strategy should be developed between local businesses and residents to agree arrangements for servicing and delivery vehicles. This can be modal and temporal, promoting consolidated and shared deliveries between businesses and encouraging electric vehicles or cargo bicycles wherever possible. E-commerce deliveries could be consolidated and delivered to secure communal points within community hubs, minimising vehicle movements and improving air quality.



- Masterplan boundary
- Super block - facilitating through movements
- Secondary routes - access to the super block
- Calm routes - encouraging local movements



Street hierarchy framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Primary
- Main street
- High street
- Secondary
- Neighbourhood street
- Green street
- Tertiary
- Residential street
- Lane / Mews / Yard
- Calm routes
- Calm route
- Public realm
- Hard public open space
- Dock Branch Park

4.4 MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK

4.4.2 Active travel and public transport

Active travel

Active travel routes will be well-integrated into the neighbourhoods movement networks. This includes step free routes for walking and wheeling along all primary and secondary routes, as well as street level connections for active travel routes which are closed to vehicular movements. In all cases street design will promote active travel and prioritise people over vehicles. There will be a mix of signal controlled crossings and informal crossings throughout the area in response to volumes of vehicle movements.

Off-road connections through Dock Branch Park and the Promenade provide an alternative to the street network. Access from street level to Dock Branch Park will include a range of accessible level change structures such as ramps and graded slopes at key locations and additional stepped accesses where the terrain is steeper.

The long term aspiration is to unlock further active travel connections through the expansion and extension of Dock Branch Park. This includes transforming the street environment of Tower Road and Canning Street to enable the expansion of Dock Branch Park up to meet Egerton Dock. Alongside this, there is opportunity to stitch into proposals for a new green link running east to west along Corporation Road to Wirral Waters.

The routes will tie in with the proposed Birkenhead to Liscard Active Travel Project, tying into proposals on Cleveland Street, Taylor Street and Egerton Wharf, with the routing illustrated opposite.

Public transport

Existing bus routes are concentrated along Argyle Street and Conway Street for access to Birkenhead Bus Station. These services are expected to continue to operate as they currently do but may expand in the future to provide better coverage in support of a growing population if viable.

The masterplan also takes into consideration the proposals for Wirral Mass Transit routes along A554 Canning Street in the north and the north/south route through the heart of the area. The mass transit mobility hubs are proposed in locations that support modal interchange, with stops at Conway Park Station, near to the proposed car barn locations, and linking with the proposed active travel infrastructure. The mobility hubs themselves could contain include modal interchange infrastructure including bicycle hire or car club bays.



Active travel and public transport framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Pedestrian and cycle route
- Active travel route (Dock Branch Park)
- LCWIP cycle route (proposed)
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- 🚊 Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- Hard public open space
- Promenade
- Dock Branch Park
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)

4.4 MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK

4.4.3 Modal shift and car storage

Modal shift

Dock Branch will be a neighbourhood where you won't need a car for local trips and where there are excellent public transport options for journeys further afield. Through designing a neighbourhood that prioritises walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport use over that of private vehicles, a low car environment is encouraged. Almost every journey starts and/or ends with walking or wheeling, so by providing high quality pedestrian facilities throughout not only makes this part of the journey possible but more pleasant. Public transport links provide access to the wider region including Chester and north Wales, with excellent connectivity to the surrounding area, and into Liverpool. With the introduction of the Wirral Mass Transit route through the heart of this neighbourhood the public transport options are further strengthened.

Car clubs

In addition to having low car parking provision there are several measures that will help support modal shift away from private car travel. Alongside the proposals above for active travel and public transport, the inclusion of car club vehicle can reduce the number of privately own vehicles in the area.

On average in 2022 each car club vehicle in the UK replaced 22 private cars¹, freeing up space for uses other than car parking. The density required for successful shared transport provision varies depending on where the development is, it ranges from one vehicle per 30-50 dwellings.

Car storage

The masterplan recommends low parking standards of 0.25 spaces per apartment or maisonette and up to 0.7 spaces per house. Divorcing car parking from home ownership is a method of reducing parking demand and the inclusion of car barns within the masterplan provides central locations for car parking to be located.

Car barns

The majority of car parking will be located in car barns. In Dock Branch Neighbourhood, they will take form of multi-storey communal car parks featuring up to several hundred unallocated car parking spaces with EV charging and battery-storage facilities. They are proposed in locations that support modal interchange, with close proximity to existing public transport hubs as well as the proposed routing of the Wirral Mass Transit system and mobility hubs.

Car barns should be designed with sufficient security measures in place to make everyone feel safe in them. Active ground floor uses should be considered to minimise adverse impacts of the structures on public realm, with the masterplan identifying these as appropriate locations for Low Threshold Enterprise Space. Adaptability should be considered from the outset to enable alternative uses in the post-car future.

On-street car parking

Convenient short-stay car parking next to a home or a business is important to allow those less able to live an active life or help families unpack after weekend shopping or a trip. On-street car parking should be controlled and time limited to encourage the use of car barns for longer-stay parking. It should be designed in a way that it does not dominate the street scene and include include short-stay provision, accessible bays and loading facilities where necessary. See the Draft Birkenhead Design Guide for for information.

On-plot car parking

In some cases townhouses may be able to accommodate on-plot car parking. They will be designed with flexibility in mind, where on-plot storage utilises undercroft car ports concealed within the principal building envelope. This enables easy conversion of space that would otherwise be unused, allowing adaptation that responds to to changing car ownership behaviours and provides real choice to residents about car ownership.

¹ CoMoUK Annual Car Club Report 2022 <https://www.como.org.uk/documents/car-club-annual-report-uk-2022>



Car storage framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Car barn
- On-street parking
- Hard public open space
- Dock Branch Park

LTP 4 - Developing a vision for local transport to 2040
<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LTP4-VISION-090522.pdf>

DRAFT VISION	
"To plan for, and deliver a clean, safe, resilient, accessible and inclusive London-standard transport system for the movement of people, goods and freight in a way that delivers our economic, social and environmental ambitions, and in particular, a net zero carbon emitting city region by 2040 or sooner"	
DRAFT GOALS	
GOAL 1	Ensure that transport supports recovery, sustainable growth and development, and that our transport plan, Plan for Prosperity, Climate Action Plan and Spatial Development Strategy are fully aligned
GOAL 2	Achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 or sooner, whilst safeguarding and enhancing our environment
GOAL 3	Improving the health and quality of life of our people and communities through the right transport solutions, including safer, more attractive streets and places used by zero emission transport
GOAL 4	Ensuring that our transport network and assets are resilient, responsive to the effects of climate change, and are well maintained
GOAL 5	Ensuring that we respond to uncertainty and change but also innovation and new technologies

4.4 MOVEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK

4.4.4 Street improvements

Street improvements

A number of streets have been identified by the masterplan for upgrades and in some cases complete redesign. The rationale for these improvements includes prioritising active travel and public transport, in keeping with the modal hierarchy.

Key considerations for each street improvement opportunity identified:

- Type of junction (e.g. priority, roundel, signalised, roundabout etc.)
- Number of arms and lanes per arm
- Cycle infrastructure and transition between different types of cycle route e.g. with-flow to bi-directional; on-carriageway to off-carriageway; segregated to non-segregated. Note that with-flow cycle lanes are more intuitive for pedestrian interaction and easier to tie into on-carriageway facilities, however, there are situations where bidirectional lanes are useful, see paragraph 6.2.15 of LTN1/20 for guidance.
- Integration with public transport (scope for bus priority)
- Long term maintenance

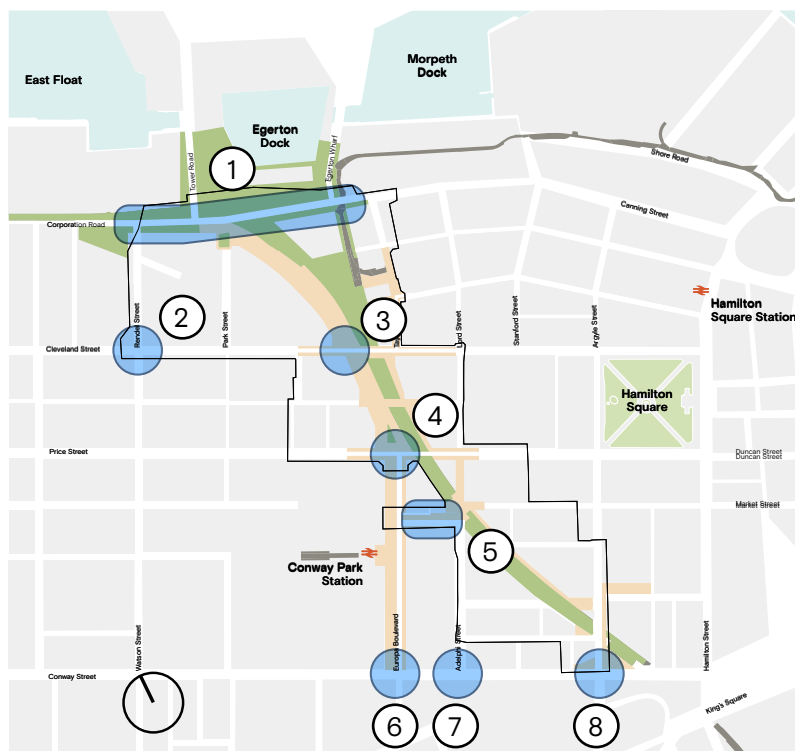
Street improvement opportunities are identified below and a summary of key objectives are summarised as follows.

1. Tower Road/Canning Street

- Realignment of junction will require land swaps. This key move would restore the grid pattern and provide an opportunity for more human scale streets, while still considering the priority traffic flow on the A554.
- There must be clear connections into cycle infrastructure, both existing and planned.
- Integrate bus rapid transit, including a consolidated stop to facilitate easy transfers between lines.
- Potential for a roundel to assist key vehicles movements. A good precedent for a roundel design is north of the junction on Tower Road.

2. Rendell Street/Watson Street/Cleveland Street

- Priority flow is along the A5029 with around 8600 vehicles per day. There are around 5800 vehicles per day on Cleveland Street.
- Reduce junction footprint; fewer lanes and tighter geometry will reduce pedestrian crossing distances and encourage slower traffic speeds.
- Opportunity to release land on three corners of this junction for public realm or development when the footprint of the carriageway is reduced.



Street improvements framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Junction / street redesign
- Hard public open space
- Dock Branch Park

- Pedestrian crossings are currently not traffic-signal controlled (there is no 'green man'); the crossings do not serve the needs of vulnerable users. Next steps must provide safer pedestrian crossings.
- Proposals must accommodate segregated cycle routes.

3. Cleveland Street/Dock Branch

- Priority flow will be along Cleveland Street with existing flows of 3,800 vehicles per day
- Bus Rapid Transit will be the only vehicle movement north to south.
- Signals to allow bus priority and aid pedestrians and cyclists for north-south movement are desirable.
- Integrate junction layout with proposed cycle lanes on Cleveland Street and connections to Dock Branch Park and adjacent route.

4. Price Street/Europa Boulevard

- Price Street currently carries around 4230 vehicles per day.
- Opportunity to reduce junction footprint.
- Consider pedestrian flows to/from Conway Park Station and to/from the park. The junction needs safe crossing points located on pedestrian desire lines.
- Integration with cycle infrastructure required.
- Bus and BRT movements will need to be accommodated, with priority where possible.

5. Europa Boulevard/Pedestrian route to Adelphi Street

- Consider pedestrian and cycle routes to/from any BRT stop.
- Pedestrian crossings must be located on desire lines.
- Integration with cycle infrastructure is required, with good cycle parking at public transport stops.
- Subject to land acquisition, the route between Europa Boulevard and Adelphi Street can be wider and more direct to comfortably accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

6. Europa Boulevard/Conway Street

- Consider pedestrian flows to/from Conway Park Station.
- Interaction with proposed cycle lanes needs to be included in the design.
- Consider bus and BRT movements.
- Reducing junction radii will slow vehicles and reduce pedestrian crossing distances.

7. Adelphi Street/Conway Street

- Reducing junction radii will encourage slower vehicle speeds and reduce pedestrian crossing distance, as well as improving intervisibility between vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists.
- Pedestrian and cycle priority for movement along Conway Street to be incorporated (e.g., continuous footway/cycleway).
- Consideration needed for bus movements in and out of Birkenhead Bus Station.

8. Conway Street/Argyle Street

- This junction currently carries more traffic than any other in the masterplan red line.
- This should be a signalised crossroad with a reduced junction footprint; tighter geometry will reduce pedestrian crossing distances and encourage slower traffic speeds.
- Pedestrian crossings are needed on all arms – signalised crossings work best for vulnerable users.
- Clear connections to be made with cycle network, with dedicated cycle facilities for safe movement through the junction.
- Opportunity to release land on the corners of this junction for public realm or development when the footprint of the junction is reduced.

4.5 CHARACTER AND TOWNSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.5.1 Overview

This section sets out the narrative and strategies underpinning how character and townscape should be shaped in Dock Branch Neighbourhood. It includes area-wide strategies on views and landmarks, height and massing, heritage and urban grain before introducing the neighbourhood's four distinct character areas; Argyle Quarter, Trinity Gardens, Egerton Point and Dock Branch Works. A narrative description of the key features of the character areas is included here, with more detail on each area included within the Character Areas chapter.



A short run of urban terraces with front gables and fine detailing – an example of Birkenhead's humble, 'everyday heritage'. Photo credit: © PeteCarr

Key moves include:

- Protect existing landmarks through the careful location and design of new buildings, generally maintaining a consistent datum of between 3 and 6 storeys
- Concentrate taller elements in appropriate locations, using set backs to preserve the established building datum
- Use building heights to reinforce the street and open space hierarchy, including establishing a comfortable enclosure to street widths, typically a 1:1 ratio or 1:2 ratio on primary streets and the principal grid avenues
- Streets should be characterised by consistent building lines and well-designed ground floors, using a repetition of front doors and windows to overlook and activate the street
- Encourage continuity in land use by building on the historical and contemporary uses, carefully adding residential to this mix and without prejudicing existing activities that contribute positively to the character of the neighbourhood
- Utilise the Draft Birkenhead Design Guide to inform contemporary reinterpretations of Birkenhead's rich character, interpreting rather than mimicking this
- Use landscape design including street trees to reinstate a formality to the grid layout

4.5 CHARACTER AND TOWNSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.5.2 Heritage and character

Heritage assets for enhancement and value

The neighbourhood's heritage assets are essential to reinforcing local identity and fostering continuity with future developments. The plan opposite identifies a number of heritage assets and recommends identifying projects to celebrate and better value them, extending to both the asset and its setting. Some of the identified assets will be considered through the emerging Hamilton Square Conservation Area Regeneration Plan.

Build long before building tall

Two related priorities include the need to repopulate streets with active building frontages and by doing so, reconnect the masterplan area with adjacent areas of quality built fabric, namely Hamilton Square and the docks. This demands linear buildings front the street such as terraces, maisonettes and linear apartment blocks, with greater scope for point blocks or villas set back from the defined street frontages.

Reinstating the grid

The structural integrity of the grid remains largely intact within the neighbourhood, despite the intrusion of the Dock Branch rail cutting. However, the perception of it breaks down where gaps in frontages exist and building orientation is inset within a block. Proposals need to reinstate the formality of the grid using consistent building lines to define the perimeter to the block, whilst building heights need to respond to the street widths by achieving a 1:1 ratio in most cases. This can also be achieved through use of landscape design, using a repetition of street trees to define principal corridors of the grid.

Landmarks and views

Views towards landmarks needs to be protected and enhanced, including views that span across the neighbourhood and as well as down the grid. Tall buildings should be located outside of the viewing corridors to avoid cluttering views or competing with landmarks. The mass of tall buildings should be carefully sculpted to reduce visual bulk and respond to the slender profile of existing landmarks. Likewise, immediate views towards landmarks granted breathing space, using scale and massing to enhance their setting.

No demolition without replacement

Gap sites across the neighbourhood and its setting degrade the overall experience and appreciation of Birkenhead, not to mention heritage assets themselves. Empty sites can reduce confidence in an area and damage the setting of surviving assets whose setting has been removed. The strategy recommends adopting a 'no demolition without replacement' approach, potentially using improved policy mechanisms to bind developers to constructing a planning permission before demolition can take place.

Adaptive reuse

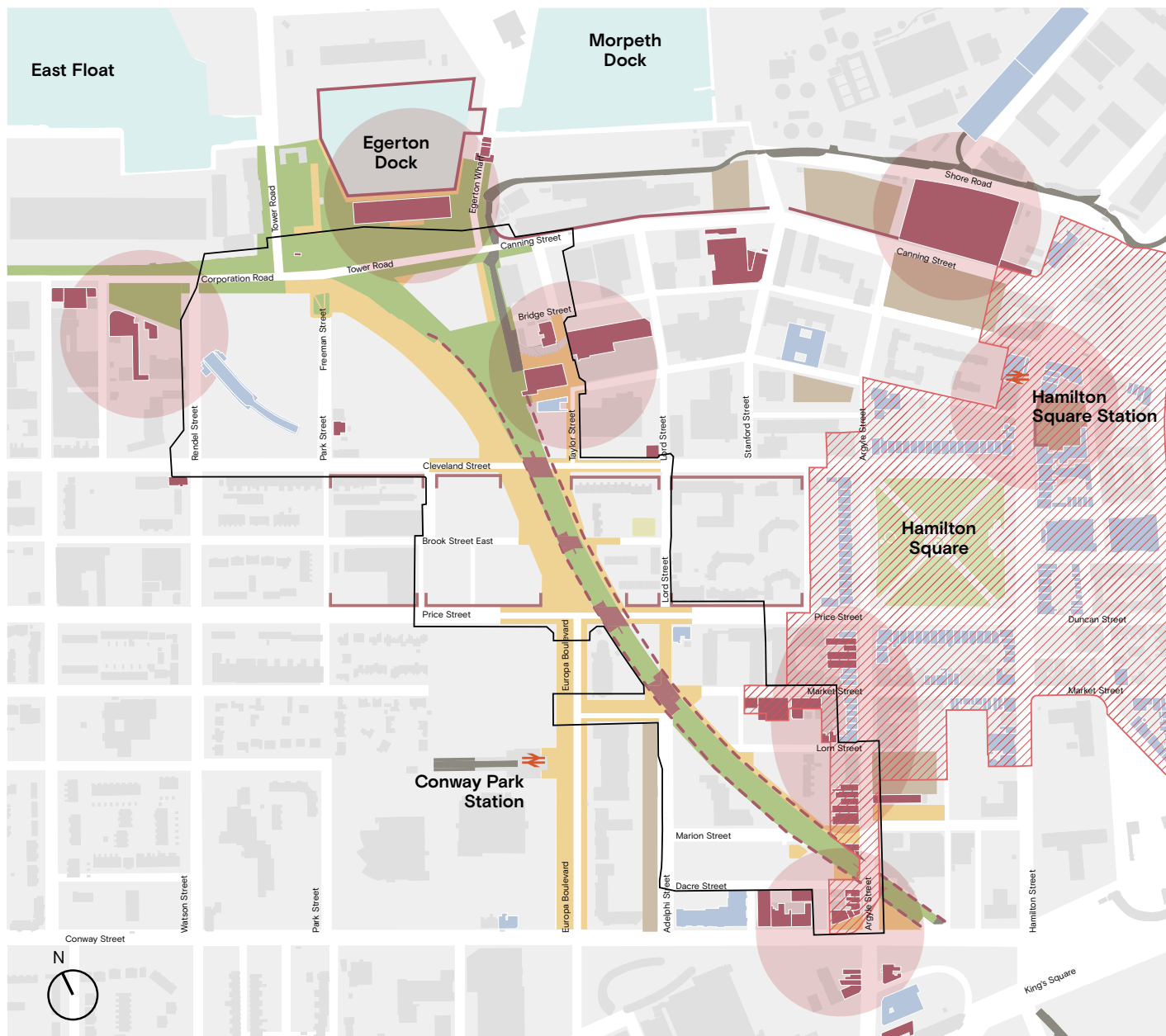
In the climate emergency it is vital to promote adaptive reuse of existing buildings and structures to maximise the embodied carbon contained within them. Moreover, there is significant commercial and social benefit to maximizing the retention of building stock, including availability of and access to good value workspace and the intangible but critical importance of society's collective memory. Promoting a policy of adaptive reuse through refurbishment and retrofit as a starting point for redevelopment proposals is therefore essential. Moreover, the adaptability of new development must be futureproofed, enabling similar flexibility where all new buildings could accommodate an alternative future, particularly at ground floor.

Character of use

It will be necessary to transform Dock Branch Neighbourhood through diversifying the mix of land uses and activities, such as the reintroduction of residential as the primary use that characterized the area for at least a century. However, this approach should focus on selectively 'adding to' rather than replacing, with the masterplan tasked with integrating new homes alongside existing activities including employment, live music, culture and nightlife. Design solutions, Asset of Community Value designations and the Local Plan Agent of Change policy WS 7.3 should be used to protect existing activities from complaints once residential uses are introduced.

Architectural design

Building designs should draw on the rich architectural palette of typologies, proportions, details, colours, textures and materials found across the best examples of Georgian, Victorian and industrial heritage to reinforce Birkenheadness. All proposals should demonstrate a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional architectural features to represent a positive evolution in character, rather than a pastiche response.



Heritage framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Heritage assets for enhancement and value
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area
- Rail corridor retaining wall
- Reinstating the grid
- Infill opportunities
- Hard public open space
- Dock Branch Park

4.5 CHARACTER AND TOWNSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.5.3 Views and landmarks

Views and landmarks

Birkenhead is characterised by predominantly low to mid-rise building heights, with this consistent datum creating a uniformity and order. This datum is infrequently interrupted by buildings and structures taller than the prevailing height, though in these instances they perform an essential role in the legibility of the town. These buildings and structures and landmarks act as key wayfinding devices, enabling you to orient and locate yourself in relation to them.

The Draft Birkenhead Design Guide, the Character Study that informed it and this masterplan's baseline analysis have identified a number of key landmarks and views towards them, as illustrated on the plan opposite. These views provide an important framework for understanding how the height and massing of new development should be organised across the neighbourhood. New development should take care not to block or clutter views towards said landmarks. Rather, it should be used to frame such views; enhancing the setting of the landmark and its appreciation as both a heritage asset and wayfinding device.

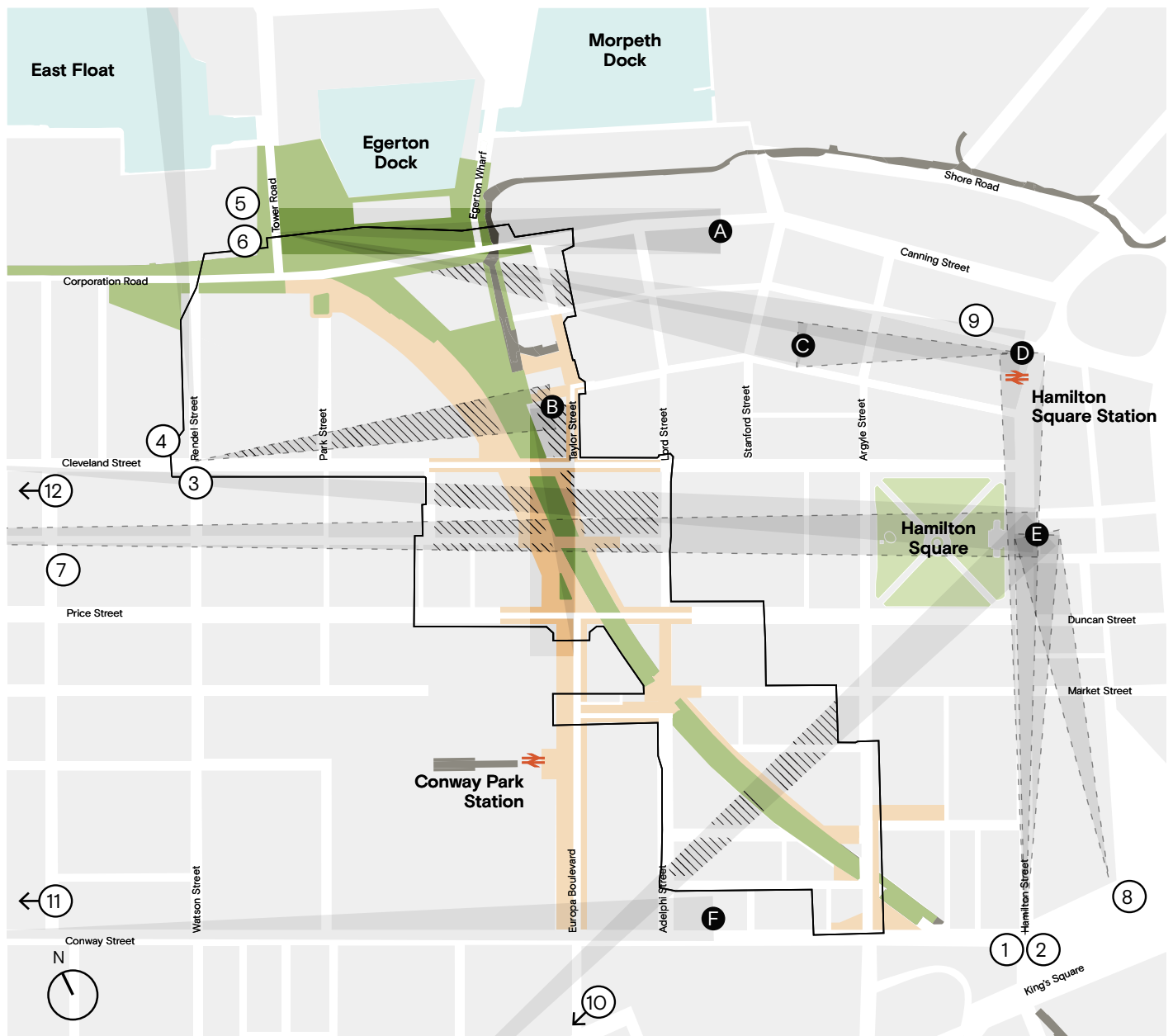
The plan opposite identifies these views, as well as areas of the masterplan that intersect them; identifying these zones as height sensitive areas. The views and landmarks themselves are summarised on the following page.

It is not just the dispersed nature of these landmarks that make them effective landmarks, but their historic function, rich architectural character that elevates their uniqueness to Birkenhead and reinforces the importance of protecting and enhancing their setting. Isolated volumes that rise unrivalled above the roofscape, they comprise a collection of clock towers, hydraulic towers, ventilation towers, industrial chimneys and turrets. Whilst each having individual characteristics, they are unified by their shared language of materiality, colour palette, architectural vernacular and similar heights; forming a separate datum of their own.

In cases where tall buildings are proposed that will exceed the established datum, these should be located outside of viewing corridors and away from existing landmarks. This will avoid cluttering views or competing with the landmarks as the principal locations of height and mass in the neighbourhood and its hinterland. Proposals should demonstrate how analysis of the identified views and landmarks will be protected and enhanced, as well as how architectural responses have been informed by the unique qualities and characteristics of the landmarks themselves.

Other structures are secondary landmarks by virtue of their design and location rather than scale (such as historic corner pubs or surviving stretches of the stone dock wall) and their setting and views to and from them should also be considered. Hamilton Square including the town hall is a landmark in total and protecting its setting is crucial, including the need for new developments to avoid intrusion into this setting or into views of the ensemble.

Key views and landmarks are identified overleaf.



Key views and landmarks framework

- Masterplan boundary
- ↖ View towards landmark (Draft Birkenhead Design Guide)
- ↗ View towards landmark (Birkenhead Character Study & Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan analysis)
- Landmark
- \\ Height sensitive location (where views cross the masterplan area)
- Hard public open space
- Dock Branch Park

Landmarks

- A. Hastings House
- B. Central Hydraulic Tower
- C. Mersey Tunnel Ventilation Tower
- D. Hamilton Station Hydraulic Tower
- E. Birkenhead Town Hall
- F. Wirral Education Centre

4.5 CHARACTER AND TOWNSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.5.3 Views and landmarks



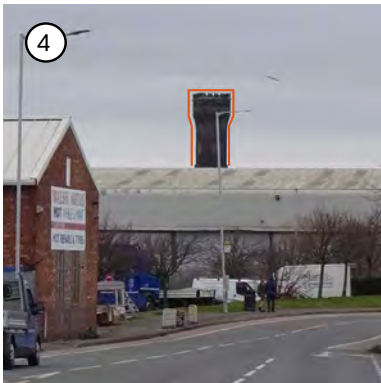
View north towards Hamilton Station Hydraulic Tower from Hamilton Street



View north towards Birkenhead Town Hall from Hamilton Street



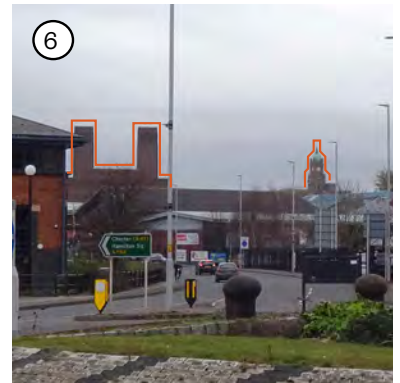
View east towards the Mersey Tunnel Ventilation Tower from Cleveland Street



View north towards the Central Hydraulic Tower from Cleveland Street



View east towards Hastings House from Tower Road



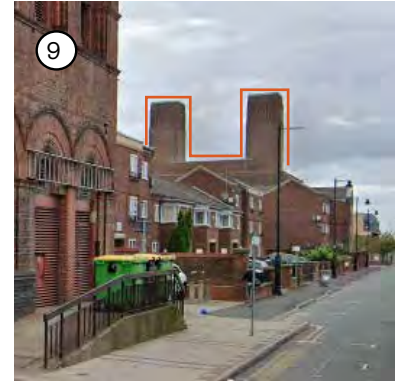
View east towards the Mersey Tunnel Ventilation Tower and Birkenhead Town Hall from Cleveland Street



View east towards the Birkenhead Town Hall from Brook Street



View north towards Birkenhead Town Hall from Albion Street



View west towards Mersey Tunnel Ventilation Tower from Bridge Street

Maps Data: Google, © 2024



View north east towards Birkenhead Town Hall from Claughton Road



View south east towards Wirral Education Centre from Park Road North

Maps Data: Google, © 2024



View east towards Birkenhead Town Hall from Cleveland Street

4.5 CHARACTER AND TOWNSCAPE FRAMEWORK

4.5.4 Height and massing

Preserve, enhance, transform

The Draft Birkenhead Design Guide sets a strategic building height framework for the town, identifying three classifications for appropriate buildings heights based on local character. These classifications include Preserve – building heights to be consistent with context i.e. 3 to 4 storeys; Enhance – building heights to be up to +2 storeys that the context i.e. up to 5 to 7 storeys with potential for taller elements; and Transform – building heights to be up to 8 storeys with potential for taller elements. This is a helpful framework for classifying maximum thresholds which the masterplan process has further refined in greater detail. All tall buildings should align with Local Plan policy WS 7.5.

Building heights

The majority of the masterplan should establish a mid-rise datum of between 3 and 6 storeys, which this varying dependent on the street hierarchy. Building heights of between 5 and 6 storeys are appropriate when defining the edge to primary and secondary streets, as well as principal public spaces including the Promenade. Heights between 3 and 4 storeys are appropriate on tertiary streets to reinforce a more local and typically residential setting. In some settings a lower scale of 1 to 2 storeys is appropriate to enable a transition to existing immediate context.

In certain settings heights of up to 8 and 10 storeys are appropriate and these should form taller elements of a central mass. These locations are usually at the apex of an urban block, marking key public spaces and junctions. In this way they can themselves acting as a second tier of hyper local landmarks, positively contributing to the evolving townscape.

Tall elements

Tall elements are parts of a building that grow out of an urban block and exceed the established building height datum. The masterplan does not support tall buildings that are not integrated into an urban block in order to ensure they meet the ground positively.

Relationship to views and landmarks

The proposals for the neighbourhood sit in accordance with the Draft Birkenhead Design Guide, typically ranging between 3 and 6 storeys with isolated pockets of 8 storeys in key locations. These locations of increased height are located outside of viewing corridors and chosen purposefully to respond to the unique qualities of the

development site and the contribution scale in this location can make to local character, particularly in relation to Dock Branch Park.

Further, sculptural massing responses are used to reduce visual bulk and create different ‘faces’ to the building, contributing to a dynamic townscape experience when perceived from different locations. Long distance views are also an important consideration, such as the view from Birkenhead Park towards Liverpool, which could see future protection from the potential World Heritage Site status.

Relationship to street hierarchy

Building heights are distributed across the neighbourhood to reinforce the street and open space hierarchy. Heights between 5 and 6 storeys are used to define the edges of primary streets, including Tower Road, Cleveland Street, Price Street and Market Street. The sensitivity of Hamilton Square should again be paramount, whilst there is greater flexibility west of Dock Branch Park.

Heights between 4 and 5 storeys are used to define the edges of secondary streets, including Park Street, Freeman Street, Lord Street and Adelphi Street. Heights between 2 and 4 storeys are used to define the edges of tertiary streets, including Brook Street East, Lorn Street and Dacre Street. This coordinated approach to building heights, mix of uses and street design combine to create a legible street hierarchy that is highly intuitive.

Relationship to the park

A duality exists between the need to bring daylight and sunlight down into Dock Branch Park, whilst enabling it to be well surveilled through direct overlooking from neighbouring development. For this reason, a strategic approach has been taken by concentrating building height and massing along the eastern edge of the park and stepping it back from the western edge. Taking account of the sun’s path and prevailing wind direction, this contributes towards a positive microclimate within the park by avoiding blocking daylight and sunlight from reaching the park. At the same time, overlooking can be achieved from the proposals that line the eastern edge of and directly interface with and help activate the park. Overlooking is also secured on the western edge through creation of the promenade, a new component of the public realm for active travel and socialising that overlooks and has access down to the park.



Building height and massing framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Tall element up to 10 storeys
- Tall element up to 8 storeys
- Consistent 5 to 6 storey datum
- Consistent 3 to 4 storey datum
- 1 to 2 storey transition to context
- Hard public open space
- Dock Branch Park

In all cases proposals must protect the amenity of existing properties within the study area, using detailed design to overcome any issues including overlooking, daylight, sunlight and wind.

More guidance on height and massing is contained within the Character Areas chapter.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.1 Context

Useful Projects have been collaborating with the Dock Branch design team and broader stakeholders to develop a regenerative vision for the Dock Branch Neighbourhood.

The Dock Branch Neighbourhood presents a unique opportunity to regenerate Central Birkenhead. Dock Branch Park will become the green backbone for the neighbourhood, improving connectivity for nature and for the community. The built environment will be retained as a priority, celebrating Birkenhead's heritage, avoiding unnecessary waste and breathing new life into existing assets. Investment will unlock diverse business opportunities, delivering a distributive economy where everyone is given the chance to thrive.

This chapter sets out the vision and strategies required to deliver a regenerative future for Birkenhead.

Structure

This section is structured as follows:

1. **Context:** key policy drivers, site context and development priorities
2. **Regenerative approach:** statement inspired by doughnut economics, regenerative pillars and principles and design and strategic opportunities
3. **Outline energy strategy:** low-carbon approach to Dock Branch's energy system
4. **Governance approach:** leadership, culture and delivery mechanisms
5. **Summary and next steps**

A regenerative neighbourhood builds on existing features of the site, responds to local needs and constraints, and is informed by wider policy context.

The following pages outline the key policy requirements, local context and development priorities for Dock Branch Neighbourhood.

National policy

The UK declared a climate emergency in 2019, with a commitment to meet net zero carbon by 2050. The Government's [10 point plan](#) sets out the ambition to shift towards green, active and public transport, with vast investment into cycle routes and public infrastructure, as well as the decarbonisation of national electricity networks and heating systems.

Wirral commitments

Wirral Borough Council has set out ambitious targets to support a sustainable future across the borough. These are found within the draft Wirral Local Plan (2021-2037) and Environment and Climate Emergency Policy Statement (2021). Some key commitments include to:

- Achieve 'net zero' emissions no later than 2041;
- Develop climate emergency statements for all new developments;
- Manage 30% of land in Wirral for the benefit of wildlife by 2030);
- Ensure 10% biodiversity net gain across all projects (Policy WS 5.4 Criterion M);
- Increase tree planting to double Wirral's tree canopy cover;
- Facilitate a modal shift from fossil fuel vehicles to active travel, public transport and ultra-low carbon vehicles e.g. EV;
- Use 100% clean renewable energy;
- Reduce energy and water use;
- Support the transition to a circular economy.

Local context

The following analysis summarises the key environmental and socio-economic context for Dock Branch Neighbourhood and its immediate surroundings. The data analysed refers to the LSOA¹ 'Birkenhead Central', within which Dock Branch Neighbourhood is located.

Environmental

Key findings:

- Air pollution is higher than England average in Birkenhead Central, with local air quality assessed using AHAH².
- Only 0.59 ha (1.67%) of Birkenhead Central is classified as having sufficient access to green and blue space.
- Flooding does not appear to be a concern within the Dock Branch Neighbourhood site. However, there is high-medium risk of flooding in the coastal areas of Birkenhead.
- Outside of Birkenhead, Wirral is peppered with sites of biological importance and local nature reserves.
- Birkenhead heat network is in development to use excess heat from waste water treatment plant and redistribute to buildings across Central Birkenhead, including the Dock Branch Neighbourhood site.

Opportunities at Dock Branch:

- Increase the volume and accessibility of green and blue space for the local community.
- Use regeneration as an opportunity to reduce air pollution and improve air quality for all.
- Identify opportunities for Dock Branch Neighbourhood to join-up wildlife and nature networks and reduce flood risk for the benefit of Wirral as a whole.
- Design ready for emerging renewable and low-carbon energy systems. This includes the Birkenhead District Heat Network which is planned to have a key corridor running through Dock Branch (see outline energy strategy for further detail).

Socio-economics

¹ LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) are small areas designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics across England. They are a similar population size, with an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households.

There are 32,844 Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England.

² The Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards (AHAH) Air quality domain measures accessibility in terms of the amount of air pollutants in the atmosphere that include nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and sulphur dioxide. The higher the score the poorer the air quality. Birkenhead Central (black outline) scores 0.8, England average is 0.3.

Key findings:

- Birkenhead Central is ranked within the most deprived 10% in the England, using IMD³.
- Income, employment, health and education are identified as the key concerns in the local area (with these domains⁴ ranked in the most deprived 10% in the UK).
- Crime and living environment are also noted as local challenges (with these domains⁴ ranked in the most deprived 20% in the UK).
- Barriers to housing domain⁴ is not identified as a challenge in the local area.
- Life expectancy is 7-years less for women and 10-years less for men than the England average.
- The proportion of people living with depression is around double the England average.
- The proportion of people living with long term illness is over double England average.
- Rate of crime offences is five-times the England average.

Opportunities at Dock Branch:

- Provide support for people living in (or on the edge) of the poverty line.
- Provide training and education opportunities.
- Provide health facilities and new, accessible, green spaces for people to exercise and relax.
- Ensure that safety is a priority principle, delivered through good street lighting and secured by design.

³ The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was used in the brief socio-economic study. The metric assesses the relative deprivation of a neighbourhood area (LSOA) compared to the rest of England, by using a suite of indicators categorised under seven domains. ⁴ IMD domains use an ensemble of datasets to approximate the performance of different deprivation topics. This feeds into the overall IMD rank but analysis of the individual domains can help to understand the specific needs of an area. The seven domains are: income, Employment, Education, Health, Crime, Barriers to Housing & services and Living Environment.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.2 Regenerative vision

Local development visions

Birkenhead's 2040 Framework

The Framework details the significant opportunity for the town to become a thriving urban community, with unrivalled sustainable connectivity, physical and social regeneration, new, accessible and resilient green spaces and one of the region's largest low-carbon district heat networks. Dock Branch Park is one of the eight projects planned to catalyse this transformation across Birkenhead.

Draft Birkenhead Design Guide

The draft design guide was written to inform various proposed developments across Birkenhead. It sets the following statement for the future of Birkenhead:

Birkenhead is a green and resilient liveable town. People choose it because it offers the opportunity to live rich urban life locally, in the tranquil but extraordinary setting of the Birkenhead docks, the River Mersey, Hamilton Square and its Georgian heritage. Birkenhead is a connected, convenient and enjoyable place to live, work and visit. Opportunities for people from all life paths create a vibrant urban centre. The town celebrates the memory of the past as it responds to the challenges of a sustainable future, sizing opportunities for inclusive growth.

The design guide sets the direction, ambition and expectations for development in Birkenhead; therefore acting as a major driver in the development of Dock Branch's regenerative vision.

Emerging vision

Previous work

In October 2021, igloo led a co-creation workshop to define the vision and direction of Dock Branch's surrounding area as a catalyst for regeneration at Birkenhead.

Over 40 people attended the workshop including community members and they co-developed a series of strategies for the regeneration. These were then mapped in relation to their impact and ease of implementation.

The output of the workshop was reviewed and directly fed into the vision and strategies contained in this document.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood vision

Building upon the local needs and aforementioned context, a framework of themes for high quality design, delivery and sustainability was developed for Dock Branch Neighbourhood with a focus to address specific challenges in ambitious ways (see opposite diagram).

The framework will be used by the project team to explore, interrogate and evaluate different components of Dock Branch aligned with the proposed regenerative approach for going beyond sustainability and giving back to nature and people.

The emerging vision for Dock Branch was inspired by Kate Raworth's doughnut economics, and co-created with the project stakeholders with the aim for the development to operate within the planet's ecological ceiling, whilst building a strong social foundation for Birkenhead.

The vision is aligned with the 2040 Framework and the Draft Birkenhead Design Guide. The next chapter outlines the aspirational regenerative approach for Dock Branch.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will be regenerative and distributive by design: a place where heritage is celebrated and revitalised, and where people and nature thrive.

To deliver this vision, this approach addresses challenges and opportunities under two regenerative pillars and six supporting principles:

Protecting and enhancing the environment

Nature and environmental resilience

A place that prioritises natural capital, focuses on climate resilience and upholds productive ecosystems.

Renewable energy and zero carbon

A place that leads the way in a transition to a zero carbon economy.

Circular economy

A place that values resources, materials and products, prioritising reuse at their highest value and eliminating waste.

Building a social foundation for Birkenhead

Active and healthy lifestyles

A place that supports active lifestyles and positively impacts the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Inclusive and thriving communities

A place that welcomes all people, provides new spaces for the local communities to belong and ignites positive social outcomes for the local community.

Employment, education and social mobility

A place that provides opportunities for local people and supports disadvantaged groups.

The two regenerative pillars and six supporting principles are aligned with the Dock Branch Neighbourhood themes. This coverage is mapped out in the table below.

		Dock Branch Neighbourhood themes										
		Redistributive	Inclusive	Regenerative	Public realm	Character	Identity	User + resources	Sustainable + resilience	Equality + inclusion	Health and well-being	Movement
Regenerative vision pillars and principles	Protecting and enhancing the environment											
	Nature and environmental resilience			■	■				■		■	
	Renewable energy and zero carbon			■					■			
	Circular economy	■	■				■	■				
	Building a social foundation for Birkenhead											
	Active and healthy lifestyles		■						■	■	■	■
	Inclusive and thriving communities	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	
	Employment, education and social mobility	■	■	■				■		■		

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.3 Protecting and enhancing the environment

Overview and themes

The ecological ceiling represents the Earth's environmental limits, beyond which is unacceptable environmental degradation. Dock Branch Neighbourhood considers the ecological ceiling at two scales: global and local.

Global ecological ceiling

Traditional development has a disproportionately negative impact on the ecological ceiling. The built environment is responsible for 25% of the UK's carbon emissions.¹ The construction industry is responsible for the consumption of around 50% of all non-renewable resources.² The shift to regenerative design and delivery is necessary for the future of the industry and the planet as a whole.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood has the opportunity and ambition to spearhead this movement; developing and delivering economic growth while operating within Earth's ecological ceiling.

Local ecological ceiling

Dock Branch Neighbourhood is a post-industrial, urban town that faces environmental challenges including air pollution, lack of access to green space and broken local wildlife networks. The re-development of urban spaces provides the exclusive opportunity to restore Dock Branch's local environmental systems.

By taking a resilience-focused and nature-led approach to design and decision making, Dock Branch Neighbourhood can secure environmental sustainability for generations to come.

Themes

The following themes and associated targets have been established to enable Dock Branch Neighbourhood to protect and enhance the environment. This page outlines each theme at a high level, while the table on the following page presents more detail on the associated objectives for each theme.

Nature and environmental resilience

A place that prioritises natural capital, builds on climate resilience and restores ecosystems.

Dock Branch Park will be the green backbone the neighbourhood, making new spaces for wildlife and linking habitats from Egerton Wharf to King's Square. Public realm greening and new, innovative green infrastructure (i.e. green and biodiverse roofs and living walls) will embed resilience to the increased risk of overheating, flooding and drought for wildlife and communities. Biophilic and nature-led urban and building design will extend links out from the park into the streets and buildings - adapted to the climate emergency.

Headline target: 10% biodiversity net gain.

Principles:

- Climate resilience.
- Thriving urban ecology.
- Biophilic spaces (connection to nature).



Precedent: Kidbrooke Village, Greenwich, London. Regeneration of a housing estate into a 20-acre Cator Park landscape, already providing 99% biodiversity net gain and setting an ambitious target to achieve over 250% biodiversity net gain in the long term.

Renewable energy and zero carbon

A place that leads the way in a transition to a zero carbon economy.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will prioritise passive design, energy efficiency and building retrofit. Buildings will be fully electric, fuelled by low-carbon energy sources and connected into Birkenhead's proposed low-carbon heat network. Any new builds would follow a low carbon design and unavoidable residual carbon emissions related to new construction will be offset responsibly. The introduction of electric travel infrastructure would aspire to decarbonise lifestyles further and support the transition to a net zero neighbourhood.

Headline target: Net zero neighbourhood.

Principles:

- Net zero construction carbon.
- Net zero operational carbon and in-use energy efficiency.
- Zero emission transport systems.



Precedent: Local area energy planning (LAEP), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

With a target to achieve net zero by 2038, GMCA has taken a data-led approach to identify on- and off- gas properties, assess energy demand profiles and consider potential of rooftop solar to understand the priority on a street by street level.

Circular economy

A place that values resources, materials and products, prioritising reuse at their highest value and eliminate waste.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood aspires to be designed to use resources efficiently and to enable long-term flexibility and adaptability. Existing buildings would be retained as a priority and as a celebration of local character. Where not possible, building materials should be re-used, re-distributed or re-cycled. Under this vision, waste would no longer be an option.

Headline target: 50% of materials (by construction value) to be recycled or reused.

Principles:

- Resource efficiency.
- Waste elimination and reuse prioritised.
- Circular design, construction and operations approaches.



Precedent: Circulair Buiksloterham, Amsterdam.

A post-industrial site - previously deemed as 'unusable land' - undergoing transformation into a fully circular and thriving neighbourhood. The development is a living lab for circularity has led to a significant strengthening of the local economy.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.3 Protecting and enhancing the environment

Theme	Principles	Design objectives	Responsibility	Supporting strategies	Responsibility
Nature and environmental resilience	Environmental resilience	<p>Landscape is resilient to a 1 in 100 year flood event, allowing for increased risk due to climate change in accordance with RCP 8.5.</p> <p>Nature-based surface water management systems integrated within streetscape (SUDS), with a target of 70:30 ratio of hard to soft landscaping.</p> <p>Overheating risk assessment and mitigation strategy of building design in accordance with RCP 8.5.</p>	Masterplan developer / Plot developer / Designer	<p>Site-wide climate resilience mitigation and adaptation strategy (flood, heat, drought, wind).</p> <p>Nature-based drainage and water management strategy.</p> <p>Plot level overheating mitigation strategy.</p>	Designer
	Thriving urban ecology	<p>Minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>Urban Greening Factor score of 0.4¹.</p> <p>3-30-300 target² - to see at least 3 trees from home; 30% tree canopy cover in each neighbourhood; and 300 metres is the maximum distance to the nearest high-quality public green space.</p> <p>Planting is to be diverse - creating a mosaic of habitats - and designed to be tolerant to the climate emergency RCP8.5 scenario.</p>	Masterplan developer	<p>Detailed ecological studies to identify opportunities to maximise biodiversity.</p> <p>Meanwhile landscape strategy (e.g. tree nursery as meanwhile use of empty site).</p>	Masterplan developer
	Biophilic spaces	<p>Green roofs, green walls and green infrastructure are maximised across the built environment.</p> <p>Green, accessible space is maximised in public realm (TBC target for area % of public realm).</p> <p>Nature patterns integrated into public realm and building, by adopting principles from Building with Nature.</p>	Masterplan developer / Plot developer	<p>“Greening fund” collected for Council to apply green infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>Green infrastructure and ecology strategy.</p> <p>Biophilic design strategy.</p>	Masterplan developer / Wirral Council / Designer
Renewable energy and low-carbon	Net zero construction carbon	<p>Embodied carbon minimised by prioritising reuse, opting for low carbon materials and practices and designing out material use.</p> <p>Whole life carbon assessment required at RIBA stage 2, 4 and 6 and savings integrated into design.</p> <p>Design to achieve LETI Band C as a minimum and aspire for B.</p>	Plot developer / Designer	<p>Net zero construction strategy that follows carbon reduction hierarchy.</p> <p>Best practice approach to offsetting scheme developed to account for any residual carbon emissions.</p>	Masterplan developer

Theme	Principles	Design objectives	Responsibility	Supporting strategies	Responsibility
Renewable energy and low-carbon (cont.)	Net zero operational carbon and in-use energy efficiency	<p>Passive design approach taken to reduce energy demand by ensuring preferable orientation of buildings and taking a fabric first approach.</p> <p>All new energy systems will be electric and smart.</p> <p>PVs to be installed on all feasible roof space to maximise onsite renewable energy generation.</p> <p>Local heat recovery and distribution network to be integrated into masterplan design.</p>	Plot developer / Designer	<p>Design codes to include guidance and requirements on energy performance.</p> <p>District-wide energy strategy (see Outline Energy Strategy for further details).</p> <p>Post occupancy evaluation (POE) integrated into contracts to tackle the performance gap.</p>	Wirral Council / Masterplan developer
	Zero emission transport systems	<p>Access to public transport improved and provision for re-routing vehicles (including car barns).</p> <p>Reduction in car parking in new developments, with a target of no surface car parking, except for accessibility reasons.</p> <p>80% car parking has EV charging ports³.</p> <p>50% parking has provision for e-bikes / scooters³.</p>	Masterplan developer	Guidance and requirements for low to no car parking zones.	Masterplan developer
Circular economy	Resource efficiency	<p>Resource efficiency measures undertaken throughout design (for water, waste and materials).</p> <p>20% of virgin materials to be locally sourced and transported.</p>	Plot developer / Designer	Strategies for water, waste and material efficiency for design and in operation.	Masterplan developer / Wirral Council
	Waste elimination and reuse prioritised.	<p>Actively retain buildings and reuse/repurpose assets (% material value retention), and commission investigations into reuse/retrofit options early.</p> <p>Waste streams from construction to be identified and plans should be developed to recirculate resources locally.</p> <p>Target no net loss of material removed from site.</p>	Plot developer / Designer	<p>Circular network for material trading created among local development sites and businesses.</p> <p>Reuse and retrofit guide developed for decision makers.</p> <p>Existing buildings onsite to be assigned high value.</p>	Masterplan developer
	Circularity design, construction and operations embedded	<p>Design following circular design principles including: build in layers principle, flexibility, adaptability, disassembly.</p> <p>All homes to use standard materials sizes and to consider replacement and reuse.</p>	Designer	<p>Circular economy statement required for all new development and refurbished assets and over arching CE strategy.</p> <p>Urban mining community interest group (CIC) assembled.</p>	Masterplan developer

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.4 Building a social foundation for Birkenhead

Overview and themes

The social foundations represent the basic human rights and needs of a population, including health, housing, equality, education, jobs, income, peace and justice. The approach to regeneration – from civic stewardship to design to local investment – can actively build this social foundation and support local communities to thrive.

Improvements in public realm, housing, local services and the provision of community spaces will improve health, wellbeing, safety and connectedness of Dock Branch, which will undoubtedly improve the quality of life of local people.

Close collaboration with the Council and local community groups will unlock opportunities to deliver social value for Birkenhead. Deprivation can be alleviated by channelling investment and interventions into addressing specific local needs. Initial research indicates that income, education, employment, health and crime are key areas of need for local communities; therefore these will be some of the focus areas.

An influx of investment to a diverse range of industries will provide space for new business, new jobs and education routes. This diverse approach to economic growth will enable an inclusive and distributive local economy, where accessibility and affordability across the area is maintained.

Themes

The following themes and associated targets have been established to enable Dock Branch Neighbourhood to strengthen its social foundation, This page outlines each theme at a high level, while the table on the following page presents a more detail on the associated objectives for each theme.

Active and healthy lifestyles

A place that supports active lifestyles and positively impacts the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Dock Branch Park will revolutionise connection across Birkenhead, by creating an accessible and safe environment that is pedestrian-focused, provides cycle routes for all users and is integrated into the surrounding street structure. The development will aspire to provide new services and amenities that would bolster local healthcare networks and support local wellness initiatives. Dock Branch Neighbourhood is committed to achieve exemplary performance for environmental quality, by ensuring comfortable and healthy air, water, light and temperatures both internally and externally.

Headline target: Liveable neighbourhood

Principles:

- Accessibility, connectivity and active travel
- Safe and healthy spaces
- Provision of services and amenities



Precedent: Royal Seaport, Stockholm

An area designed using the traffic hierarchy; giving priority to walking and biking, followed by public transport and private cars. Ensuring every day services and public transport are no further than 400m away.

Inclusive and thriving communities

A place that welcomes all people, provides new spaces for the local communities and ignites positive social outcomes for the local community.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will work closely with the local community to thoroughly understand their needs and instigate initiatives to support specific challenges. The development would look to provide more family and affordable housing through a range of models and generate new spaces for the community to enjoy. Dock Branch Neighbourhood should become a hub for the Birkenhead community, by linking into local community groups and running joint outreach programmes.

Headline target: Improved IMD score compared to 2019 baseline

Principles:

- Diverse and flexible communal spaces
- Affordable living
- Civic stewardship and community outreach



*Precedent: Marmalade Lane, Cambridge
Marmalade Lane offers 42 private homes, alongside a mix of shared facilities unique and essential to cohousing community.*

Employment, education and social mobility

A place that provides opportunities for local people and specifically works to support local disadvantaged groups.

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will generate social value for local groups by introducing education and skills opportunities throughout its construction and operation. The new development would attract new businesses and maintain its strong industrial industry, enabling a diverse range of jobs that will serve the whole community. Dock Branch Neighbourhood should become a connected hub for local business, enabling the local neighbourhood to partake in a thriving and distributive economy.

Headline target: 15% of new career opportunities generated for local people (TBC)

Principles:

- Education and skills training
- Targeted local employment
- Targeted investment in local businesses/ economy



*Precedent: Construction skills centre, Kings Cross, London
Construction Skills Centre has supported 1,200 people into construction-related employment and strengthened local labour market by providing 600 apprenticeships and 450 NVQ L2 starts*

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.4 Building a social foundation for Birkenhead

Theme	Principles	Design objectives	Responsibility	Supporting strategies	Responsibility
Active and healthy lifestyles	Accessibility, connectivity and active travel	<p>Active travel networks and ‘super grid’ established to provide cycle routes in Dock Branch Park and beyond into street structure.</p> <p>Good provision of high quality and secure cycle storage in public realm and cycle storage and shower facilities in all new commercial buildings.</p> <p>Cycle networks designed to align with current cycle safety guidance (LTN120) and household compositions.</p> <p>Design for accessibility for everyone, with a target to achieve 50% M4(2) - “accessible and adaptable” - and 50% M4(3) - “wheelchair user dwellings” - for new homes under Building Regulations Part M1 and 100% accessibility to public realm.</p>	Masterplan developer / Plot developer	<p>Active travel strategy which supports infrastructure that closes the gaps across the site grid and provides community outreach opportunities (i.e. Bikeability).</p> <p>Accessibility strategy which solidifies accessibility targets for buildings and plans for 100% accessibility across the public realm.</p>	Masterplan developer
	Safe and healthy spaces	<p>Targeting Secured by Design - Gold and work closely with local police to design in security.</p> <p>Healthy Streets Approach taken with a target core of >90/100 score and Air Quality Neutral.</p> <p>Exemplary standards for internal and external environmental quality, as defined by the WELL standard.</p> <p>Design public realm to mitigate against noise pollution and high levels of wind and maximise access to daylight.</p>	Masterplan developer / Plot developer	<p>Activity plan specifically integrates youth programmes (potential for Council funding).</p> <p>Long term estate management plan including clear security and management strategy.</p> <p>Daylight and sunlight assessments of building design.</p> <p>Overheating, ventilation and noise risk assessments of building design.</p>	Council / Masterplan developer
	Provision of services and amenities	<p>100% homes to be within 5 minute walk from at least one key service / amenity (i.e. public transport, shop, GP, school) and key community infrastructure (i.e. community growing, library of things, accessible green space).</p> <p>Design in new services/amenities/ community infrastructure where lacking, informed by Local Needs Assessment (LNA).</p>	Masterplan developer	Local needs assessment (LNA) to identify services/amenities lacking and target areas.	Council / Masterplan developer
Inclusive and thriving communities	Diverse and flexible communal spaces	<p>Accessible and affordable community meeting space that is flexible and multi-purpose.</p> <p>Communal gardening spaces (i.e. allotments) integrated into masterplan design and residential space designed to stay “messy”.</p>	Masterplan developer	Meanwhile use strategy and activity plan, developed in close collaboration with existing community groups. i.e. living labs.	Masterplan developer

Theme	Principles	Design objectives	Responsibility	Supporting strategies	Responsibility
Inclusive and thriving communities (cont.)	Affordable living	<p>Minimum 10% is a policy requirement² (aspiring higher %) and 100% of homes to be tenure neutral.</p> <p>A diverse range of dwelling sizes and types, considering different age groups.</p> <p>Custom built / fit out apartments with basic habitable specification, enabling lifelong adaptability.</p> <p>Affordable business tenures instated to attract VCSEs and SMEs</p>	Masterplan developer / Plot developer	<p>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should outline joined up approach to local residential plans.</p> <p>Meanwhile use strategy could include modular, temporary housing (i.e. homes for rough sleepers).</p> <p>Deliver through public sector appointment (e.g. not for profit).</p> <p>Use Community Land Trust Market to bring in SME developers.</p>	Council / Masterplan developer
	Civic stewardship and community outreach	<p>Collaborate with local community and networks, especially groups identified in LNA, in a codesign process to ensure design matches the needs of local residents.</p> <p>Conduct post-occupancy evaluations and use findings to inform remedial actions as well as to drive continuous improvement on future phases.</p>	Masterplan developer	<p>Local needs assessment LNA to inform a social value strategy.</p> <p>Audit of existing businesses and community interest groups (CICs) to forecast their growth and identify opportunities for support (i.e. Community fund, Social value leasing model).</p> <p>Meanwhile use strategy developed and kickstart a citizens assembly forum to build social capital.</p> <p>Policy of plural ownership and community-led stewardship.</p>	Masterplan developer
Employment, education and social mobility	Education and skills training	<p>Provision for education facilities designed onsite.</p> <p>Commitment to local secondary school children receiving education / upskilling</p>	Masterplan developer	<p>Education and skills strategy to be actioned in development and operation.</p> <p>Local school partnerships adopted, informed by the LNA, to support education of local young people.</p>	Masterplan developer
	Targeted local employment	<p>At least 15% of employment roles should be filled by local residents in Dock Branch, measured and reported annually.</p> <p>Real living wage³ required as a minimum for all employees.</p> <p>Required construction techniques identified early and optioneering for local contractors (and need for local upskilling) investigated early.</p>	Masterplan developer	<p>Training, Employment and Business Strategy (TEBS) developed for the whole development and operation, which specifically supports high needs groups identified by the LNA.</p> <p>Local college and university partnerships adopted to attract future job market.</p> <p>Education and skills strategy could include upskilling interventions to support adults with no qualifications (i.e. apprenticeships).</p>	Masterplan developer
	Targeted investment in local businesses/ economy	<p>Provision for a new business hub for remote working and networking.</p> <p>Existing businesses and sectors retained where possible and design seeks to support a mix of tenure to enable a distributed economy.</p>	Masterplan developer	<p>Investment strategy specifically looks at supporting under-represented industries / job types, to support a distributed economy (rather than skewing local economy).</p>	Masterplan developer

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.5 Outline energy strategy

Dock Branch Neighbourhood will lead the transition to a zero carbon economy at Birkenhead. To support this goal, the design, construction and operation of the site will need to address and reduce multiple carbon emissions sources, such as embodied emissions from construction and energy use, as well as other resources used during operation, such as transport, food and waste.

The energy strategy is crucial to achieving net zero objectives. This sections summarises the key interventions proposed in line with the energy hierarchy as set out in Policy WS 8.1. The strategy priorities:

1. Minimising energy demand through a 'Passive' approach.
2. Transitioning to an all-electric approach and connection to Birkenhead heat network for all new buildings.
3. Maximising energy efficient supply and using low carbon energy through an 'Efficient and clean' and 'Smart controls' approaches.
4. Maximising the use of building mounted and local sources of renewable energy.

Impact to consumers

This strategy proposes a series of interventions that will benefit residents and consumers to manage their energy bills in the context of rising energy costs, such as:

- setting targets for energy efficient buildings that will cost less to heat up;
- promoting on-site energy generation for resiliency and autonomy of supply;
- connecting to planned district-wide infrastructure that will provide affordable heat.

Energy performance targets proposed for Dock Branch Neighbourhood

Use	Energy use intensity (kWh/m ² GIA/year)	
	New build	Retrofit
Residential	< 35	< 50
Non-residential	< 55	
School	< 60	
Space heating demand, kWh/m ² /yr	< 15	< 15
Note	LETI EUIs	LETI retrofit guide

Minimum levels of energy performance

To be 'zero carbon ready by design', energy demand and consumption should be reduced as far as possible, aiming to achieve the proposed targets set out in the table opposite.

The following sections detail further the components of the energy hierarchy at the building and neighbourhood scale.

At the building level through:

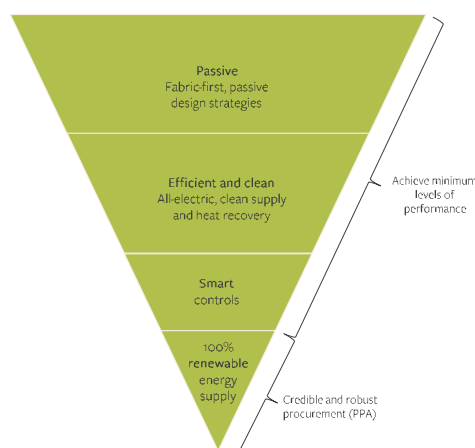
- Passive design with proposed building performance targets for reducing energy demand.
- Recommendation for retrofit energy performance
- Use of energy efficient systems, lighting and appliances.
- All-electric energy supply by heat pumps or connection to heat network.
- Smart meters and controls to monitor and interrogate consumption.

At the neighbourhood level through:

- Preparing for future district heat network that cuts through the park and distributes affordable heat.
- Renewable energy generation and micro-grid for communal supply.
- Energy and thermal storage.
- Smart controls and monitoring systems.

Supporting studies are presented to illustrate the options to achieve an energy positive position that aligns with the regenerative vision.

Energy hierarchy



Passive design

Site-wide considerations

Climate and environmental considerations across the site have been taken into account and addressed through climate-responsive site layout and planning. The site-wide considerations include daylight and sunlight provision, wind direction and pedestrian comfort, overshadowing and placement of street trees to assist in managing heat risk and urban heat island effect, such as creating sheltered and shaded spaces, plot layouts to enable natural ventilation by locating sensitive uses away from noise sources and orienting future elevations towards the prevailing wind direction.

New buildings

Passive design principles applied to new buildings include:

- Orientation, massing and layout of buildings to balance solar gains (welcoming passive gains in winter and blocking excessive gains in summer), natural ventilation, daylighting and acoustic requirements.
- Promoting dual aspect spaces, and limit number of single aspect units, especially facing north
- On southwest and western facing rooms, considering appropriate fenestration and solar control measures (e.g. external shading) to avoid the risk of overheating.
- High performance of insulation and good air tightness to maintain comfortable indoor air temperature coupled with cross ventilation when possible to purge out excess heat.
- Designing out thermal bridges from the outset by avoiding or creating thermal breaks to architectural features such as parapets, reviewing balcony installation systems and simplifying façade form e.g. form factor.

Element	Part L 2021	Best practice
External walls (W/m ² K)	0.18	0.10 - 0.15
Ground Floor (W/m ² K)	0.15	0.10 - 0.15
Roofs (W/m ² K)	0.15	0.10 - 0.15
Windows (W/m ² K)	1.4 (double glazing)	< 1.0 (overall)
Doors		< 1.0
Air permeability (m ³ /hr/m ²) @ 50Pa	5	< 3 (or 0.6 ach)
Form factor (surface area/floor area)	-	< 2.5
Window to wall ratio	-	< 35% glazed
Shower wastewater heat recovery (SWWHR)	Yes	Yes
Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR)	No	Yes, 90% efficiency
Heating source	Gas boiler	All-electric heat pump

All new building should target a space heating demand of less than 15 kWh/m²/year by 2025 at the latest, following the recommendations made by the Committee on Climate Change. For the proposed thermal performance targets for new buildings refer to the table below.

Retrofit

For buildings undertaking retrofit, utilise LETI's Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide (2021) exemplar targets (table below) wherever possible, which includes guidelines for building fabric, building services and renewable energy generation.

For heritage assets, retrofit measures should be sympathetic to existing historical features whilst maximising energy efficiency measures, as well as being carried out in consultation with heritage consultants.

Efficient systems

Developments should prioritise the use of the most efficient lighting, fans, pumps and water use fittings. Engagement with residents will be undertaken to ensure that they understand how to use and operate these design measures.

Low energy lighting, such as LED, in conjunction with dimming and presence detection controls can achieve significant energy savings, particularly to commercial buildings.

Where mechanical ventilation is required, specify mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, with optimised location of units to reduce specific fan power. Showers should be fitted with waste water heat recovery, wherever possible.

Low unregulated energy

Other small details should be embedded into the masterplan to prevent high energy consumption, such as a providing natural clothes drying solution in homes. Additionally, appliances or plug-in equipment to achieve energy efficiency rating of Class C or better.

Proposed best practice values for building envelope and systems performance for new buildings.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.5 Outline energy strategy

Heat network context

Dock Branch Park will serve as a key corridor for the pipework of the future Birkenhead District Heat Network, and developments within the area should enable connection to the network where appropriate.

The image below shows indicative plans for pipework layout and phased delivery of the network. As indicated, there will be a mix of phases of delivery across the spine of Dock Branch Neighbourhood. The first phase is expected to be in operation in 2025.

Primary heat source

Following the consultation with the Carbon Trust who have been involved in planning the district heat network, the preferred option for the emerging local Birkenhead District Heat Network (DHN) is understood to be a water source heat pumps (WSHP) utilising pre-warmed water from waste-water treatment works. The low carbon technology at the waste water treatment works is an ammonia-based WSHP with a COP of 4. This is the preferred option over water pumped from the canal (previously considered). A central energy centre is proposed to be located to the north near the waste-water treatment centre.

DHN carbon factor

The carbon factor for Birkenhead DHN is currently estimated at 0.043kgCO₂/kWh decreasing to below 0.02 by year 5 of operation. This is significantly lower than a typical gas fired arrangement which could be in the region of 0.25 kgCO₂/kWh. A typical air source heat pump currently has a carbon factor of 0.057 (with a COP of 2.5), continuing to decrease as the grid decarbonises, reaching just under 0.02 gCO₂/kWh by 2030 (using BEIS electricity emissions factors).

Final figures are to be confirmed and may change as the design is refined. However, one of the requirements for BEIS Green Heat Network funding is that the carbon factor is below 0.1 kgCO₂/kWh.

System operating temperatures

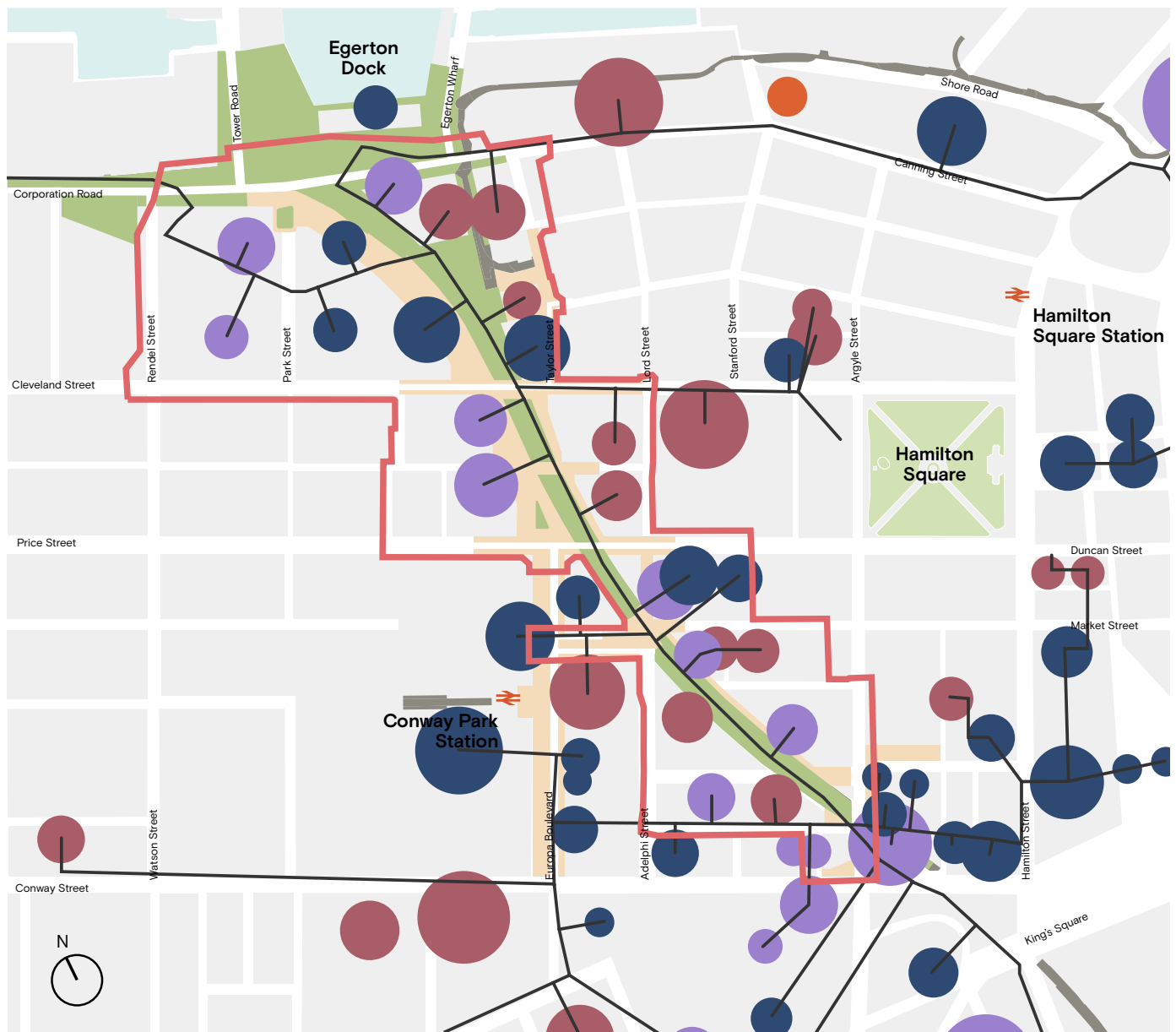
The DHN is designed to operate at 70/40 degC flow and return temperatures, where it will enter the building at 60-55degC.

Pricing and consumer protection

The operator will be signed up to the Heat Trust scheme to ensure that residents and businesses supplied by the network receive suitable consumer protection.

Moreover, a mechanism should be in place for ensuring consumers connected to the network (residents or businesses) benefit from energy price caps where present.

A life cycle costing exercise of the operational and maintenance costs for residents in line with Home Quality Mark (HQM, credit 6.3) could be a useful tool to establishing the estimated utilities costs and affordability.



- Masterplan boundary
- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Energy centre location

*Birkenhead District Heat Network pipe route
(interreted from Buro Happold drawing, 2022)*

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.6 Outline energy strategy

Heat supply to Dock Branch

New buildings within the priority zone should prioritise connection to the district heating network (DHN). It is recommended that existing buildings are refurbished, so that they can connect to the DHN. They could be done once technical review of radiator sizes and temperature supply strategy has been undertaken to enable DHN connection.

There are two primary scenarios for providing heat to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood, depending on the feasibility and phasing of connecting to the planned DHN.

1. Connection to the proposed Birkenhead DHN.
2. Communal heat pumps supplying plot / building-level heat networks.

1. Birkenhead DHN

New and existing buildings connect to the primary pipe network running through the site via a heat exchanger substation located in a plant room within each development plot. A number of connections and substations are likely to be required, depending on phasing.

Secondary pipe networks distribute hot water within development plots. These secondary networks provide connection between the heat substations and the heat interface units (HIU) in each home or internal heating systems of non-domestic buildings.

The DHN is designed to operate at 70/40degC flow and return temperatures, entering buildings at 60–55degC.

Subject to the flow temperatures of existing buildings (i.e. if above 60degC), they may need to retain their existing heating systems (gas-boilers) for top-up in the short-term. Improving thermal performance and where necessary replacing heat emitters and infrastructure as part of any refurbishment will help buildings cope with lower flow temperatures (likely to be more critical in Option 2).

This is a heating only network and any cooling needs on site will need to be provided by separate local cooling plant.

2. Communal Heat Pumps

Where the DHN phasing means it is not available for connection or for other technical/commercial reasons, for example connection cost is too high, plot or building level networks are proposed using heat pumps.

Central air or ground source heat pumps would supply plot or building-level low/ambient temperature networks (around 10–25degC). Individual heat pumps would be required in each dwelling or building to uplift water temperatures locally to provide heating.

These same heat pumps could also be reversed to provide cooling, rejecting excess/waste heat into the network for use elsewhere. This is especially useful for mixed-use plots where there is likely to be a good balance between heating and cooling demand.

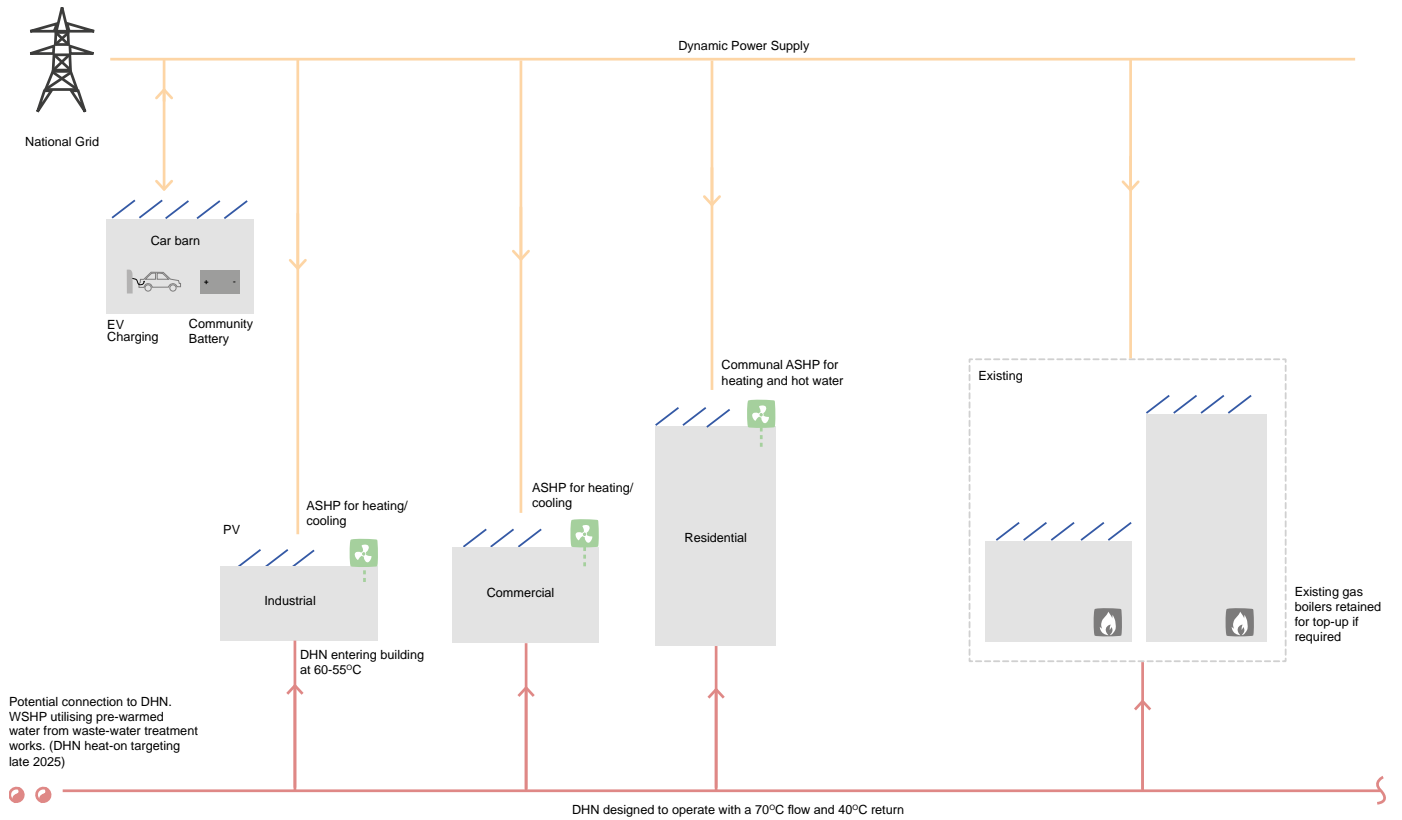
The building network is used for exchange of heat between distributed individual heat pumps:

- Apartment packaged heat pumps for heating and hot water
- Commercial packaged heat pumps for heating and cooling
- Rooftop air source heat pumps as a supplementary heat source.

Individual homes or businesses that cannot connect to the DHN, individual heat pumps will be used for heating and hot water for houses and non-residential buildings, with cooling configuration possible if required.

Carbon factors

The graph opposite shows the carbon content of heat with different systems and the grid average emission factors (BEIS 2022). The comparison of the carbon intensity of the two primary scenarios for providing heat to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood, Birkenhead DHN and communal heat pump, shows that the DHN has lower carbon factors in the short-term. However, as the electricity grid decarbonises, the carbon intensity of the DHN becomes higher than that of electricity from 2035. The DHN operator would be expected to provide a plan for decarbonisation for the longer term connections.

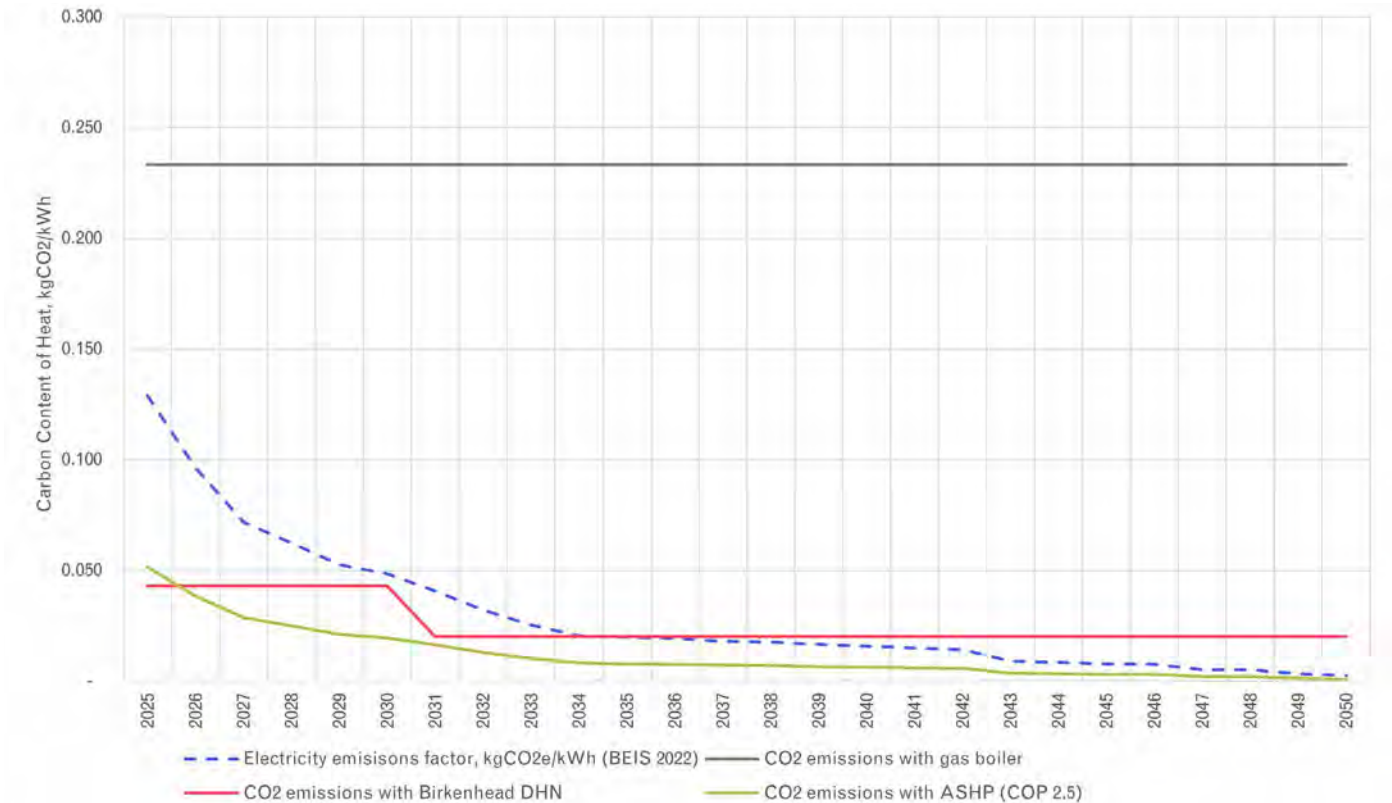


Key

Site wide strategy: Connection to District Heat Network (DHN) ———

Building level / interim strategy: Awaiting connection to DHN or connection unviable - - - - -

Proposed energy strategy diagram



Carbon emissions factors for different systems up to 2050.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.6 Outline energy strategy

Renewable energy

Renewable energy generation contributes to the last step of the energy hierarchy, towards net zero operational carbon emissions. As a minimum, the development should target to offset at least 20% of carbon emissions. However, aligned with Dock Branch's regenerative vision for an energy positive position, i.e. generating over 100% of energy on-site by renewable sources, this would be the aspiration for all developments.

On-site renewable energy generation

All roofs should seek to maximise solar panel coverage and integrate with biodiverse green roofs, wherever possible, to maximise renewable energy generation.

A sensitivity analysis was undertaken to estimate the optimum PV area required to offset energy usage (chart top right opposite) and operational carbon emissions (chart bottom opposite) on-site. It considered the new building areas and applied the energy use intensity targets set out in Table 1. The analysis considered two scenarios of heat supply: Birkenhead DHN and communal heat pump for the operational carbon profile.

The new build roof area accounts for approximately 27,000m² and a minimum of 50% of the roof would be available for PVs. The estimated total energy use for Dock Branch Neighbourhood's new buildings would be approximately 5GWh/year (grey bar showing on the opposite graph). If half the roof is covered with PVs circa 57% of the energy use can be offset by the on-site renewables. As shown in the chart top right opposite, if PVs account for 90% of the total new build roof area around 5GWh/year can be generated. For on-site renewable energy generation to exceed energy use for new buildings (i.e. energy positive), the whole new build roof area would need to integrate PV panels.

As regards operational carbon, each scenario of energy supply is presented for a timescale of 2028 (first phase), 2041 (Wirral's net zero carbon target year) and 2050 (UK net zero carbon target).

The lower carbon factor associated with the Birkenhead DHN compared to the electricity grid in the early years offers the advantage of requiring less PV area on the roof space for a full on-site offset on operational carbon emissions.

For a zero operational carbon position in 2028, 90% of the roof area would be required for PVs under the DHN option, whereas 100% of the roofs would need to be covered by PVs under the heat pump scenario. However, starting from 2035, the grid's carbon factor becomes lower than that of the DHN (as shown in the chart bottom opposite) making the heat pump scenario a more favourable long-term option.

In conclusion, design proposals within the masterplan should consider maximising PV area (either roof-mounted or building integrated), facing south and east/west orientations, avoiding overshadowing from nearby buildings and structures (i.e. plantroom, satellite dishes).

Advanced solutions

A smart network, with a smart management of electricity loads, can help to reduce peak loads and balance demand to minimise grid connection requirements. Furthermore, advanced battery storage and integration with electric vehicles can help manage loads on the electricity grid.

There is the possible decarbonisation of UK gas network through a transition to hydrogen gas. However, there is a much clearer trajectory towards becoming low carbon, through continued national investment in renewable energy.

Procurement of renewable energy supply

All development plots are encouraged to detail routes to procure 100% high-quality renewable electricity following the principles of local production, additionality, time-matching and transparency in line with emerging guidance from the UKGBC.

Energy storage

Large scale energy storage options will be explored by using the car barns as locations to store energy, wherever possible, and by employing smart grid principles.

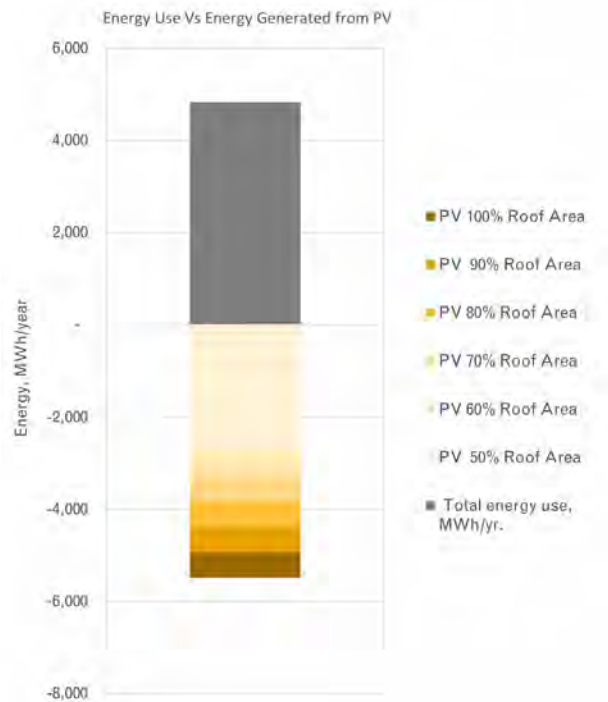
There are also a number of electric vehicle chargers being installed across the development which could be used for vehicle to grid charging, utilising capacity consumers have made available to store energy.

Ownership models

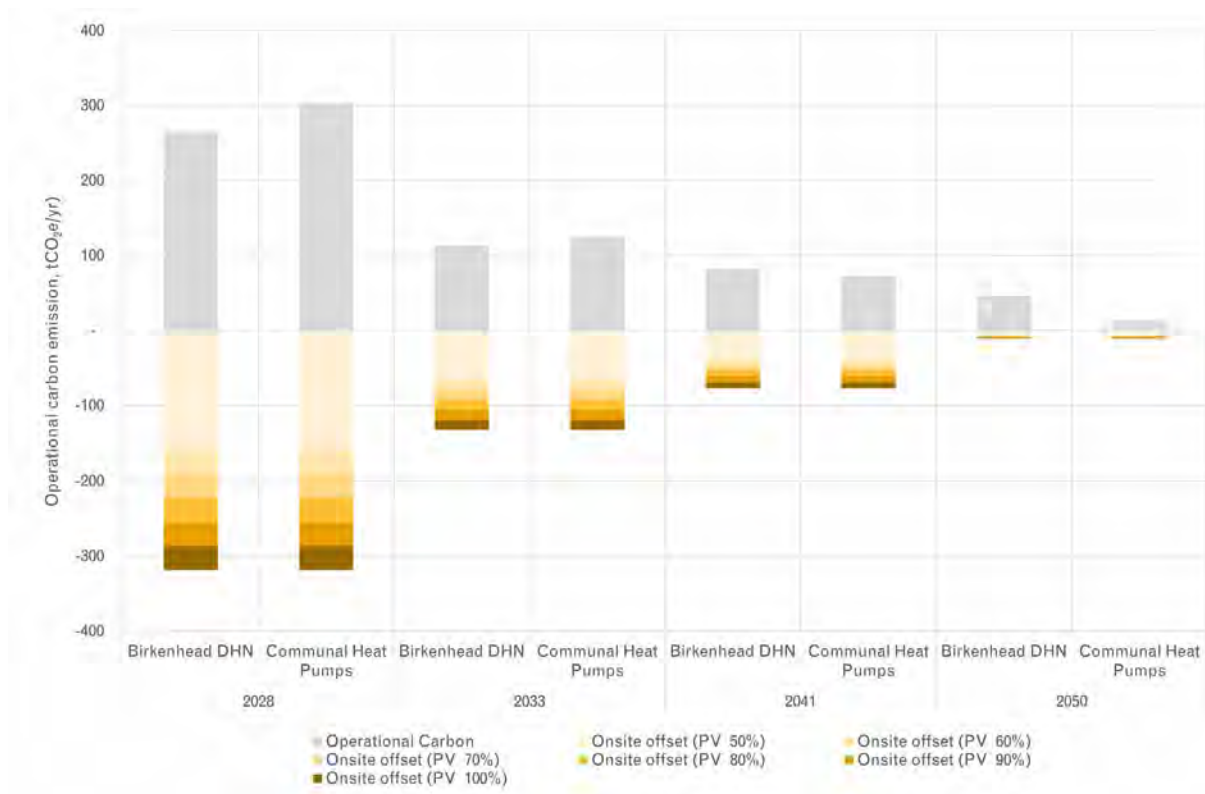
Alternative models for community ownership of energy systems are becoming more popular as they are aimed to better serve the needs of the community. Instead of the traditional model of a private energy services company (ESCo) to own and manage district-wide systems, community ownership models such as a community interest company (CIC) could be formed in collaboration with stakeholders that wish to own and manage neighbourhood systems. The benefits include:

- reliability and affordability of energy services
- lower service charges and management fees
- shared costs for shared use
- governance structures that better service customers
- profits re-invested in the community.

Communal energy systems, such as roof top solar and micro-grids could be owned and managed by the community it is aimed to serve. Opportunities for community ownership and management of facilities should be investigated and included in the maintenance and management plans.



Indicative energy use vs. energy generated from PV.



Operational carbon profile for different scenarios with PVs.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.6 Net zero carbon principles

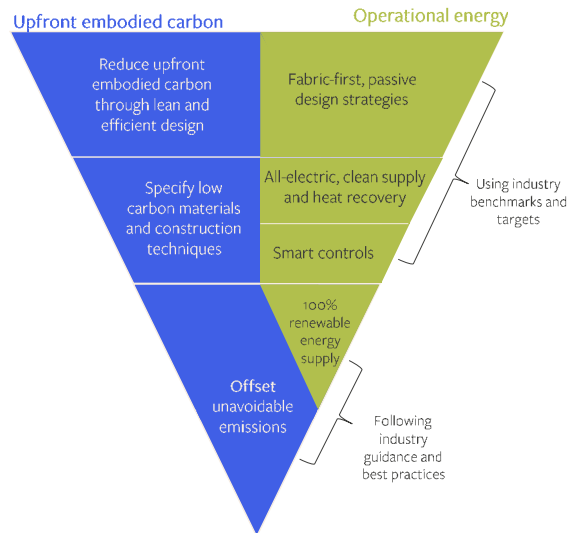
This section provides principles to reduce emissions associated with two of the five stages of life cycle carbon: upfront and operational carbon, illustrated in the table below.

The hierarchy for reducing these emissions (in blue) and operational energy emissions (in green) is presented in the diagram opposite. These principles should be adopted at the level of infrastructure and plot for design and delivery. This approach will promote efforts that primarily reduce carbon before offsetting residual emissions (“unavoidable emissions”).

Carbon management

Wirral Council’s ambition to achieve “*net zero’ emissions for Wirral as a whole no later than 2041*” requires that developments follow a robust methodology compatible with the Council’s transition for measuring, reporting and managing carbon. This should be underpinned by targets and governance, aligned with best practices such as PAS 2080:2022.

The minimum levels of performance associated with net zero operational energy has been presented in the previous section. The expected levels for embodied emissions are presented below.



Upfront carbon and operational energy reduction hierarchy.

Upfront Carbon						Maintenance and Refurbishment Carbon					Operational Carbon				End of Life Carbon				Beyond the lifecycle Carbon
Ao	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	C1	C2	C3	C4	D
Preliminary studios, consultations	Raw material supply	Transport	Manufacture	Transport to site	Construction and installation	Use	Maintenance	Repair	Replacement	Refurbishment	Operational Energy Use	Operational Water Use	Other operational processes	Utilisation of infrastructure	Deconstruction	Transport	Water processing for recovery	Disposal	Benefits and loads beyond the system boundary including exported utilities and energy recovery.

Whole life carbon cycle stages (grey areas are not included in the scope of this document).

Minimum levels of performance – embodied carbon

As per policy WS1.1 infrastructure upfront carbon (e.g. emissions associated with civil engineering works, public realm and transport systems) should be measured and reduced as far as practically possible.

Buildings should meet or, preferably, exceed industry leading benchmarks for embodied carbon in buildings. Best practice would be LETI Band C, as a minimum (as below), with an aspiration to achieve LETI Band B.

- Residential upfront carbon (A1-A5): <math><500 \text{ kgCO}_2\text{e}/\text{m}^2</math> (LETI Band C)
- Commercial upfront carbon (A1-A5): <math><600 \text{ kgCO}_2\text{e}/\text{m}^2</math> (LETI Band C)
- School upfront carbon (A1-A5): <math><500 \text{ kgCO}_2\text{e}/\text{m}^2</math> (LETI Band C)

Residual carbon

The last stage of the carbon hierarchy is to offset any residual emissions to achieve a net zero carbon position. Proposals within Dock Branch Neighbourhood are encouraged to follow UKGBC's Carbon Pricing and Offsetting guidance (2023) to develop a responsible offsetting strategy and align the internal carbon pricing with the HM Green Book of £252 per tonne of CO_2 , subject to viability considerations.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.7 Governance

Leadership and culture

To successfully achieve Dock Branch's vision, a clear governance structure with assigned responsibilities and accountabilities, underpinned by a strong culture of collaboration and shared values amongst everyone involved in the delivering Dock Branch through the project's lifecycle.

Top-down decision-making (e.g. at local authority level) should have regard to bottom-up needs from the community and this should be reflected in the governance framework.

This governance framework should be flexible and adaptable to respond to changes throughout the lifetime of the development and include the right incentives and right 'sanctions' to deliver upon the regenerative vision.

Roles and responsibilities

The delivery of Dock Branch Neighbourhood will have several actors involved over the years, but seven of them will be the key for steering the project into a regenerative position. It is important to understand the relationships between these actors when developing the governance framework - see diagram below.

The responsibilities of these actors in relation to the project's vision are outlined below:

Wirral Council

- Establish a clear brief and aspirations for the development embedding the regenerative vision, ensuring policy, guidance (e.g. SPDs) and binding mechanisms are in place (e.g. S106).
- Facilitate holistic integration of systems, e.g. bridge gaps between delivery teams and designers to maximise regenerative potential for the sites.
- Seek funding for delivery and promote stewardship approaches within the community.
- Ensure there is sufficient internal capacity to monitor proposals and how they align with this strategy
- Adopt a triple bottom line approach or align with the Four capitals approach by Construction Value Toolkit



Dock Branch project governance model

Landowners & Developers

- Develop plots in accordance with planning policy and this strategy
- Investigate opportunities for partnerships, risk-sharing and innovation pro-actively.
- Appoint a design guardian as the golden thread between design team and construction and operations to reduce risk of performance gaps.

Designers

- Adopt and embed the targets of this strategy into their proposals through drawings, specifications and tender requirements
- Report on progress against those targets at each design stage
- Flag and report risks that would impede achieving the objectives and seek mitigation measures
- Engage with relevant stakeholders early on to explore innovation opportunities and efficiencies

Contractors & Supply chain

- Embed the objectives of this strategy into construction management plans and processes and pass them on to supply chain and sub-contractors
- Establish an award mechanism for meeting key performance metrics
- Report on progress against those targets at each construction stage
- Develop a handover and commissioning plan ahead of schedule and review with design guardian to mitigate issues with performance.

Local community

- Engage with project team and provide feedback to the proposals based on their needs
- Hold the Council and development partners accountable for clearly communicating evolution of the development and that proposals deliver on the objectives.

4.6 REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

4.6.8 Governance

Delivery mechanisms

To ensure that the sustainability aspirations are delivered in practice, it is important that delivery mechanisms are identified through the design, procurement and operation of development.

The table opposite summarises the key mechanisms to be used to drive a successful delivery for the masterplan in design, construction and operation. The right hand side indicates to which stakeholders these mechanisms would apply.

The other cross-cutting mechanisms proposed span across typologies and project phases, such as procurement and funding. For each mechanism, an indicative timescale is proposed to steer the steps for delivery.

This framework is the first step in setting out the regenerative ambition and investigating the associated delivery requirements for the Dock Branch masterplan. It requires further testing with the project team to agree targets, to undertake feasibility studies and to organise a timeline of actions.

Next steps

The key next steps are to:

- Obtain team-wide buy in on the vision and level of ambition.
- Test the KPIs with the project team, check viability and run required feasibility studies to agree scheme-wide targets.
- Collaborate with the design team to create strategies to deliver the targets.

Delivery mechanisms required to deliver against targets and assigned responsibilities.

Mechanism	Timescale
Certification / Standards	Pre-planning
Design code	Pre-planning
Cross-cutting mechanisms	
Procurement	Before tender
Section 106	Post-planning
Funding	Before construction
Partnerships	All stages

Relevant content applied to masterplan typology				Applicable to actors					
Infrastructure	Public realm	Buildings	Operation	Landowner	Developer	Designers	Contractor	Supply chain	Local community
		Passivhaus BREEAM Excellent Home Quality Mark 4 stars	Commercial: Fitwel, NABERs		X	X			
<p>Include, as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> housing mix, tenure-neutral principles safety and security principles, designing out anti-social behaviour low parking to car-free zones, active travel routes and provision for modal shift whole life embodied carbon targets and routemap energy performance by building typology (predicted and actual demand, renewable energy generation) 				X	X	X	X		
Choice of delivery partners (from large to small-scale) with aligned values on social and natural capital Performance-driven contracts and incentives to adopt a value-driven decision making approach					X	X	X	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for community programmes (including youth engagement), activating and improving public realm and green infrastructure (through new development) Endeavour to undertake post occupancy evaluation beyond energy consumption, and feedback into subsequent development phases Land allocation for custom build and fit-out Promote community stewardship and ownership models for energy networks, land ownership, landscape management (including growing food) 				X	X				
Unlocking meanwhile uses that are meaningful to the community by addressing local needs Living labs (e.g. using temporary and empty sites for trial experiments)				X	X				X
Heritage local groups Local businesses Create community champions to promote opportunities in the area				X	X			X	X



Boss Birds Parlour, Argyle Street – Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo

5. CHARACTER AREAS

This chapter includes detail on each of the four character areas identified within the neighbourhood. This provides an overall steer on the type, form, mix and scale of development appropriate and how this varies along the length of the park. Landscape character is also bespoke to each area, with guidance on the approach to planting and public space design.

5.1 ARGYLE QUARTER

5.1.1 Introduction

Argyle Quarter is a vibrant mixed-use place that is characterised by compact infill development on gap sites and the widespread refurbishment and adaptive re-use of existing buildings. It is a highly layered place that draws on the existing material palette and contemporary reinterpretations of Victorian character to complement the best of Argyle Quarter’s Victorian buildings. Infill development treads lightly to reinforce the area’s permeable network of fine grain buildings, with proposals working with the existing fabric to define edges to streets and spaces, including Dock Branch Park.

A mix of homes will be introduced to the area to bring day to day residential activity to the streets, with a mix of tenures and dwelling sizes appropriate including family-sized homes. Alongside new homes pockets of industrious activity will be supported with ground floor workshops for small scale manufacturing and fabrication found in combination with a mix of creative and cultural industries including both production e.g. media, design and art restoration etc. and consumption e.g. performing arts, antiques and galleries. A culture-led mix of activities will bring a range of visitors to the area, with public art installations, food halls and live music being used to diversify choice in the leisure and nightlife economy.

A fine grain network of streets and spaces will work alongside the principal thoroughfares of Argyle Street and Dock Branch Park. A ‘one block back’ approach will encourage pedestrians to explore the diversity of Argyle Quarter, catching glimpses of the park as they weave through streets and yards. Argyle Quarter’s sequence of intimate streets and pocket spaces will be activated by a mix of residential and commercial ground floors that provide something new to discover with each visit.

Illustration of the character and form of development appropriate in Argyle Quarter. This focuses largely on infill development on vacant plots and surface car parks, using new buildings to front streets and Dock Branch Park.

Note: Illustration represents one way in which development could be brought forward and does not reflect a prescriptive or ‘final’ design.

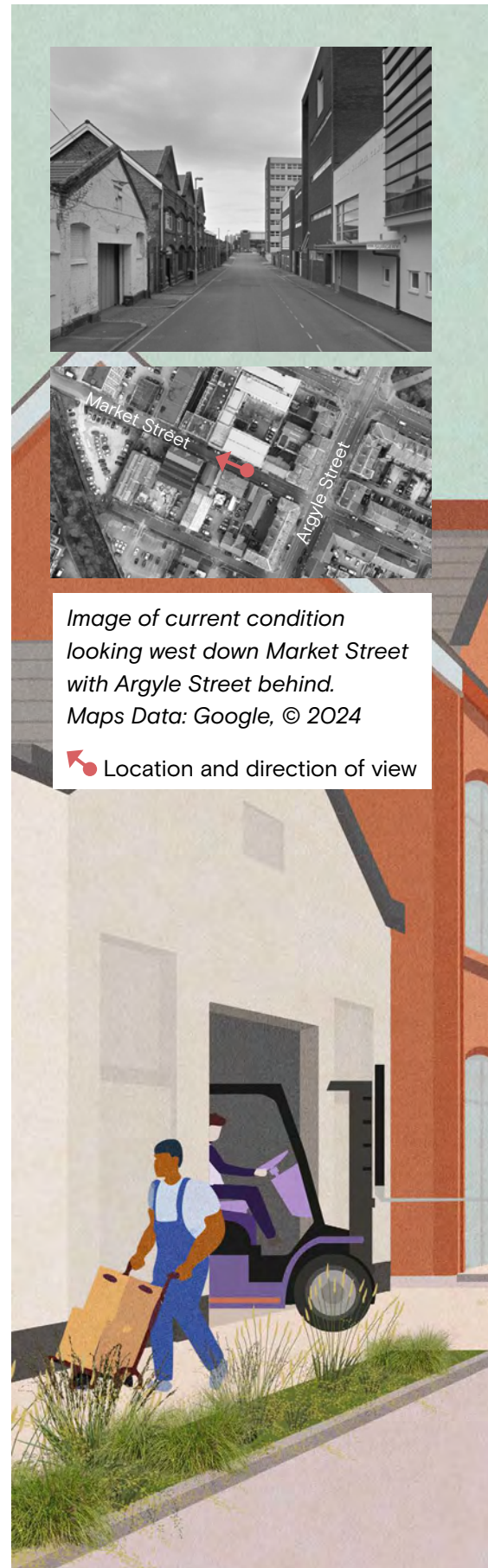


Image of current condition looking west down Market Street with Argyle Street behind. Maps Data: Google, © 2024

Location and direction of view



5.1.3 Built character

Building typologies

Argyle Quarter is characterised by unique and irregular block geometries, particularly where streets meet Dock Branch Park. A range of typologies are appropriate here and should take care to respond to their particular site geometries, with a bespoke approach necessary to accentuate these special characteristics.

A mix of point blocks, linear blocks, maisonettes and townhouses are appropriate typologies in different settings, with this illustrated in the inset framework opposite. In the majority of cases these should be residential at ground floor, with the exception of some proposals on Market Street and Lorn Street which should be commercial in order to animate the public realm and Dock Branch Park.

All development must use design and management to mitigate impacts of potential disturbance to ensure established uses can remain in operation without unreasonable restrictions e.g. noise - see Local Plan policy WS 7.3. This is particularly important for new development spurring off of Adelphi Street.

Height and massing

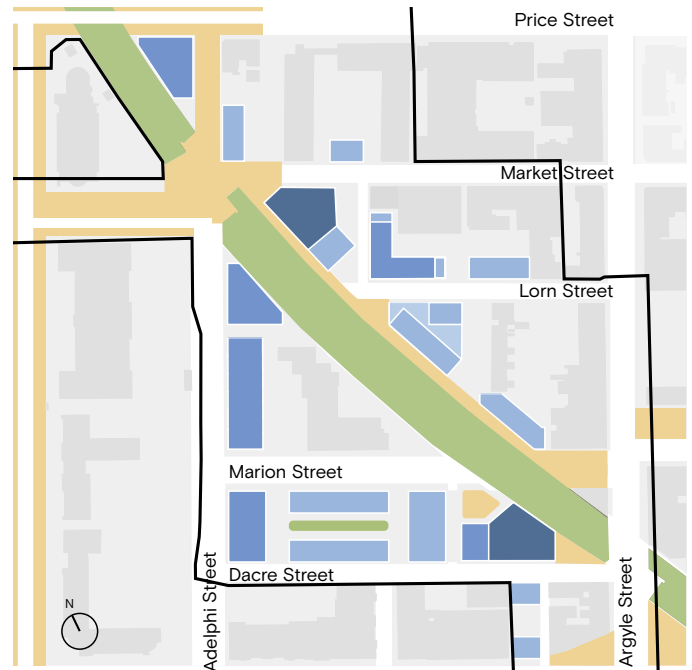
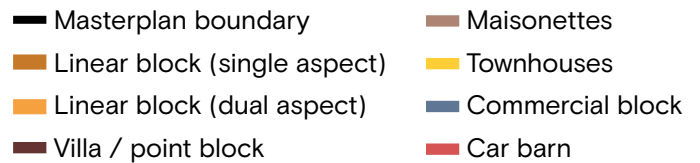
Building heights should sit between three and six storeys, reinforcing the consistent mid-rise datum established in the area. In two locations greater height is appropriate, with up to 8 storeys suitable on the apex of Market Street with Adelphi Street and the apex of Dacre Street with Argyle Street. Both areas are relatively unconstrained by views and have opportunity to contribute positively to the townscape via long, gently curving views south from Dock Branch Park.

Massing should respond to the geometry of the site in which it sits. On regular plots massing should be rectangular and uncomplicated in form, whilst on irregular triangular sites, massing should be more sculptural and draw on the qualities of existing local landmarks to provide moments of distinction within the roofscape. On upper floors proposals may benefit from setting back slightly to preserve the perception of the established datum and consistent street width ratio.

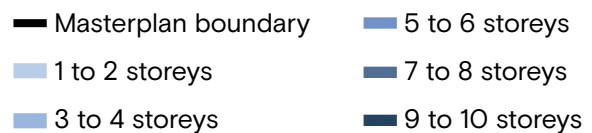
In all cases proposals should protect and enhance the setting of local heritage assets as well as the Hamilton Square Conservation Area as a whole. All tall buildings should align with Local Plan policy WS 7.5.



Typology plan



Height and massing plan



5.1 ARGYLE QUARTER

5.1.3 Built character

Townscape

Argyle Quarter is home to a variety of quality buildings with in-tact architectural features and detailing, with the best examples dating from the Georgian and Victorian era. Proposals should enhance this established character by drawing on the established palette of architectural features, proportions, details materials and colours to establish a synergy and rhythm between old and new. Proposals should explore introducing accent material and colours that whilst used sparingly, can positively contrast with the predominant palette.

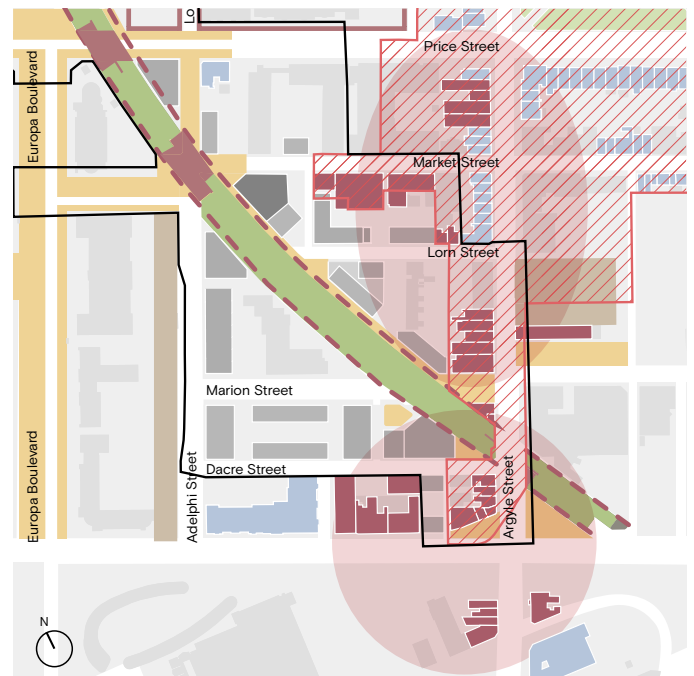
Heritage

Argyle Quarter represents part of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood that has the most intact, high-quality character. It abuts the Hamilton Square Conservation Area and is characterised by the largely good quality historic building stock that fronts Argyle Street, Market Street and the north side of Conway Street.

The heritage objectives here are to respect and enhance the existing characteristics established, using infill development to reinstate the grid through building frontage and improved permeability. New development should be sensitive to the established datum and scale and draw on the rich architectural detailing and colour palette to inform contemporary design. Redesign of Conway Street should seek to repair connections to intact heritage south of the current roundabout, using infill development to reconnect the north and south of Argyle Street.

Key heritage assets include:

- Birkenhead Board School, Conway Street Grade II Listed
- No. 32-36 and 38-50, Argyle Street, Grade II Listed
- Corkhill and Jobs Warehouse, Dacre Street
- The setting of Hamilton Square adjacent is also a key consideration.



Heritage assets framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Proposed buildings
- Existing buildings
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Heritage assets for enhancement and value
- ▨ Hamilton Square Conservation Area
- - - Rail corridor retaining wall
- Reinstating the grid
- Infill opportunities
- Heritage clusters

A palette of building types that would be appropriate for Trinity Gardens. Emphasis should be placed on buildings that enhance the existing character of Victorian warehouses and Georgian townhouses. Window proportions and detailing are key considerations, using positively contrasting materials to create a rich townscape. Irregular plot geometries should be mirrored in fine grain building footprints and massing, celebrating pedestrian permeability through the area.

Note: precedents are chosen to reflect fundamentals of appropriate building types and do not illustrate specific architectural styles or aesthetic choices.



100 Union Street, London



Corkhill & Job's warehouse on Dacre Street, Birkenhead



William Street, Birkenhead



Little Kelham, Sheffield

5.1 ARGYLE QUARTER

5.1.4 Uses and activities

Digital and media

Argyle Creative Quarter is already well established and recognised in the Local Plan. Furthermore, a number of creative industries focusing in digital and media sectors are found within Birkenhead and Wirral more widely. These activities can include marketing, advertising, graphic design, web design, video production, photography, events production, 3D printing etc. These fall into Birkenhead's strengths within creative and cultural production and can easily be accommodated within flexible commercial workspace.

- Commercial
- Flexible
- Industrious
- Argyle Street Local Centre



Video production

Workshops and studios

Birkenhead is home to a number of makers and industrious activities including filtration mesh manufacturers, hand made musical instruments, art restoration, furniture restoration, textiles, glass work and more. Providing secure leases, affordable rates and flexible space for these activities within Argyle Quarter will be an important part of the land use mix and reinforce its sectoral strengths in creative and cultural production. In many cases these could be accommodated within existing buildings through light touch retrofit and adaptation.

- Commercial
- Flexible
- Industrious
- Argyle Street Local Centre



Textiles manufacturing

Culture-led evening economy

A number of evening and night time economy uses exist within Argyle Quarter including Future Yard live music venue and bar, Cotton Club bar and nightclub, The Brass Balance Wetherspoon pub, Capitol Chinese restaurant and Sawasdee Thai restaurant. Adding to, complementing and diversifying this offer is a core component of driving footfall to Argyle Street and Dock Branch more widely. This could include culture-led uses such as an art house cinema, boutique hotel, exhibition space, rehearsal and performance space etc. with all uses having a productive, as well as consumptive, approach and appeal.

- Commercial
- Argyle Street Local Centre

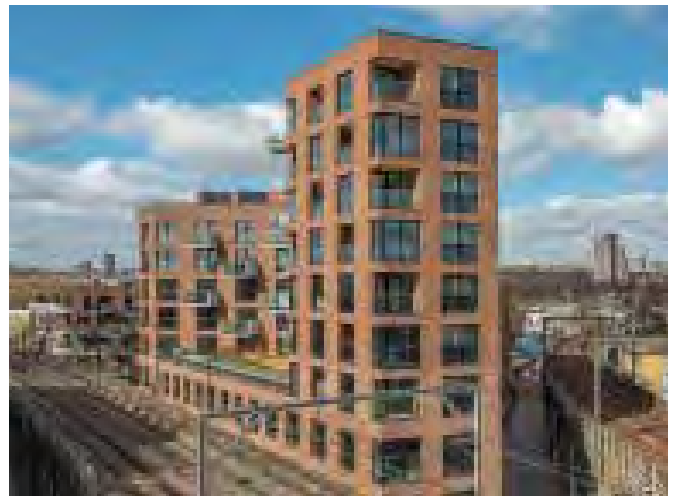


Community cinemas and performance spaces

Homes

Argyle Quarter is appropriate for a mix of residential types, with an emphasis on smaller, more compact 1 to 2 bedroom dwellings. Given the infill nature of development in this area, typologies should include linear blocks, stacked maisonettes and point blocks. The target occupiers will focus on attracting students, young professionals and older people seeking close proximity to services and amenities in close reach. A palpable urban atmosphere of food, drink, leisure and recreation opportunities will be key to unlocking these audiences and should therefore be carefully phased.

■ Residential



Homes within compact linear and point blocks

Food, health, fitness and well-being

There is scope to encourage convergence between Birkenhead's burgeoning sectoral strengths in food processing e.g. Birkenhop Beer; well-being e.g. Joy health and cultural hub; health treatments e.g. Noubalm cosmetics and clinics; and fitness sectors e.g. Two Brothers Gym CIO. Activities could include a community garden and kitchen, foodhall, urban farm, art and music therapies, holistic treatment clinic and salon, fitness and personal training centres etc. and encourage participation through community outreach and widening local employment opportunities.

■ Industrious ■ Low Threshold Enterprise Space
≡ Argyle Street Local Centre



Access to fresh food and encouraging participation

Local amenities and services

Argyle Street is designated as a local centre within the Local Plan and should be a focus for local amenities and services to support existing and future populations. Uses need to complement, rather than compete, with Birkenhead Town Centre - meeting the everyday needs of an immediate catchment in Dock Branch e.g. corner shop, barbers, cafes, as well as providing an alternative and niche offer for Birkenhead and Wirral more widely e.g. independent retailers, artisanal and bespoke crafts, co-working space etc.

■ Commercial ■ Low Threshold Enterprise Space
■ Flexible ≡ Argyle Street Local Centre



Everyday services and amenities to serve the growing population

5.1 ARGYLE QUARTER

5.1.5 Streets and spaces

Argyle Quarter will see a package of improvements that maximise its function as both a place for meeting, dwelling, working and playing, as well as accommodating mixed modal movements. Upgrades across the area will include:

- Reduced carriageway widths that reclaim space from vehicles for people.
- Widened pavements space providing more space for people to walk and wheel, as well as spill out space at ground floor for local businesses.
- On-street parking, cycle rails and waste storage will be interspersed along the street, providing access and servicing for businesses and homes.
- Tree planting and SuDS will line streets to boost climate resilience through increased shade, improved drainage, enhanced air quality and habitat creation. Creative planting solutions will be needed on Argyle Street to carefully balance climate resilience with the historic environment, including views to Hamilton Square.

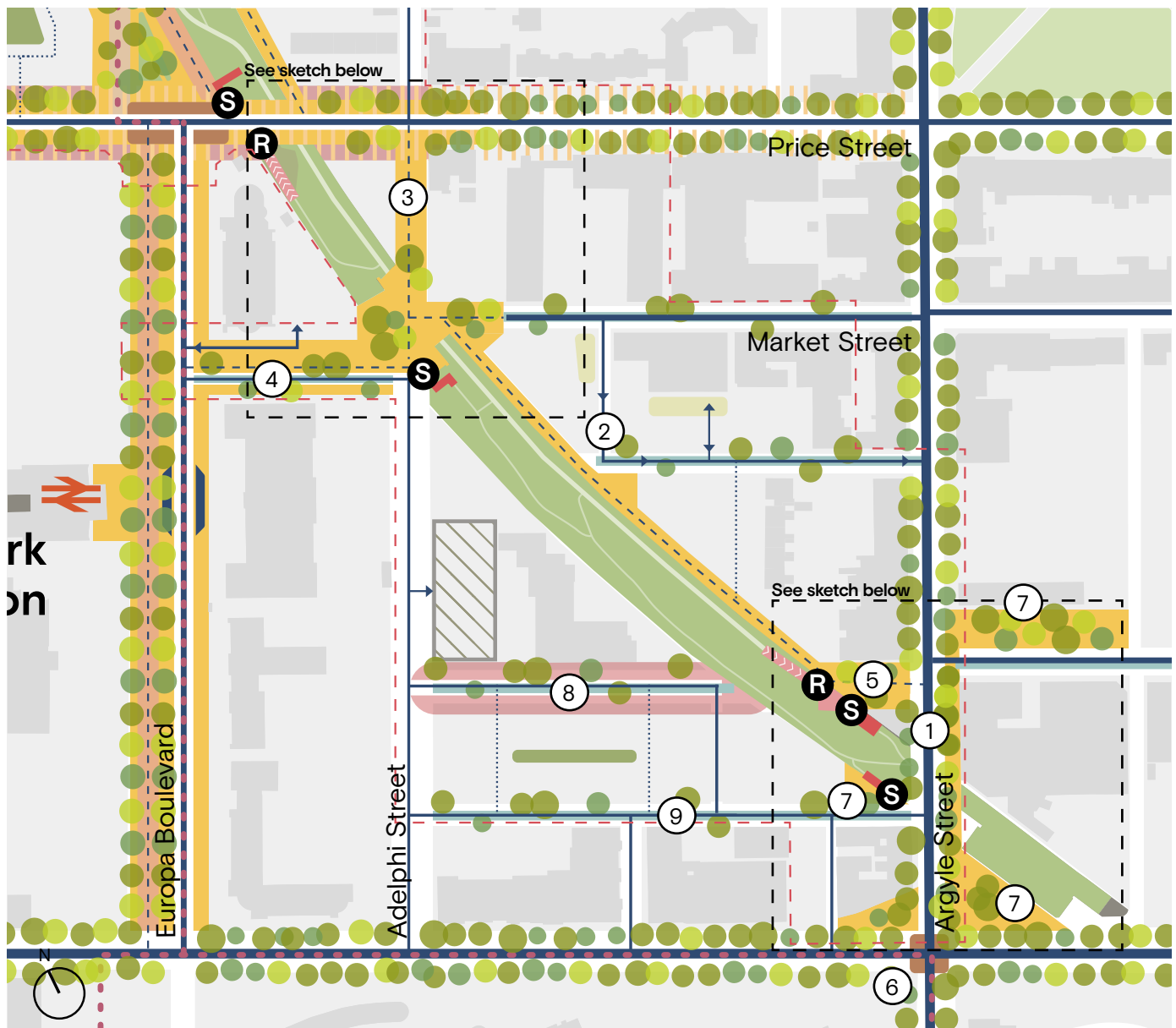
6. Reconfiguration of Conway Street roundabout will create a rationalised junction design that prioritises people over vehicles, unlocking land north and south for public realm and development proposals.
7. A collection of pocket parks will spur off Argyle Street, establishing a network of local play and amenity space.
8. Marion Street is identified as a play street, providing opportunities for informal, incidental play for children, parents and carers to pause and linger.
9. Dacre Street is identified as a wild street and it is important to establish an attractive, verdant character along the street; establishing a positive setting and aspect for proposed residential development.

A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.

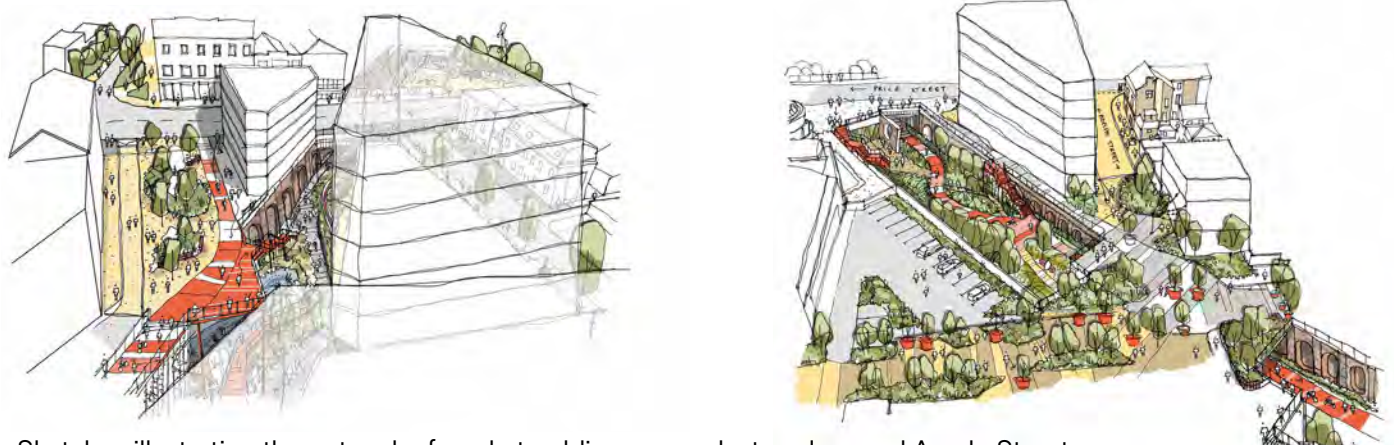
Character area specific improvements include:

1. Argyle Street will continue to function as the principal movement route between Hamilton Square and the town centre, with on-street cycling, bus routes and vehicle movements accommodated through the high street typology.
2. A new street will be established between Market Street and Lorn Street to allow for improved pedestrian and vehicle circulation, avoiding dead ends terminated by the park.
3. The northern end of Adelphi Street will be closed to vehicle access, forming a new public space that works in synergy with the pedestrian and cycle route leading east - west from Conway Park Station to Argyle Street.
4. Close liaison with both Wirral Probation Centre and Wirral Metropolitan College will be required to unlock an improved connection between Europa Boulevard and Market Street. Long term rationalisation of their land holdings should deliver an safe and direct pedestrian and cycle link to Dock Branch Park, with potential for vehicular access in the long term providing circulation between Adelphi Street and Europa Boulevard to avoid dead ends terminated by the park.
5. Marion Street will be closed to vehicle movements and provide direct pedestrian and cycle access to Dock Branch Park via the Active Travel Route.

- - Masterplan boundary
- Primary street
- Secondary street
- Tertiary street
- - Public route (walking and cycling)
- Semi-public route (walking)
- ▶ Access / servicing
- Tree street
- Wild street
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Promenade
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- Play street
- ||||| Calm street
- /// Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- /// Car barn
- Pedestrian and cycle priority junction
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)



Streets and open spaces framework



Sketches illustrating the network of pocket public spaces clustered around Argyle Street and Adelphi Street. These small spaces complement the fine grain, character of Argyle Quarter, whilst increasing the amount of open space for biodiversity and amenity.

5.1 ARGYLE QUARTER

5.1.6 Landscape character

A gritty urban landscape of smaller, hard spaces softened by planters, SuDS and climbers.

Overarching vision / character

- High density living in urban setting arranged around a series of street-level spaces comprised of high quality and contemporary public realm elements
- Network of formal streets, spaces and squares interrupted by trees, structural planting and planters
- Species to include lime, sweet gum, callery pear, sweet box, kohuhu, carex, Japanese forest grass

Key spaces

- Amenity seating adjacent to park - to comprise change in surface material and amenity grass areas

Typical Tree Street character

- Argyle Street and corner of Conway Street
- Formal avenue planting with ornamental planted verges
- Deeper pavements with simple palette of hard materials to delineate footway and social / dining areas adjacent to buildings

Typical Wild Street character

- Several east / west links - comparatively formal in character
- Should provide colour, texture and interest in this urban environment, including: clipped hedges, larger structural shrubs supplemented by herbaceous and perennial species
- Potential for areas of wildflowers in trees verges
- Marion Street is particularly wide (whereas most others may be fairly narrow). Opportunity for much wider verge here which supports amenity use and encourages wildlife and play

Typical SuDS

- Rain gardens
- Urban swales with hard features such as boulders, gabions, walls etc to encourage interaction and play



Argyle Quarter character area



Indicative landscape character



Indicative landscape character



Playful artworks and installations within the public realm, working with local artists, manufacturers and fabricators.



Using creative methods to boost urban greening including hanging baskets, green walls and climbing plants to soften edges.



Work with Argyle Quarter's fine grain to create a network of connected pocket spaces, encouraging exploration and intrigue.

Note: Precedent images represent suggested landscape character and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.

5.2 TRINITY GARDENS

5.2.1 Introduction

Trinity Gardens is a residential neighbourhood of homes organised around a series of shared leafy courtyards, gardens and mews, providing sanctuary from the bustling Dock Branch Park. Comprehensive redevelopment sees runs of family-sized townhouses, maisonettes and apartments returned to the area in a compact layout that evokes some of the historical urban fabric lost to site clearance in the early 20th century. Streetscapes are characterised by a repetition of front doors and windows to reinstate a rhythm of domestic architecture found in Birkenhead's most in-tact historic fabric, such as Hamilton Square.

Whilst predominantly residential in use the neighbourhood includes some mixed ground floors for community facilities arising from an increased residential population, such as child care nursery, community centre, library of things etc. Community growing spaces will be found in street level allotments and orchards, rooftop greenhouses and ground floor urban farms in low threshold enterprise space, encouraging healthy and sociable lifestyles. Trinity Gardens could also be home to the neighbourhood central energy centre, a space to house infrastructure related with on-site renewable energy generation e.g. electricity microgrid, district heating system etc. The space could be used to manage demand and act as a hub for the community energy stewardship model, plus related communal activities such as recycling, deliveries, shared equipment etc.

Leafy tree lined streets and courtyards will be widespread to establish a mature, verdant character to the streetscape. Introducing street trees will act to reinstate a repetition and formality to the streetscape and reinforce climate resilience through increased shade, improved drainage, enhanced air quality and habitat creation. The central section of the Promenade will provide a primary open space for active travel, Wirral Mass Transit, amenity and play. It provides opportunity for creation of an 'urban bosque' under which seating and play space could be accommodated, as well as the creation of informal doorstep play opportunities within street design.

Illustration of the character and form of development appropriate in Trinity Gardens. This will focus on the creation of communal courtyards and gardens for use by residents and local people.

Note: Illustration represents one way in which development could be brought forward and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.



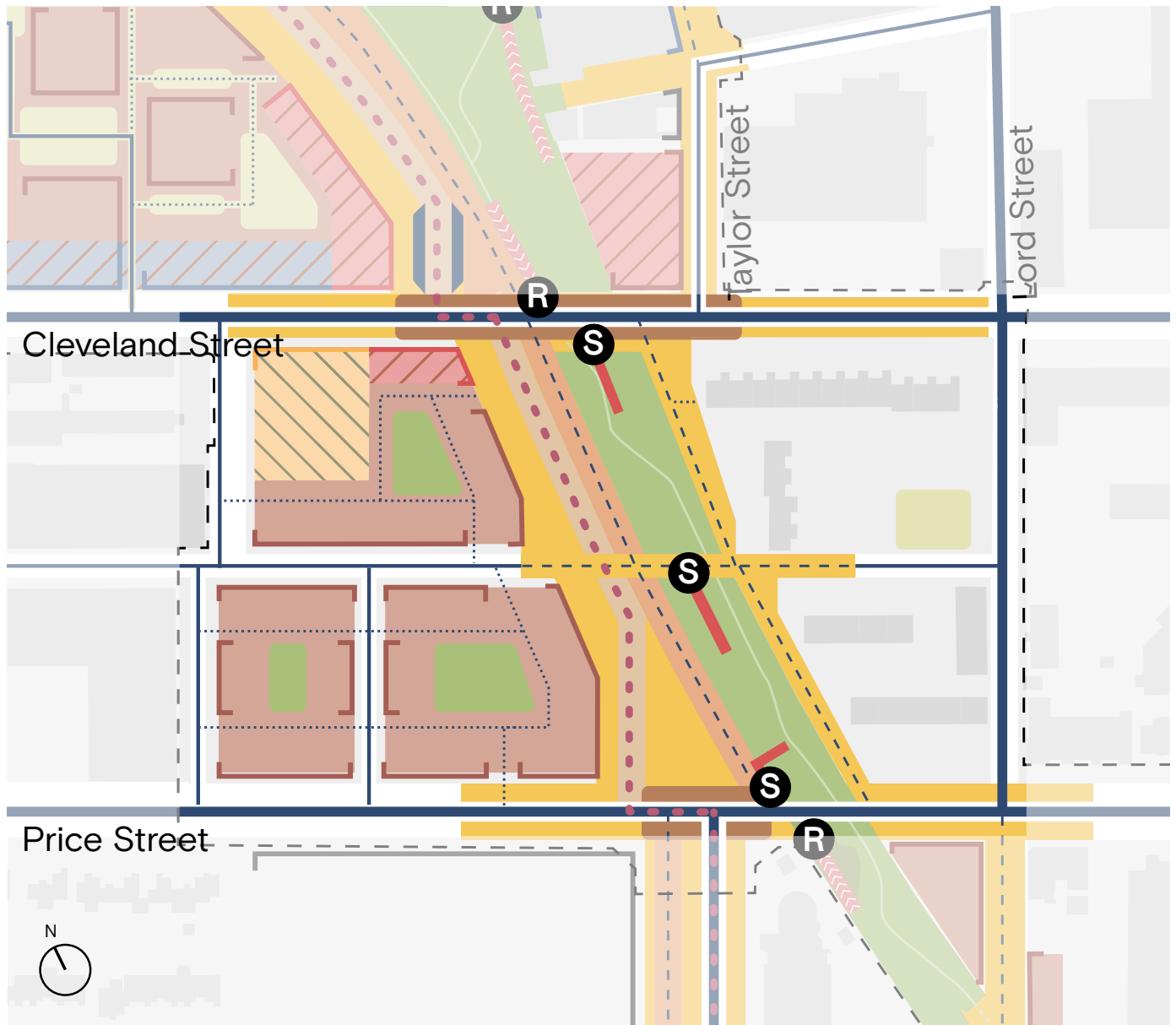
Aerial image of current condition looking west between Brook Street East and Price Street. Maps Data: Google, © 2024

Location and direction of view



5.2 TRINITY GARDENS

5.2.2 Framework



Trinity Gardens framework

- Masterplan boundary
- ▬ Frontage
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrious
- Flexible: residential / industrious / commercial
- Low threshold enterprise space
- /// Mixed-use with residential on upper floors
- \\ Car barn (upper floor)
- Wider development opportunities
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Promenade
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- ▬ Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- Primary route
- Secondary route
- ▬ Public route (walking and cycling)
- ▬ Semi-public route (walking)
- Pedestrian and cycle priority junction
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)
- * Potential location for taller element

5.2.3 Built character

Building typologies

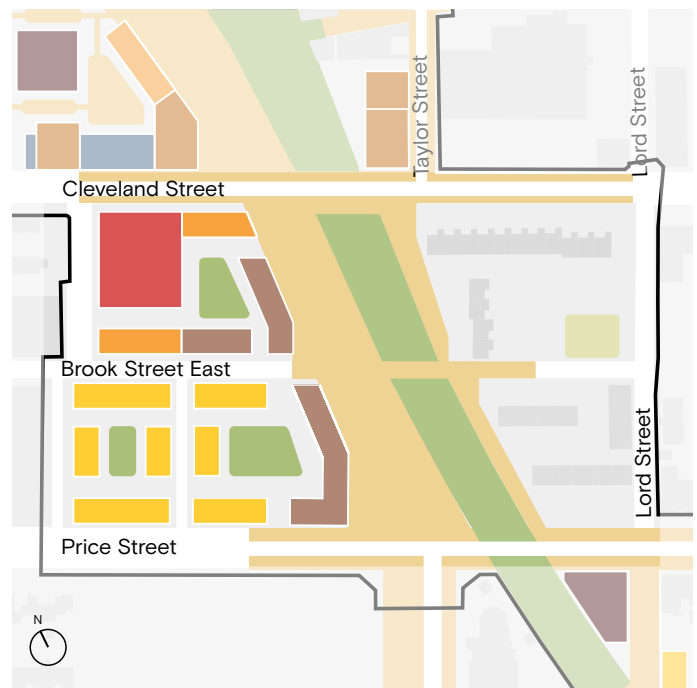
A large proportion of family-sized dwellings will be found here spread across a mix of townhouses, maisonettes and linear block apartments, as illustrated in the inset framework opposite. Buildings should be arranged in compact, semi-public courtyards with the outer perimeter defined by fronts and the inner perimeter defined by backs. In all cases residential ground floors should be designed as 'house fronts' with individual front doors and windows that create a strong visual relationship between the public street and private home, as well as a sense of ownership over the public realm. Buildings fronting Cleveland Street should be commercial and low threshold enterprise space at ground floor in order to reinforce the street hierarchy and activate the street frontage.

Flexibility will be built into townhouses to enable ground floors that can respond to changing car ownership behaviours. Car storage will be accommodated through on-plot undercroft car ports concealed within the principal building envelope, enabling easy conversion of space that would otherwise be unused and providing real choice to residents about car ownership.

Height and massing

Building heights should sit between three and six storeys, reinstating the consistent low to mid-rise datum found more widely. Heights between three and four storeys are appropriate fronting Price Street and the promenade, with five to six storeys appropriate onto Cleveland Street and Russell Street. Frontage onto Brook Street East, Trinity Lane and mews streets created should see a more intimate character established through three storeys. The neighbourhood is relatively constrained by views towards Birkenhead Town Hall in Hamilton Square and should seek to protect and enhance these views, particularly framing the long view looking east along Brook Street.

Massing should be regular, using rectangular blocks to establish comfortable enclosure to streets and internal courtyards. The edge to the promenade should be defined through a cranked building line, creating variegated views and perspectives along its length that accentuates the diagonal geometry of Dock Branch Park, providing a foil and contrast to the long views of the Laird Grid layout. All tall buildings should align with Local Plan policy WS 7.5.



Typology plan

- Masterplan boundary
- Linear block (single aspect)
- Linear block (dual aspect)
- Villa / point block
- Maisonettes
- Townhouses
- Commercial block
- Car barn



Height and massing plan

- Masterplan boundary
- 1 to 2 storeys
- 3 to 4 storeys
- 5 to 6 storeys
- 7 to 8 storeys
- 9 to 10 storeys

5.2 TRINITY GARDENS

5.2.3 Built character

Townscape

Proposals should draw on Birkenhead's rich palette of Georgian and Victorian domestic architecture to demonstrate a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional architectural features to represent a positive evolution in character, rather than a pastiche response. Inspiration should be drawn from local urban terrace, townhouse and tenement design with a focus on the proportions, details, colours, textures and materials. Buildings fronting streets should establish a consistent, tight building line with a modest defensible boundary that allows some level of personalisation by residents with window boxes, seating, pots and planters. Townhouses and ground floor maisonettes should include small rear planted yards and gardens that open onto and activate the courtyards.

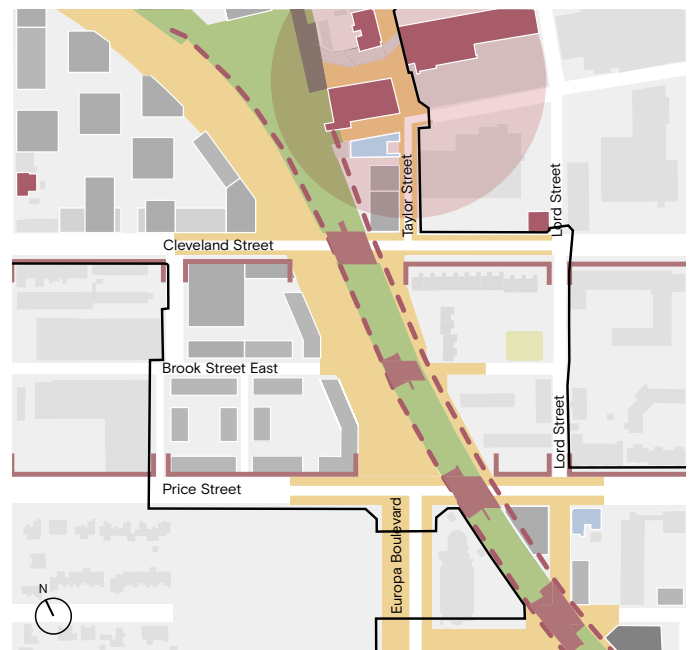
Heritage

Trinity Gardens is currently a mix of residential on the east of the Dock Branch rail cutting and employment to the west. Previously occupied by compact urban terraces and townhouses, it now lacks any real heritage value having been subject to site clearance and mid to late 20th century redevelopment.

The heritage objectives here are to transform the area by reintroducing residential uses as the principal land use. The role of the masterplan is to reinstate the grid, using a consistent building line and street trees to introduce frontage to Price Street, Cleveland Street and Dock Branch Park. Building heights should be proportionate to street widths, achieving a 1:1 ratio to define the grid and create a comfortable sense of enclosure. Residential development in the centre of the character area could include compact runs of mews, taking cues from the original street pattern.

Key heritage assets include:

- The Stork Hotel, Price Street, Grade II
- Former pub on the corner of Cleveland Street and Lord Street
- The setting of Hamilton Square adjacent is also a key consideration.



Heritage assets framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Proposed buildings
- Existing buildings
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Heritage assets for enhancement and value
- - Rail corridor retaining wall
- Reinstating the grid
- Heritage clusters

A palette of building types that would be appropriate for Trinity Gardens. Residential design is appropriate here and should draw on local examples of Georgian townhouses and Victorian urban terraces. Buildings should be unified by their rhythm along the street, using a repetition of elements including front doors, windows and chimney stacks. Front doors should line streets and utilise planting to define boundary treatments, defining the private home from the public street.

Note: precedents are chosen to reflect fundamentals of appropriate building types and do not illustrate specific architectural styles or aesthetic choices.



Hamilton Square, Birkenhead



Time Keepers Square, Salford



Marmalade Lane, Cambridge



Water Street, Birkenhead

5.2 TRINITY GARDENS

5.2.4 Uses and activities

Homes

The principal role of Trinity Gardens is to establish a residential neighbourhood that knits together broader residential patterns either side of Dock Branch Park. Family sized dwellings are highly appropriate in this location, particularly 'house' typologies such as terraced townhouses, mews and maisonettes that can accommodate 3 to 4 bedrooms. Typologies will place an emphasis on front doors onto streets and spaces to create a strong relationship and sense of ownership of the public realm.

■ Residential



Planted courtyards

Amenity and recreation

Amenity and recreation will be a key component of Trinity Gardens, with doorstep play characterising the streets and spaces of the neighbourhood. All outdoor amenity space will be communal, with homes framing centralised residential courtyards and gardens, with private amenity spaces making use of terraces to optimise efficiency and encourage a social environment between neighbours.

■ Residential ■ Hard public open space
■ Green public open space



Playable streets

Community growing spaces

Opportunity for community growing spaces should be integrated into proposals, either through street level allotments and orchards, or roof top green houses and gardens. This will work in synergy with doorstep play and strong surveillance of the street to create a calm, neighbourhood character as well as encouraging social interaction and promoting access to healthy, affordable food. This could begin as an interim use on site before development to promote engagement with existing and emerging communities.

■ Residential ■ Low Threshold Enterprise Space
■ Hard public open space
■ Green public open space



Edible streets

Social infrastructure

There is potential in this character area for social infrastructure that meets the need of Dock Branch's increasing residential population, such as childcare nursery, community centre, play spaces etc. This use could potentially occupy a ground floor of any car barn that may be proposed, activating the public realm with a low-overhead, public-facing use. This space could be designed to be flexible and able to accommodate a range of community activities at evenings and weekends.

- Commercial
- Low Threshold Enterprise Space
- Flexible



Integrated joyful community resources

Central energy centre

Trinity Gardens could be home to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood central energy centre, a space to house infrastructure related with on-site renewable energy generation e.g. electricity microgrid, district heating system etc. The space could be used to manage demand and act as a hub for the community energy stewardship model, plus related communal activities such as recycling, deliveries, shared equipment etc.

- Commercial
- Low Threshold Enterprise Space



On site community energy production

Open access resources

As a principally residential neighbourhood, Trinity Gardens could be home to a centralised hub for shared resources, such as a Library of Things, enabling local people to borrow equipment for periods of time. This could be operated in the same space as the central energy centre and any social infrastructure, to encourage visitation and social interaction.

- Industrious
- Low Threshold Enterprise Space
- Flexible



Community library of things

5.2 TRINITY GARDENS

5.2.5 Streets and spaces

Trinity Gardens will see a package of improvements that maximise its function as both a place for meeting, dwelling, working and playing, as well as accommodating mixed modal movements. Upgrades across the area will include:

- Reduced carriageway widths that reclaim space from vehicles for people.
- Widened pavements space providing more space for people to walk and wheel, as well as spill out space at ground floor for local businesses.
- On-street parking, cycle rails and waste storage will be interspersed along the street, providing access and servicing for businesses and homes.
- Tree planting and SuDS will line streets to boost climate resilience through increased shade, improved drainage, enhanced air quality and habitat creation.

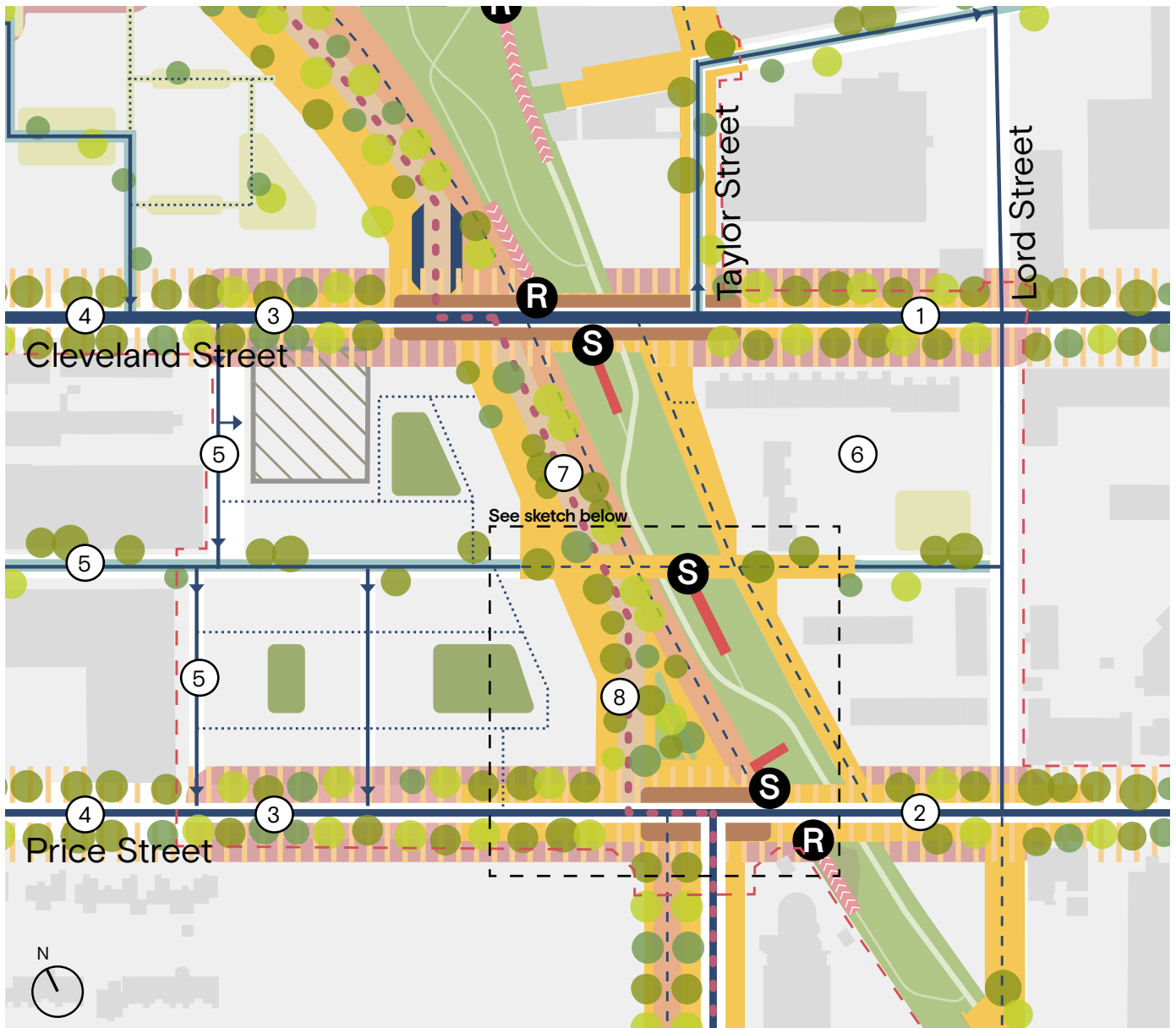
Character area specific improvements include:

1. Cleveland Street will act as the main street typology and primary route accommodating on-street cycling, bus routes and vehicle movements using the street.
2. Price Street will act as the secondary route accommodating mixed modes using the neighbourhood street typology.
3. Both streets will be transformed through their street design into 'calm streets' that reduce speeds and deter vehicle movements across the park, encouraging through traffic to circulate back down Europa Boulevard and Lord Street and out to the strategic movement network.
4. Both streets will be designed as play streets, providing opportunities for informal, incidental play for parents and carers to pause and linger with the children.
5. Brook Street East will adopt the mews street typology that establishes a residential and access only function to the street, accessed by Russell Street and Trinity Lane. Vehicle movements across the park will be stopped at the promenade.
6. New mews streets will be designed to provide residential access from Brook Street East to Price Street and Lord Street respectively.
7. The promenade will be designed to accommodate the Wirral Mass Transit route as well as active travel, running north to south parallel with Dock Branch Park.

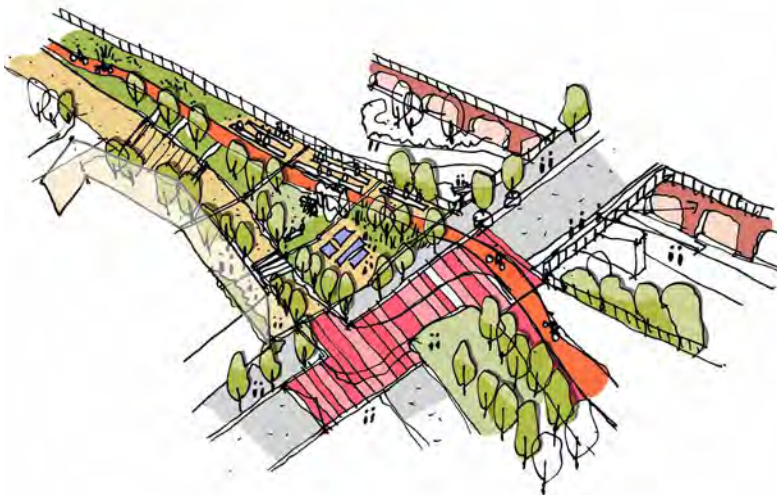
8. The character of the promenade will be wooded and planted to connect with the Tree Street landscape typologies, using an 'urban bosque' to establish canopy cover and linking the wider green infrastructure network.

A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.

- - Masterplan boundary
- Primary street
- Secondary street
- Tertiary street
- - Public route (walking and cycling)
- Semi-public route (walking)
- ▶ Access / servicing
- Tree street
- Wild street
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Promenade
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- Play street
- |||| Calm street
- ▬ Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- \\ Car barn
- Pedestrian and cycle priority junction
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)



Streets and open spaces framework



Sketch illustrating the threshold where the promenade meeting Price Street and Europa Boulevard. This multifunctional space accommodates slow vehicle speeds moving across the park, as well as the potential Wirral Mass Transit route crossing from the promenade to Europa Boulevard.

5.2 TRINITY GARDENS

5.2.6 Landscape character

A series tree-lined streets and intimate residential courtyards and gardens.

Overarching vision / character

- Series of intimate spaces with built form arranged around communal courtyards and play streets
- Compact spaces with strong enclosure and foreshortening of views reinforced by woodland and informal landscape character
- Generous planted areas and oversized planters including mix of native and ornamental species
- Species to include larch, eucalyptus, Indian bean tree, fatsia, Japanese spurge, fern, plantain lily, ivy

Key spaces

- The Promenade will be the primary open space passing through this character area. It connects Europa Way with the two Tree Streets (Cleveland Street and Price Street)
- Opportunity to create heavily treed section of the Promenade to connect the well-treed streets
- Creation of an 'urban bosque' under which seating and play space could be located

Typical Tree Street character

- Cleveland Street and Price Street to north and south of zone
- Single species avenues to each to unify character area and accentuate east / west movement
- Verges to include planted understorey to mimic woodland floor character including dense evergreen ground cover and perennials

Typical Wild Street character

- Single Wild Street passing through central area
- Streets will include build outs and passing places to slow traffic allow for space for people
- Informal play trails through wide verges
- Naturalised shrub and grass planting
- Linear foraging routes for wildlife and people - to include species with edible nuts and berries

Typical SuDS

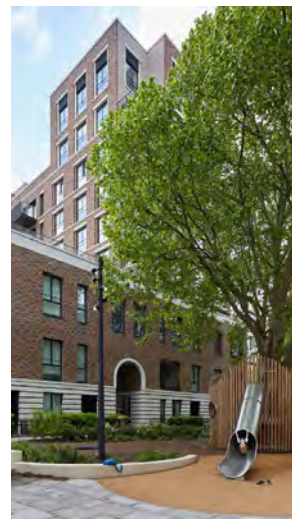
- Linear wetlands incorporating native species
- Swales incorporating play features and permanently wet areas
- Rain gardens at key locations in urban core



Trinity Gardens character area



Indicative landscape character



Indicative landscape character



Planted communal courtyards provide calm, quiet spaces for new and existing residents to meet, socialise and relax in nature.



Pedestrian-only streets that place an emphasis on socialising and dwelling, a street as a public space and extension of the home.



Maximising opportunities for food growing including orchards and allotments within courtyards and the promenade, supporting healthy lifestyles.

Note: Precedent images represent suggested landscape character and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.

5.3 EGERTON POINT

5.3.1 Introduction

Egerton Point is a vibrant and truly mixed-use neighbourhood set within the spacious parkland of Dock Branch Park and its environs. A mix of new build development will sit comfortably alongside the refurbishment and the adaptive re-use of existing characterful buildings, working in synergy to create a richly varied and distinctive built character. Unlike the ordered streets of the Laird Grid, buildings here sit within and are defined by their relationship to open space, with the parkland setting of hard and soft spaces encasing urban blocks and building footprints. Indeed, greater freedom exists to establish a new, high density character that takes advantage of both the dockland and parkland setting, establishing a distinct new character for Birkenhead.

A truly mixed-use neighbourhood, Egerton Point will introduce a mix of new homes to the area alongside active commercial uses. Homes will be appropriate on upper floors of new build development, providing a mix of apartment sizes with expansive views across the docks and parkland. Ground floors of new build development should provide commercial space for a mix of activities including office space opening onto the docks; function, event and front of house space for Egerton House; wholesale and distribution onto Canning Street; and gym, gallery and food and beverage space looking south onto Dock Branch Park. This will work in synergy with the leisure and amenity focus of Dock Branch Park and the established cultural venues on Taylor Street including Molly's Chambers, Northern Power House and Wirral Transport Museum.

Dock Branch Park will spill up from the rail cutting and out to street level, with buildings sat within an expansive public realm of hard and soft spaces. The long term ambition to realign Canning Street and consolidate surface car parking will transform the highways dominated design, creating a well vegetated and animated parkland that extends the park up to the docklands. Part of Taylor Street will become a new public space, providing a platform for spill out activity from the Wirral Transport Museum and other venues, providing a complementary space for events and activities alongside Dock Branch Park.



Image of current condition looking west down Tower Road at the junction with Egerton Wharf. Maps Data: Google, © 2024

Location and direction of view



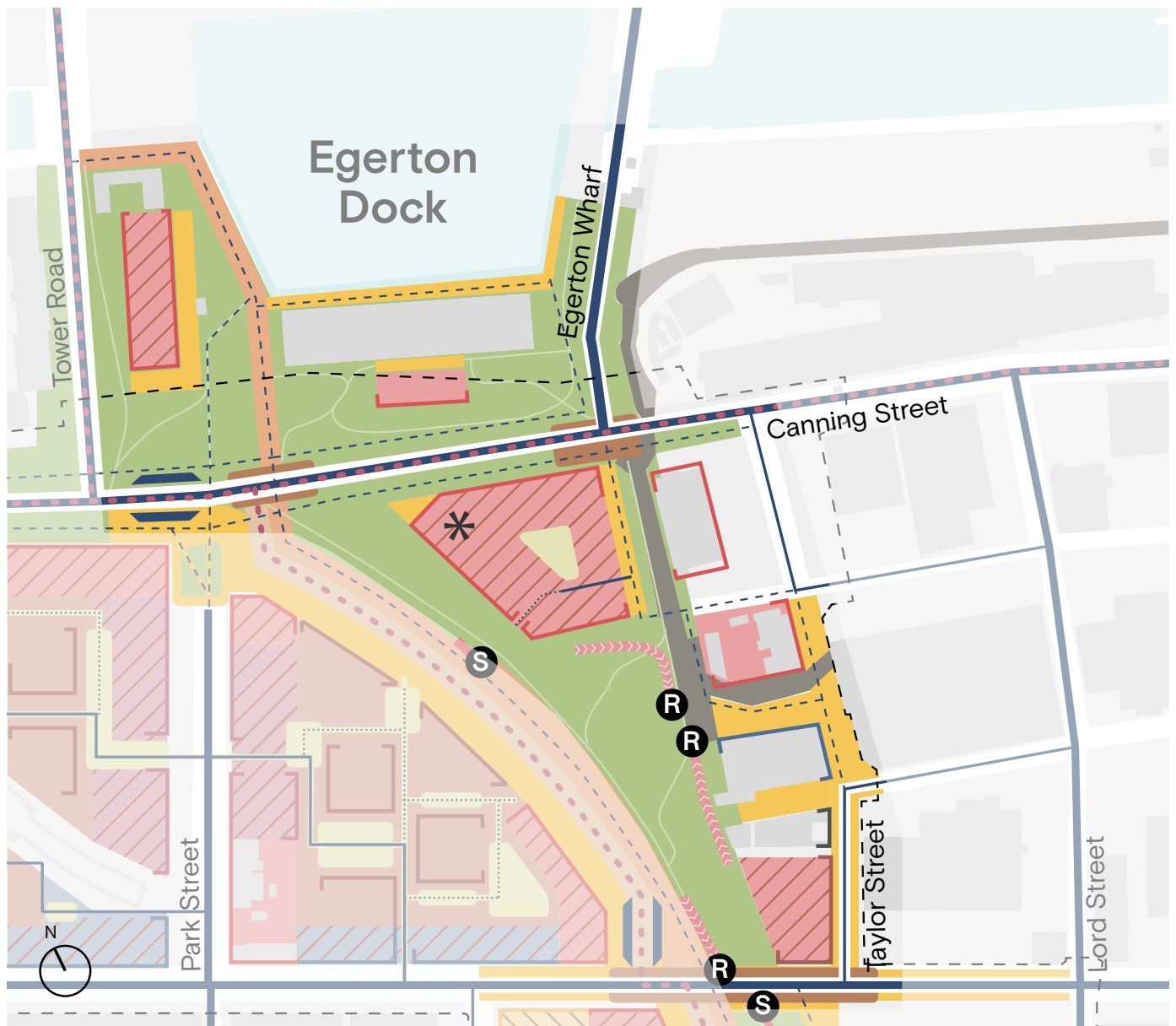
Illustration of the character and form of development appropriate in Egerton Point. This focuses on the realignment of Canning Street and the creation of a new high density mixed use neighbourhood.

Note: Illustration represents one way in which development could be brought forward and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.



5.3 EGERTON POINT

5.3.2 Framework



Egerton Point framework

- Masterplan boundary
- ▬ Frontage
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrious
- Flexible: residential / industrious / commercial
- Low threshold enterprise space
- /// Mixed-use with residential on upper floors
- \\ Car barn (upper floor)
- Wider development opportunities
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Promenade
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- ▬ Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- ▬ Primary route
- ▬ Secondary route
- ▬ Public route (walking and cycling)
- ▬ Semi-public route (walking)
- Pedestrian and cycle priority junction
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)
- * Potential location for taller element

5.3.3 Built character

Building typologies

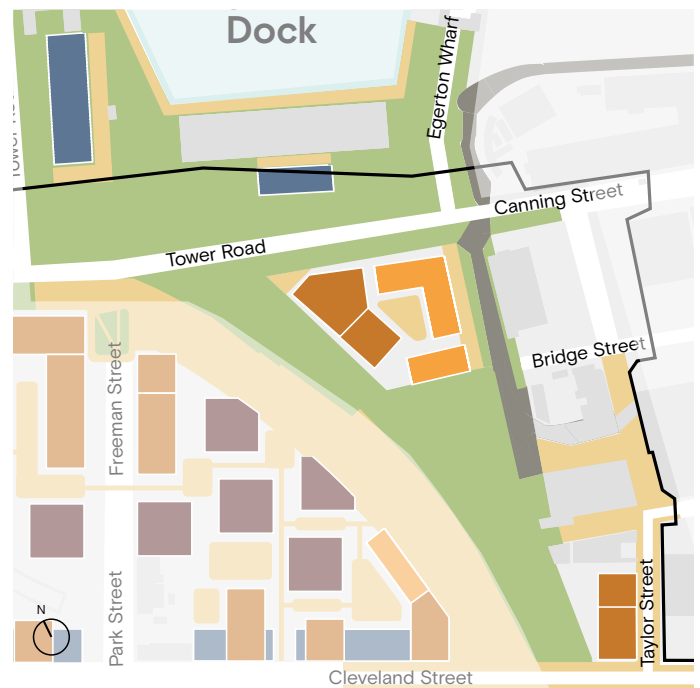
Egerton Point comprises a mix of typologies delivered through comprehensive redevelopment, infill and refurbishment. New build typologies all make use of linear blocks with mixed-use ground floors and apartments above, whilst refurbished and adapted typologies include warehouses and sheds. Infill development on Taylor Street and Tower Road should focus on defining the edges to urban blocks within which they sit, aligning building lines parallel with the street and using frontage to define the block perimeter.

The principal development opportunity includes creation of a new urban perimeter block sitting within Dock Branch Park and fronting the realigned Canning Street, using linear blocks to define both an outer edge and internal courtyard. Ground floors should be commercial in use to take advantage of the high quality public realm setting and tailor a target employment and leisure mix. Upper floors should be residential and include a range of dwelling sizes including family-sized dwellings, who can take advantage of the doorstep amenity to help activate the park outside of principal visitation times.

Heights and massing

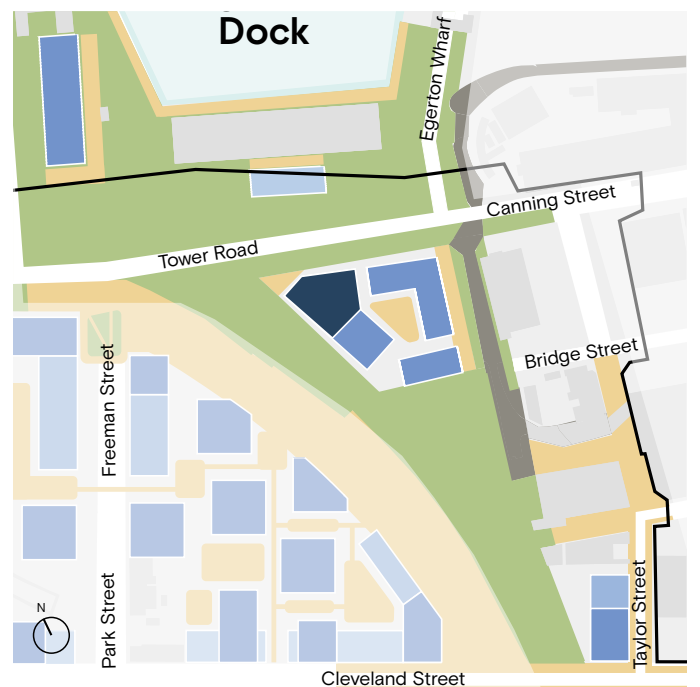
Building shoulder heights should be between three and four storeys to reinstate the consistent mid-rise datum found more widely, before taller elements rise at key locations to between six and eight storeys. Buildings fronting Taylor Street and Tower Road should establish a shoulder height of between three and four storeys, with taller elements rising to six at the corner of sites including Cleveland Street. Canning Street and Dock Branch Park should define a shoulder height of three to four storeys, before rising to eight storeys at the apex of the site. Massing on these taller elements should be sculptural and draw on the qualities of existing local landmarks to provide moments of distinction within the roofscape.

In all cases height and massing should be carefully considered to protect and enhance the setting of heritage assets, including Hamilton Square and Taylor Street Ventilation Tower. In the case of the latter, a carefully composed and bespoke architectural response will be needed to avoid cluttering the asset itself and its setting. Height and massing will need to be carefully considered to positively contrast and complement the original structure, rather than compete with or try to form an extension of it. All tall buildings should align with Local Plan policy WS 7.5.



Typology plan

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| — Masterplan boundary | ■ Maisonettes |
| ■ Linear block (single aspect) | ■ Townhouses |
| ■ Linear block (dual aspect) | ■ Commercial block |
| ■ Villa / point block | ■ Car barn |



Height and massing plan

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| — Masterplan boundary | ■ 5 to 6 storeys |
| ■ 1 to 2 storeys | ■ 7 to 8 storeys |
| ■ 3 to 4 storeys | ■ 9 to 10 storeys |

5.3 EGERTON POINT

5.3.3 Built character

Townscape

Development fronting Canning Street and Tower Road is currently fragmented and highways dominated in character. Accompanied by its proximity to the expansive docklands and generous parkland setting, this creates a greater degree of freedom for the role of contemporary and innovative design in establishing a new, high density and mixed-use character.

Buildings should observe core elements of Birkenheadness in facade and massing design, allowing greater scope for introducing positively contrasting colour and material palettes, referencing the emerging contemporary Tower Road character. Buildings fronting Taylor Street and Cleveland Street should retain a more reserved character that reflects the existing character into which they sit, particularly the Victorian industrial heritage of the warehouses and Ventilation Tower clustered around Taylor Street.

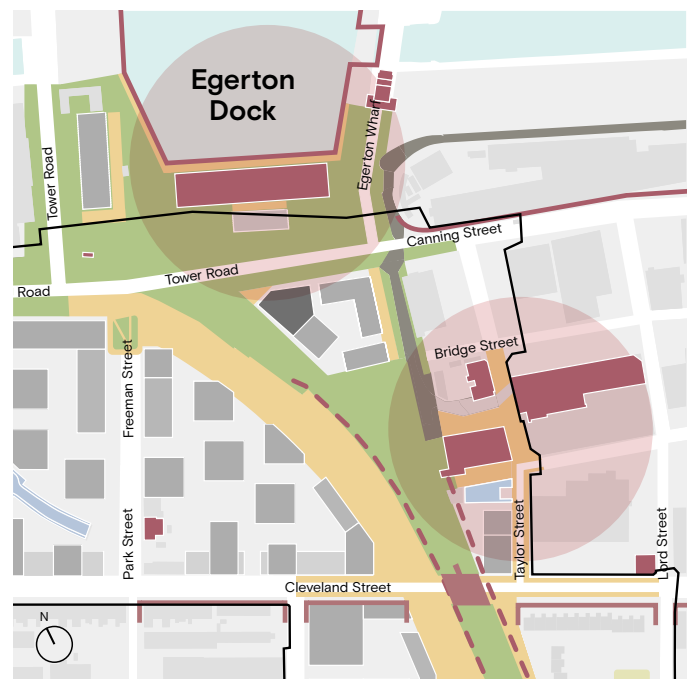
Heritage

An area of mixed character, home to a number of designated and undesignated assets, including Taylor Street Ventilation Tower and the Wirral Transport Museum and their proximity affords them a strong group value. Egerton House is dislocated from wider urban fabric by the dominance of Tower Road and surface car parking encases it.

The area heritage objectives are to work with the Taylor Street assets cluster, encouraging existing leisure, culture, and tourism activities here, preserving the smaller-scale and informal morphology that derives from the bridge crossing the lost Dock Branch stream, and finding alternative active uses for underutilised buildings. Development adjacent to Taylor Street Ventilation Tower should create a composed response to complement its prominence. The transformation of Tower Road will be critical to enhancing the setting of Egerton House and appreciation of the docks.

Key assets include:

- Signal Box, Freeman Street
- Egerton House, Tower Road
- Mersey Tunnel Ventilation Tower, Taylor Street, Grade II Listed
- A key consideration is the relationship with dock assets to the north including a number of potential designated and non-designated heritage assets.

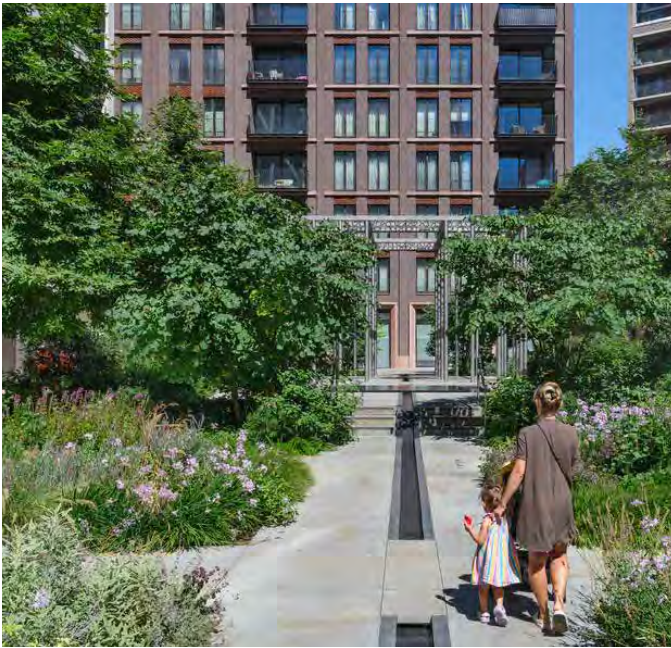


Heritage assets framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Proposed buildings
- Existing buildings
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Heritage assets for enhancement and value
- - - Rail corridor retaining wall
- Reinstating the grid
- Heritage clusters

A palette of building types that would be appropriate for Egerton Point. Buildings should sit within a verdant parkland setting, characterised by pedestrian routes directly into Dock Branch Park. Building character here should present a contemporary interpretation of Birkenhead's industrial heritage as well as drawing on the new architectural language emerging around Egerton Dock. Where taller buildings are proposed, these should be taller elements that rise from an established shoulder height, much the Sidney Street ventilation tower.

Note: precedents are chosen to reflect fundamentals of appropriate building types and do not illustrate specific architectural styles or aesthetic choices.



Roseberry Mansion, Kings Cross, London



New development around Egerton Dock, Birkenhead



Chobham Manor, London



Ventilation Tower, Sidney Street, Birkenhead

5.3 EGERTON POINT

5.3.4 Uses and activities

Heritage and culture

Egerton Point will act as a major gateway to Dock Branch Park. There is a clear role for uses and activities that complement the transport heritage associated with Birkenhead and its impact on local culture, such as leisure, F&B, arts and performance and some limited retail. Key attractors include the Dock Branch Park itself and the Wirral Transport Museum, alongside potential adaptation of the Taylor Street Ventilation Tower.

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrious
- Flexible
- Low Threshold Enterprise Space
- Argyle Street Local Centre

Leisure and entertainment

The creation of Dock Branch Park will help create a new market for leisure and amenity activities, with Egerton Point an appropriate setting through a world class public realm. These activities could tap into the increased residential population, student population at Wirral Metropolitan College, as well as major employment destinations around Egerton Dock such as the Hythe, and new professional occupants of the Commercial Quarter. Activities could cater towards corporate entertainment and hospitality such as e-sport and gaming, climbing walls, escape rooms, axe throwing etc.

- Commercial
- Flexible

Food and beverage

The combination of the Transport Shed, Wirral Transport Museum and Dock Branch Park itself will establish a visitor destination for Wirral. The footfall generated by visitors can be tapped into by providing food and beverage choices in the area. Molly's Chambers is an extant pub and live music venue that could be expanded to steward outdoor space in the park for dining. Additional, complementary choices for eating and drinking could work well, such as a microbrewery, street food and coffee vendor pop-ups in the summer.

- Commercial
- Flexible



Wirral Transport Museum



Activities that spin off from the active leisure character of Dock Branch Park



Pubs, restaurants, cafes and street food markets

Homes

The residential component of Egerton Point could sit within mixed or single use buildings. Apartment typologies are appropriate, potentially some family sized dwellings (3+ bedrooms) to take advantage of the amenity space offered by Dock Branch for play and recreation. These should be accommodated within high density typologies including courtyard blocks and point blocks, alongside smaller dwellings.

■ Residential



Homes set within a parkland landscape

Wholesale and retail

Wholesale and retail plays a key role in the functioning of the study area, with the industries and sectors listed opposite including both front of house and back of house activities. A number of businesses in the area include small trade counters that provide a public face for retail provision, as well as larger spaces for storage and purchase of wholesale items. Egerton Point would encourage this continued activity as a source of animation and activation on the street, as well as economic continuity of on-site business models.

■ Commercial ■ Flexible
■ Industrious



Trade counter businesses

Outdoor amenity and recreation

A core component of Egerton Point will be the creation of a world class public realm through creation of Dock Branch Park. This setting provides ample scope for day trip activities, tourism, picnics, events and installations. Ultimately a high proportion of activities will relate to those spending time dwelling in the park, without necessarily spending money. The design of the park itself will drive this, whilst surrounding streets and spaces can provide a continuation of amenity and recreation opportunities e.g. play.

■ Commercial ■ Hard public open space
■ Flexible ■ Green public open space



Amenity and leisure within the parkland

5.3 EGERTON POINT

5.3.5 Streets and open spaces

Egerton Point will see a package of improvements that maximise its function as both a place for meeting, dwelling, working and playing, as well as accommodating mixed modal movements. Upgrades across the area will include:

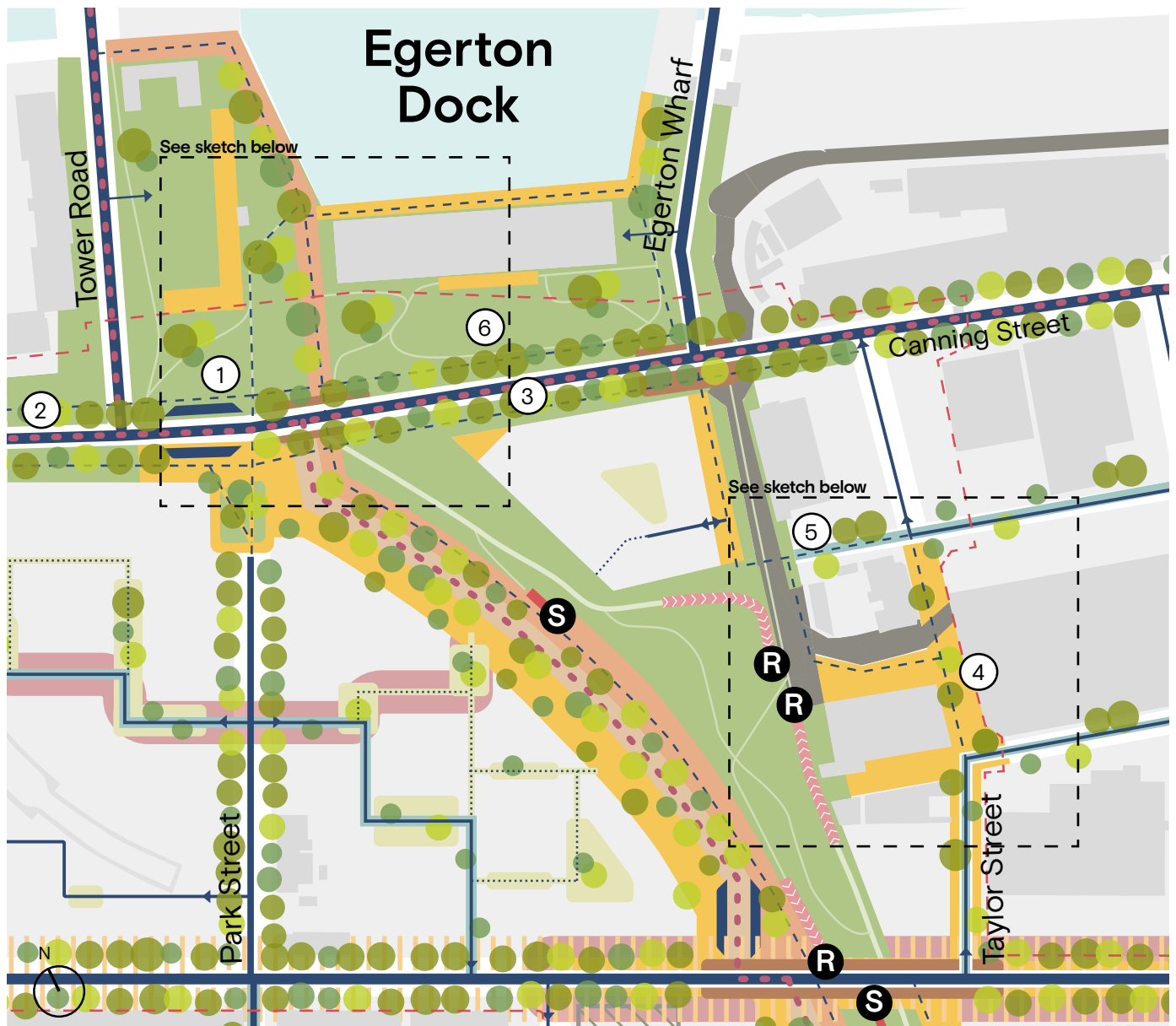
- Reduced carriageway widths that reclaim space from vehicles for people.
- Widened pavements space providing more space for people to walk and wheel, as well as spill out space at ground floor for local businesses.
- On-street parking, cycle rails and waste storage will be interspersed along the street, providing access and servicing for businesses and homes.
- Tree planting and SuDS will line streets to boost climate resilience through increased shade, improved drainage, enhanced air quality and habitat creation.

Character area specific improvements include:

1. Dock Branch Park will spill out from the rail cutting to street level, creating a high quality parkland that extends across Canning Street and Tower Road to meet Egerton Dock.
2. The parkland will extend to meet Wirral Waters and the proposed green active travel corridor running west along Corporation Street, expanding Birkenhead's evolving green infrastructure network.
3. Canning Street and Tower Road will be realigned to establish a more rational, linear street environment that passes through Dock Branch Park to re-prioritise people, amenity and leisure within the public realm.
4. The central section of Taylor Street will become a new public space closed to vehicles, providing a platform for spill out activity from the Wirral Transport Museum and other venues.
5. Bridge Street will be de-cluttered and reinstated east of Taylor Street, creating access into Dock Branch Park, stitching in with the tramway and new active travel link.
6. The setting of Egerton Dock will be transformed, with consolidation of surface car parking into car barns releasing this space for new public realm that can be used for functions and events, as well as improving the setting of Egerton House itself as a heritage asset.

A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.

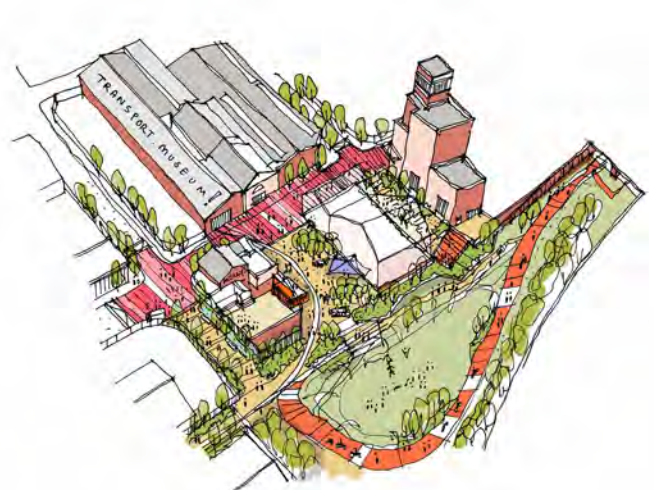
- - Masterplan boundary
- Primary street
- Secondary street
- Tertiary street
- - Public route (walking and cycling)
- Semi-public route (walking)
- ▶ Access / servicing
- Tree street
- Wild street
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Promenade
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- Play street
- ||||| Calm street
- ▬ Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- \\ Car barn
- Pedestrian and cycle priority junction
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)



Streets and open spaces framework



Above: sketch illustrating the realignment of Canning Street / Tower Road and the expansion of Dock Branch Park up to street level to meet Egerton House and Dock.



Right: sketch illustrating the public space created at Taylor Street, providing a platform for activities spilling out from Wirral Transport Museum and Molly's Chambers.

5.3 EGERTON POINT

5.3.6 Landscape character

A generous parkland gateway where Dock Branch Park spills up and out to meet the docks.

Overarching vision and character

- High density living in parkland setting
- Potential to create maritime / coastal character or mimic dunes through use of landform, grasses and aggregate or bound gravel
- High quality and contemporary public realm which incorporates existing rail tracks as part of contemporary interpretation of industrial character
- Species to include black pine, birch, cherry, reed grass, needle grass, gorse, sea buckthorn, lavender

Key spaces

- Generous hard and soft public realm between Docks and realigned Canning Street
- Large lawn areas for recreation and leisure
- Play streets including bespoke play features
- New active travel link along former railway line north of Corporation Street

Typical Tree Street character

- Single Tree Street along realigned Canning Street, to be influenced by Tower Road improvements
- Well-vegetated with mixed tree planting alternating between formal avenues and stands of trees
- Verges to include close-mown grass, shrub and grass planting and informal seating

Typical Wild Street character

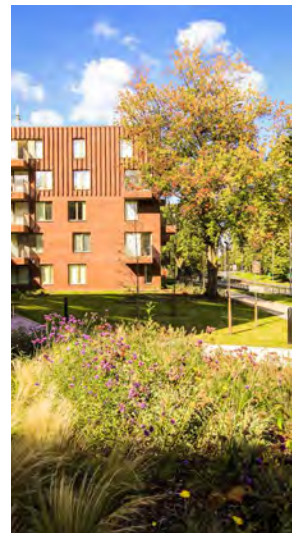
- No internal Wild Streets, but interfaces with Bridge Street & George Street which abut the eastern edge of the character area
- Potential for enhanced planting / tree planting and entry points or to reinforce views or desire lines

Typical SuDS

- Potential for detention basins depending on storage requirements
- Linear swales with close-mown grass or dry/drought flowering mixes
- Rain gardens along Tree Streets



Egerton Point character area



Indicative landscape character



Indicative landscape character



A combination of hard and soft spaces that exploit the level changes to create visually and spatially connect the landscape, with edges activated by mixed uses.



A parkland character with meadow planting that sets the scene for a variety of play opportunities. Generous lawn spaces provide a platform for events and activities throughout the year.



A multifunctional landscape with a mixture of formal and informal areas, using the landscape as a setting to celebrate Dock Branch's heritage assets.

Note: Precedent images represent suggested landscape character and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.

5.4 DOCK BRANCH WORKS

5.4.1 Introduction

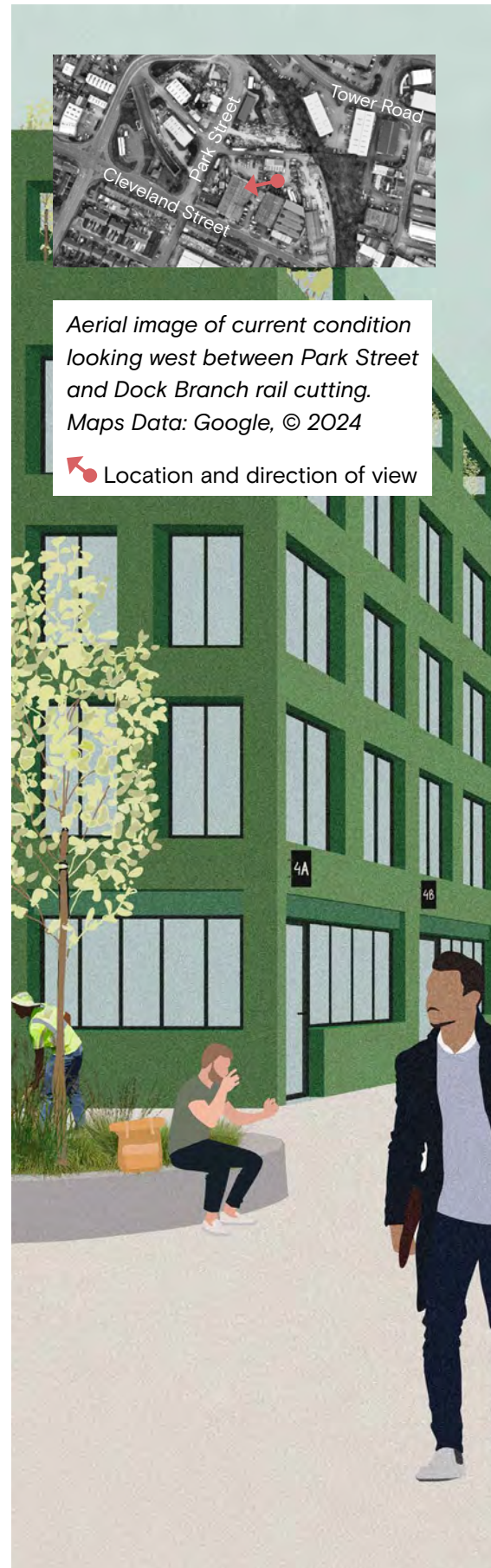
Dock Branch Works is a residential-led, mixed-use neighbourhood that forms a harmonious combination of homes and workshops. A mixture of new build development and retained buildings will form an industrious campus of production and supply chain activities located in ground floor workshops, with residential apartments found on upper floors. The campus will be defined by an ordered perimeter to evoke the formality of the Laird Grid, whilst a looser arrangement of detached villas will define the inner campus, with buildings set within a hard landscape of service and amenity yards.

An industrious campus, Dock Branch Works will be home to a rich mix of employment activities in ground floor workshops, labs and showrooms that provides fertile ground for innovation, cross-sector collaboration and circularity. The operation of all ground floor activities must be compatible to mix with residential, using careful stewardship, planning, design and delivery to enable harmonious co-location. Ground floor industrious uses should front onto Cleveland Street, reinforcing the mixed-use character and broader street hierarchy. Ground floor uses on Park Street, Freeman Street and Bridge Street should be designed to be flexible in use, either industrious or residential.

Dock Branch Works will comprise a hard landscape of permeable service and amenity yards, softened through planters, climbing plants and trees. Yards will provide spill out space for ground floor businesses including servicing and loading, as well as structures and installations for public art display, lighting and planting. With an emphasis on flexibility, yards will comprise few structural landscape elements, instead focusing on boundary seating, moveable planters and temporary structures. This will enable easy adaptation between '9am to 5pm weekday' commercial activities such as loading and servicing, and '5pm to 9pm weekend' community activities such as markets and performances.

Illustration of the character and form of development appropriate in Dock Branch Works. An industrious campus will see a mix of ground floor workspace and new homes on upper floors, all set within a network of amenity and service yards.

Note: Illustration represents one way in which development could be brought forward and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.





5.4.3 Built character

Building typologies

Dock Branch Works will comprise a combination of mixed-use typologies delivered through comprehensive redevelopment and refurbishment of some existing buildings. Linear apartment blocks will be used to define the edge to the campus along Cleveland Street, Rendel Street and Corporation Street with non-residential uses appropriate here to reinforce the street hierarchy of main street typologies.

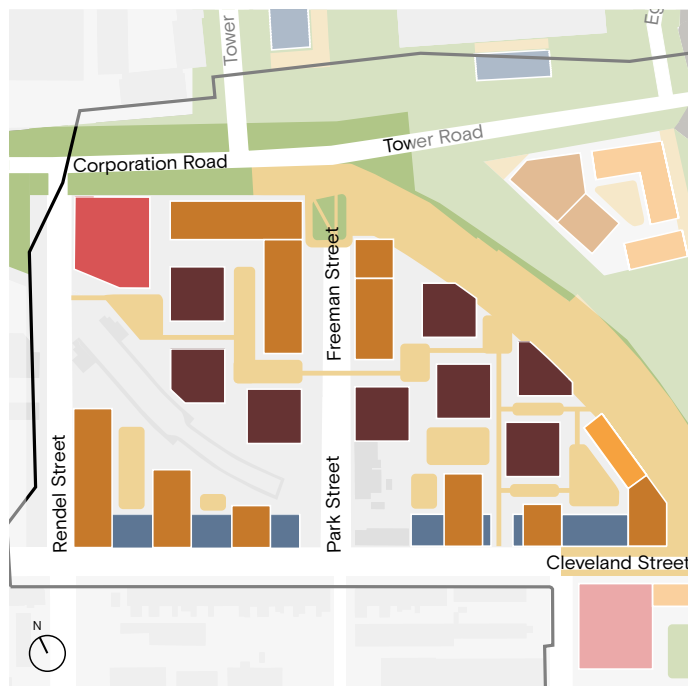
The internal composition of the campus is more flexible and irregular, with a combination of linear blocks and villas sat within a permeable network of yards. Residential ground floors will be concentrated towards the promenade edge to encourage overlooking and ‘adoption’ of the public realm here, with community personalisation being encouraged through artwork, seating, pots and planters. A perforated edge here will allow pedestrian permeability between the campus, the promenade and Dock Branch Park.

Heights and massing

Building heights should sit between four and six storeys to establish a consistent mid-rise datum observed more widely in Birkenhead. A consistency in building heights and uniformity in simple, rectangular massing will establish a harmony between buildings to reinforce a collective campus identity, even when the architectural character of buildings may vary in style.

Whilst there is scope for some variety in building heights within the campus, the outer edge to Cleveland Street, Rendel Street, Corporation Street and the promenade should sit between 5 and 6 storeys in order to define the street and open space hierarchy. Massing should generally be regular in form, though this can be cranked and chamfered in occasional circumstances to provide ‘moments’ of difference in the townscape and a foil to the repetitive form of the wider campus. This should include edges to the promenade and the Mersey Tunnel route.

All tall buildings should align with Local Plan policy WS 7.5.



Typology plan

- Masterplan boundary
- Linear block (single aspect)
- Linear block (dual aspect)
- Villa / point block
- Maisonettes
- Townhouses
- Commercial block
- Car barn



Height and massing plan

- Masterplan boundary
- 1 to 2 storeys
- 3 to 4 storeys
- 5 to 6 storeys
- 7 to 8 storeys
- 9 to 10 storeys

5.4 DOCK BRANCH WORKS

5.4.3 Built character

Townscape

Development on Cleveland Street and Rendel Street should reinforce the Laird Grid formality, with a continuous frontage defining the outer edge of the campus. The outer character should observe core elements of Birkenheadness and respond to exemplar Victorian industrial buildings found locally, including The Foundry Business Centre and Hastings House.

Development within the campus has greater freedom in expression, with a looser arrangement of villas set within a hard landscape of yards. This contemporary industrial character should feel distinctly urban, speaking to the emerging contemporary dockland character on Tower Road. Buildings should be sited to 'nibble the edges' of Bridge Street, creating a varied sense of enclosure between yards and a rich collection immediate views leading towards Dock Branch Park.

Heritage

An area characterised by employment uses, home to a range of industrious activities, fronting Cleveland Street with trade counters and forecourts. Partially intended to be a Georgian crescent in the 1824 New Town plan, but never realised. It became synonymous with infrastructure and industry serving the docks, and is home to the Mersey Tunnel dock entrance. This grand structure is now isolated by poor quality highways and lacks active uses in the vicinity.

The area heritage objectives are to work with the existing industrious activities, adding to these to reinforce its working character. New development will reinstate the grid along Cleveland Street, forming a consistent building line, with street trees to create formality. This formality can become looser within the urban blocks, as the area meets the docks, taking on a more contemporary character. The redesign of the Rendel Street and Cleveland Street junction is important to unlock development and define the neighbourhood edge, signalling a qualitative townscape linking Cleveland Street towards Hamilton Square.

Key assets include:

- Mersey Tunnel entrance, Rendel Street, Grade II Listed
- The Blue Bell Pub, Park Street
- The Foundry Business Centre, Marcus Street and former pub adjacent, corner of Corporation Road / Pool Street



Heritage assets framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Proposed buildings
- Existing buildings
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Heritage assets for enhancement and value
- - - Rail corridor retaining wall
- Reinstating the grid
- Heritage clusters

A palette of building types that would be appropriate for Dock Branch Works. A rich variety of building styles and characters should be encouraged within the internal setting of the campus. A contemporary palette and combination of materials can establish a new character for the area, including high volumes of glazing and moments of colour. Buildings should sit within a landscape of hard and soft spaces that are well defined by active ground floors, creating a network of yards for amenity and servicing commercial activities.

Note: precedents are chosen to reflect fundamentals of appropriate building types and do not illustrate specific architectural styles or aesthetic choices.



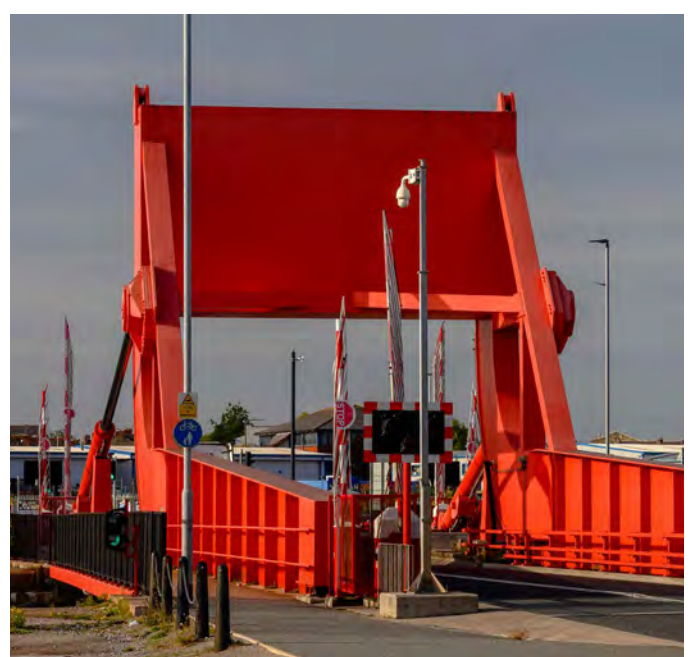
Wirral Met College, Tower Road, Birkenhead



GWL Terrein, Amsterdam



Design District, London



Alfred Dock Bridge, Birkenhead

5.4 DOCK BRANCH WORKS

5.4.4 Uses and activities

Automotive and related industries

Automotive industries are common to Birkenhead and particularly in this part of the study area. The ecology of existing automotive and related industries are well embedded and the land use strategy would seek to re-provide accommodation for these businesses, co-locating them with similar commercial activities. This could include MOT centres, engine parts and repair, tyre replacement, car wash, auto body repair, bespoke automotive activity and taxi services.

- Commercial
- Industrious
- Flexible



Automotive industries

Commercial design and printing

Commercial design and printing is found within Birkenhead and closely integrated with the wider creative industries of digital media, advertising and marketing. Space for these types of companies could reinforce local economic strengths as well as provide a platform for the evolution and new home for the Birkenhead Museum of Printing, formerly found within the now closed Amorini Antiques Centre.

- Commercial
- Industrious
- Flexible



Commercial design and printing

Bespoke making and restoration

Birkenhead is home to a number of restoration and repair businesses including artwork, antique and bespoke automotive restoration. Alongside this, craft and artisanal making businesses operate including hand made musical instruments and candle making. These industries are often dispersed and tucked away, but bringing them together in one destination to showcase the best of Birkenhead's artisan skills would help accentuate the special interest of Dock Branch Neighbourhood.

- Commercial
- Industrious
- Flexible



Bespoke restoration and repair

Homes

Residential in Dock Branch Works will need to be successfully co-located with employment activities. This could include a mix of residential and employment buildings that concentrate frontage onto separate streets to avoid conflict between access and operations. In some cases homes could be stacked above compatible employment uses occupying ground floor workshops, trade counters and showrooms. This will require effective stewardship, planning, design and delivery to mitigate any potential conflicts such as noise and vibrations.

■ Residential



Homes successfully co-located with commercial uses

Food and drink industries

Birkenhead itself has a strong sectoral base in food and drink processing at range of scales. Businesses focus on volume processing of beer, coffee, soft drinks, peanut butter and gourmet foods including Peerless Brewing Company, Glen Affric Brewery & Taproom, Birkenhop Beer, Quan's Food Supply Limited, Priory Quality Meats, Adams & Russell Coffee Roasters, Nuts Plus and Generation Juice. There are also small and micro businesses including butchers and bakeries, as well as related businesses including baking equipment supplies, cocktail accessories and commercial catering.

■ Industrious

■ Flexible



Circular economy based food production e.g. cultivating mushrooms from used coffee grounds

Open-access factory

On-demand spaces and access to resources is an increasingly important part of creating resilient urban economies. The land use strategy proposes the provision of an open-access factory, a model that provides affordable commercial and community access to state of the art facilities, equipment and expertise that would otherwise be held behind closed doors. This democratic access to resources will turn gate keeping into gateways, driving innovation across making activities such as woodworking, metalworking, textiles, engineering, spray finishing and catering.

■ Industrious ■ Low Threshold Enterprise Space

■ Flexible



Open access to resources including machinery

5.4 DOCK BRANCH WORKS

5.4.5 Streets and open spaces

Dock Branch Works will see a package of improvements that maximise its function as both a place for meeting, dwelling, working and playing, as well as accommodating mixed modal movements. Upgrades across the area will include:

- Reduced carriageway widths that reclaim space from vehicles for people.
- Widened pavements space providing more space for people to walk and wheel, as well as spill out space at ground floor for local businesses.
- On-street parking, cycle rails and waste storage will be interspersed along the street, providing access and servicing for businesses and homes.
- Tree planting and SuDS will line streets to boost climate resilience through increased shade, improved drainage, enhanced air quality and habitat creation.

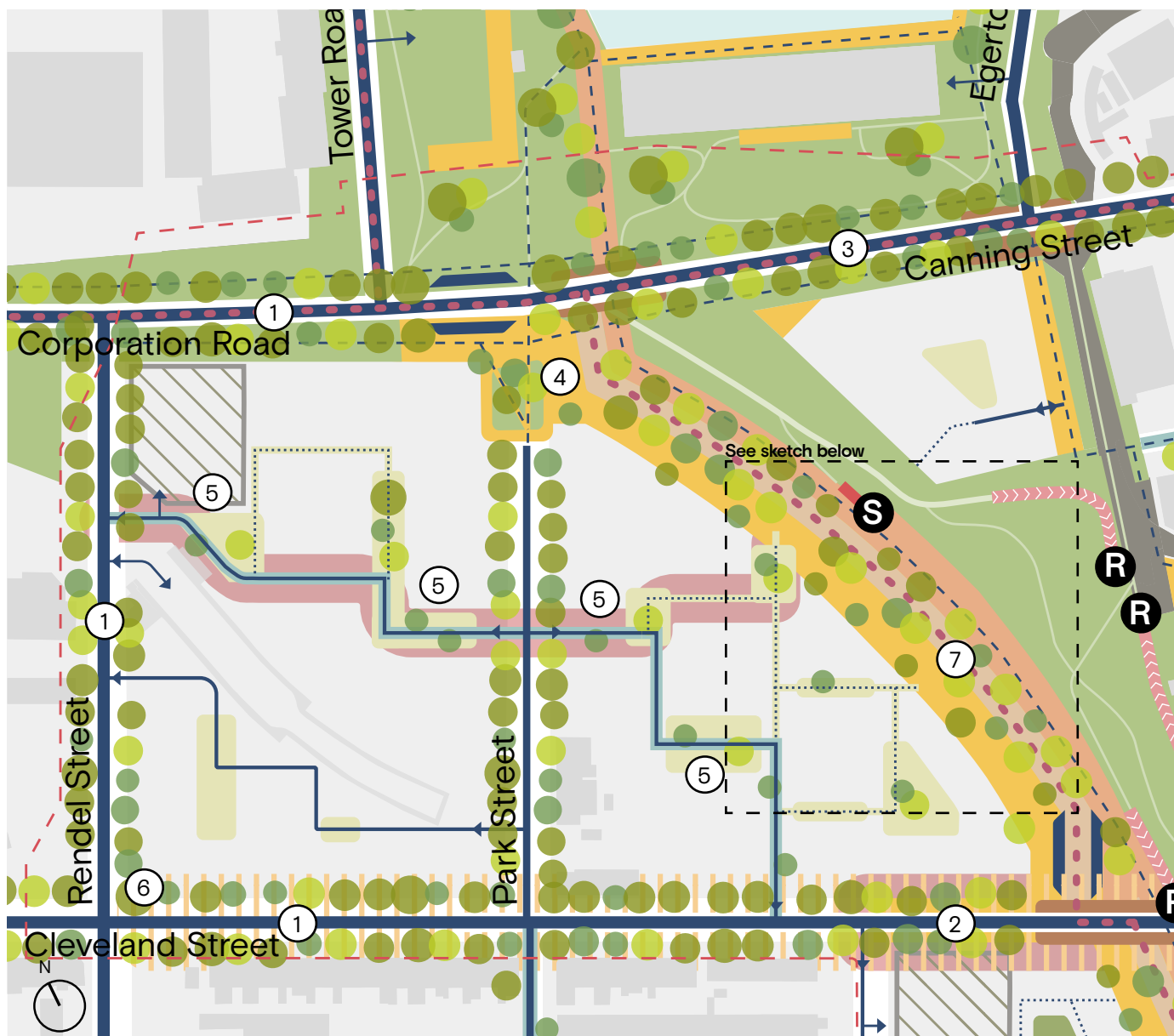
Character area specific improvements include:

1. Dock Branch Works will be bounded on three sides by Cleveland Street, Rendel Street and Corporation Street, all adopting the main street typology to accommodate on-street cycling, bus routes and vehicle movements.
2. Cleveland Street will be transformed through its street design into a 'calm street' that reduces speeds and deters vehicle movements across the park, encouraging through traffic to circulate back out to the strategic movement network.
3. There is a long-term aspiration to realign Rendel Street and Corporation Street to establish a more rational, linear street condition that re-prioritises people, amenity and leisure within the public realm.
4. Yards will provide servicing and loading for businesses within the industrious campus, using servicing loops from Park Street to filter back out to either Rendel Street or Cleveland Street
5. The northern section of Freeman Street will become a new public space closed to vehicles, providing an extension of the promenade and arrival threshold to both Dock Branch Works and Dock Branch Park, with Wirral Mass Transit stop co-located here.
6. The southern end of Rendel Street will see its turning radii tightened in order to reduce vehicle speeds and unlock development space south of the Mersey Tunnel.

7. The promenade will form the principal active travel route running along the eastern edge of the campus, forming a street level public space and thoroughfare that also accommodates Wirral Mass Transit.

A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.

- - Masterplan boundary
- Primary street
- Secondary street
- Tertiary street
- - Public route (walking and cycling)
- Semi-public route (walking)
- ▶ Access / servicing
- Tree street
- Wild street
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Promenade
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)
- Play street
- ||||| Calm street
- ▬ Wirral Mass Transit mobility hub (indicative)
- ▬ Car barn
- Pedestrian and cycle priority junction
- Ⓡ Dock Branch Park access (ramp / graded slope)
- Ⓢ Dock Branch Park access (steps)



Streets and open spaces framework



Sketch illustrating character of the promenade as a planted and informal public space, able to accommodate a mix of amenity and active travel activities, alongside the potential route for the Wirral Mass Transit. Trees and planters will soften the hard landscape, creating micro spaces and a varied environment that works in synergy with Dock Branch Park.

5.4 DOCK BRANCH WORKS

5.4.6 Landscape character

A permeable industrious campus set within a mix of hard landscape of service and amenity yards.

Overarching vision / character

- Mix of uses including high density residential (apartments) arranged around service spaces and key streets
- Potential to create hybrid maritime / coastal and ornamental character
- Fewer structural landscape elements, with focus on provision of flexible spaces to encourage informal use by industry and residents
- Species to include hornbeam, maple, black pine, bergenia, coneflower, Japanese spurge

Key spaces

- Promenade - to include terraced areas for seating, outdoor eating, sensory planting and shaded areas
- Hard and soft courtyards and greens - potential for boundary seating and structures for display and lighting

Typical Tree Street character

- Rendel Street, Park Street, Cleveland Street
- Tree planting alternating between formal avenues and stands of trees to either side of carriageway
- Verges to include close-mown grass, shrub and grass planting and informal seating
- Generous verges to encourage activity from adjacent industrious uses

Typical Wild Street character

- Two short Wild Streets which permeate blocks to connect Tree Streets with Promenade
- Simple character comprising wildflower meadow and grasses to create linear habitat corridors
- Seating and shaded sensory spaces to reflect when taking a break from work
- Informal and naturalistic play supported by boulders and timber elements within streets

Typical SuDS

- Limited to linear features along streets
- Rain gardens along Tree Streets
- Informal swales, linear wetlands or marshes along Wild Streets



Dock Branch Works character area



Indicative landscape character



Indicative landscape character



Few structural landscape elements, with focus on sparse structures, climbing plants and planters to soften the hard landscape.



A network of flexible yards to encourage informal use by industry and residents, providing smaller spaces 'on block back' from the promenade.



Opportunities for changing structures and installations that enable wayfinding between Dock Branch Park and wider neighbourhoods.

Note: Precedent images represent suggested landscape character and does not reflect a prescriptive or 'final' design.



MAN CAVE, Argyle Street – Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo

6. ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

The illustrative masterplan chapter exhibits the potential character, and urban form of the new Dock Branch Neighbourhood, by utilising the strategies and principles of the framework.

6.1 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

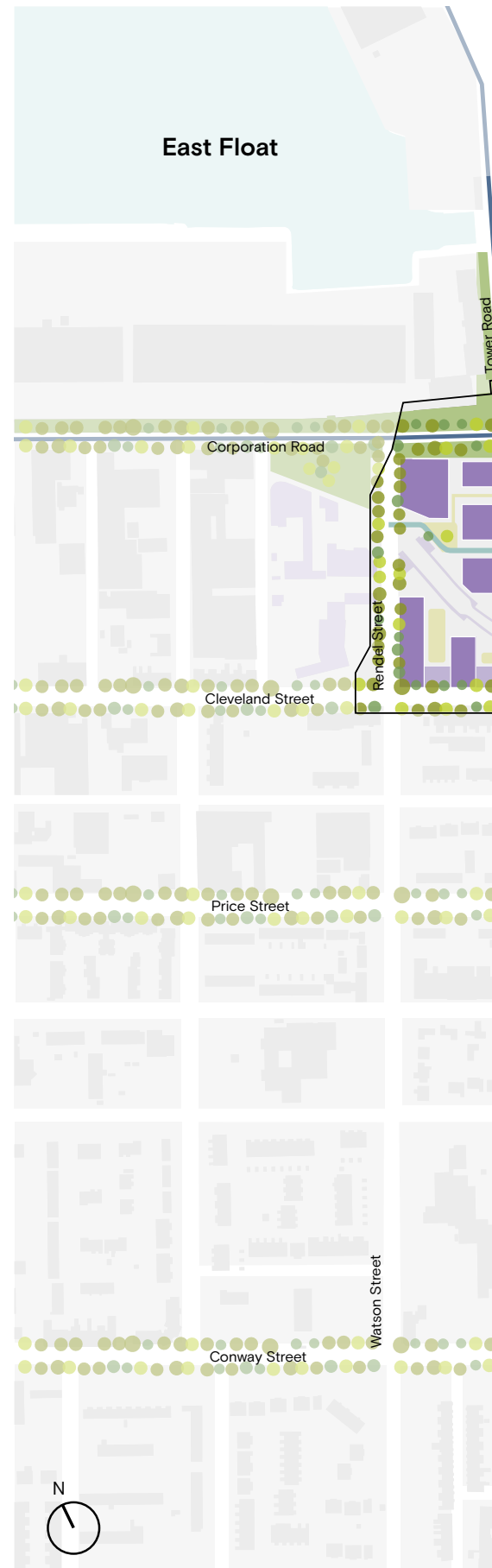
6.1.1 Illustrative masterplan - plan

The four character areas are each defined by a distinctive uses mix, built and landscape character that celebrates the unique qualities of Birkenhead and maximises the opportunity presented by Dock Branch Park. Working in tandem with the wider regeneration projects set out within the 2040 Framework, the masterplan sets the ambition for transforming Dock Branch Neighbourhood into a vibrant, safe and welcoming place to live, work and visit.

Whilst development will come forward over time the masterplan sets a framework for guiding the right type and form of development in the right locations. Proposals here demonstrate an illustrative masterplan informed by the masterplan strategies and frameworks, working within the established parameters to illustrate one way in which development could come forward.

- Masterplan boundary
- Argyle Quarter
- Trinity Gardens
- Egerton Point
- Dock Branch Works
- Hard public open space
- Green public open space
- Residential courtyard
- Service / amenity yard
- Tree street
- Wild street
- Wirral Mass Transit route (indicative)

Plan drawing of the illustrative masterplan





6.1 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

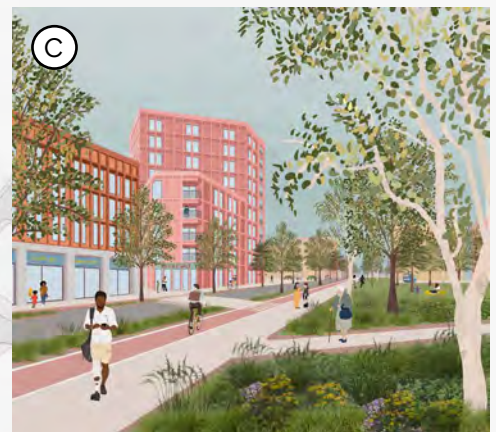
6.1.2 Illustrative masterplan - 3D view



The illustrative masterplan demonstrates the approach to height and massing across the neighbourhood. In accordance with the masterplan strategies and frameworks, building heights sit broadly between three and six storeys to reinforce central Birkenhead's low to mid-rise character. On occasion building heights of up to eight storeys are used to enrich the townscape and aid local legibility. This considered approach to enhances the best of Birkenhead's inherited qualities whilst positively contributing to its evolving character.



Axonometric drawing of the illustrative masterplan. Annotations denote location and orientation of views within the proposals.



6.1 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

6.1.3 Indicative capacity

Overall quanta of uses

As a mixed-use liveable neighbourhood, Dock Branch will be a place where one can sleep, play, entertain, fix, learn and work. These activities and uses have been carefully chosen to build on Birkenhead's existing and emerging strengths, adding to and diversifying the existing mix found within Dock Branch. Working within the parameters established in the masterplan strategies and frameworks, an indicative capacity has been identified for the neighbourhood.

Residential	103,900 m ²
Commercial / Community	8,500 m ²
Industrious	8,350 m ²
Low Threshold Enterprise Space	3,300 m ²
Car Storage	13,200 m ²
Total GEA (m²)	137,250 m²

Indicative area schedule

Residential quanta

Increasing the residential capacity of the neighbourhood is a core objective of the masterplan and it is therefore the prevailing use. The indicative capacity has been informed by a design-led approach and draft Local Plan policies on residential density and dwelling mix. These new homes will come in three main typologies:

- Houses with their own front doors and gardens to the rear;
- Maisonettes that are either accessed on the ground floor with their own front doors and gardens to the rear, or on the top floor, with generous roof terraces and views across the neighbourhood; and
- Apartments accessed off a communal corridor, with shared entrances to a street or square.

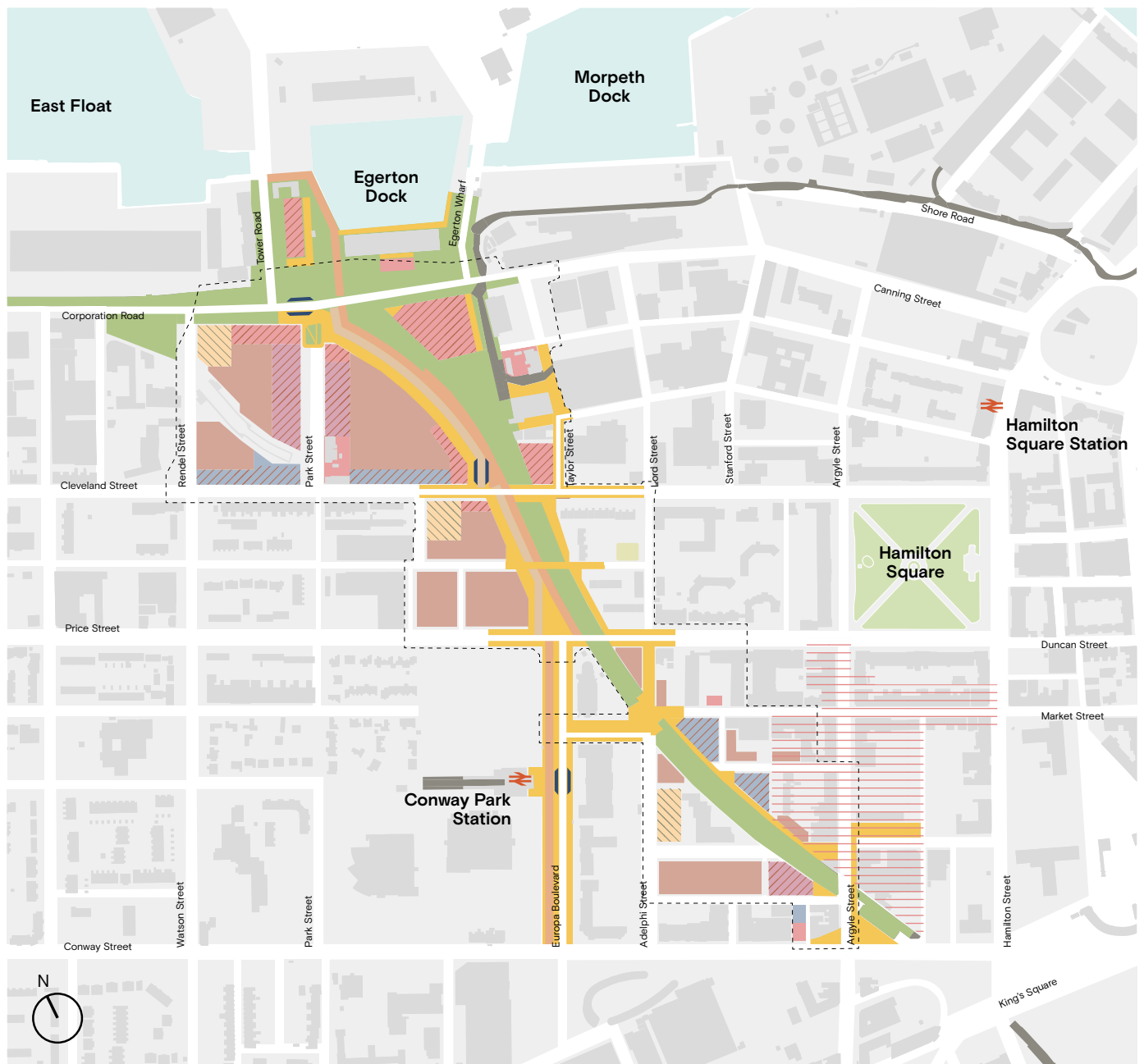
Family-sized dwellings will form a significant proportion of the residential offer, with approximately 30% being 3-bedroom or larger. These will be accommodated with houses, maisonettes and apartments to provide choice about where and how people choose to live.

Houses	50
Maisonettes	50
Apartments	890
Total	990 dwellings

Indicative residential typology schedule

1-bedroom	35%
2-bedroom	35%
3-bedroom or larger	30%

Indicative residential dwelling mix schedule



Uses framework

- Masterplan boundary
- Residential
- Commercial: retail / office / leisure / community
- Industrious: workshops / wholesale / employment
- Flexible: Flexible: residential / industrious / commercial
- Low threshold enterprise space
- Argyle Street Local Centre
- Mixed use with residential on upper floors
- Car barn (upper floor)

6.1 ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

6.1.4 Approach to delivery

Approach

The Council will oversee the governance and delivery of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood through the Wirral Regeneration Partnership which has been established to drive delivery of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework.

The Council will continue to work with the Dock Branch Community Panel to ensure that the emerging proposals are consistent with the vision for the area, as articulated in the Dock Branch Co-creation workshop and this masterplan document. An important part of the delivery approach is community stewardship, which would aim to develop the capacity for community-led action and stewardship in collaboration with Dock Branch's diverse resident, business and third sector communities.

The Council will engage with key delivery partners – existing businesses, landowners, developers and investors – to unlock future development. In the short term they will look to use their assets in the area to unlock development and leverage private sector. In the longer term there may be a requirement for the Council to acquire additional sites to create larger, more viable residential sites. They will also play a role in seeking additional sources of funding (e.g. Homes England and LCRCA) to ensure that new development aligns with the principles of the masterplan.



*View looking east across Egerton Dock
Photography credit © Pete Carr Photo*



GLOSSARY

A-Z of technical terminology

Building line

Where the outer edge of a building meets a street or open space, defining the difference between public and private realms.

Built form

The overall three dimensional shape, size and configuration of a building as a result of its layout, scale and massing.

Datum

The prevailing building height of an area which serves to unify different building typologies and architectural styles through this shared and defining characteristic.

Doorstep play

A landscaped space including engaging play features for young children under 5 that are close to their homes, and places for carers to sit and talk.

Enclosure

The extent to which streets and open spaces are visually defined by buildings, walls and trees. A continuous perimeter of these components between public and private space can achieve enclosure.

Facade

The design components comprising an elevation e.g. windows, materials, details.

Fenestration

The arrangement and design of entrances, windows, balconies and other openings on a building facade. A well composed fenestration can achieve well balanced proportions and help reduce visual bulk.

Frontage

The external face of a building that fronts onto a street or open space and is characterised by entrances, windows and other openings that create interest and activity, especially at ground floor.

Legibility

The combination of buildings, streets, trees and open spaces that use visual cues to create an intuitive and easily navigable environment.

Massing

The three dimensional volume and structure of a building. Massing is expressed through the size, shape and scale of its different components. Commonly understood as the expression of a building without any finer architectural elements and details.

Natural surveillance

The placement of physical features, activities and people in such a way as to maximise visibility and foster positive social interaction.

Perimeter block

Buildings arranged along the edge of an urban block, using their physical mass to define the outer (and public) edge of the block, forming a boundary between public and private space. The blocks themselves have limited permeability but are set within a highly permeable street network.

Permeability

A connected street or pedestrian network with a high frequency of routes that allow easy passage of movement, often associated with a fine urban grain.

Roofscape

The landscape of building rooftops viewed from above.

Scale

Most commonly understood as building height, though scale is relative to another (usually neighbouring) building's height. It can also relate to the size of a building's different elements e.g. massing, fenestration, rather than purely its absolute building height.

Set back

A step-like recess in massing of upper storeys, often used where proposed building heights exceed prevailing building height datum of a street. This strategy can preserve the established street width ratio and allow daylight to reach lower storeys.

Street hierarchy

A system of classifying different streets within a movement network principally based on the type and volume of movements a route supports, as well as its characteristics in terms of neighbouring building scale, use and enclosure.

Street width ratio

The proportional relationship between building heights and street width, having a direct bearing on the sense of enclosure.

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

A collection of water management practices that aim to align modern drainage systems with natural water processes and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment.

Tall element

Components of a building that exceed the established building height datum of the building it belongs to. For example, where the corner of a courtyard block apartment building steps up to 8 storeys and the remainder of the building is at 6 storeys.

Tenure

The conditions under which a building or space is occupied and operated, typically a financial and ownership structure e.g. freehold.

Townscape

The visual appreciation of an urban area informed by the combination of and relationship between its physical components and attributes e.g. the scale and facade design of buildings along a street.

Typology

A classification of building types based on their fundamental characteristics, focusing on their form and function.

Urban fabric

All-encompassing term capturing the physical characteristics of urban areas, includes the streets, buildings, soft and hard landscaping, signage, lighting, roads and other infrastructure.

Urban grain

The arrangement and relationship between buildings and streets. A fine urban grain pattern consists of compact buildings arranged in a highly permeable network of streets and pedestrian routes that wrap around or permeate small urban blocks.

Wayfinding

The ways in which people orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place, using the built and natural environment to do so.

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