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Core Strategy - Draft Settlement Area Policy for Mid-Wirral

1 Settlement Area Policy

Policy CSx.x - Priorities for Leasowe, Moreton, Upton, Greasby and Woodchurch

The overall strategy for Settlement Area 5 will be to:

1. Maintain attractive residential areas with good access to Birkenhead, Liverpool and the M53 Motorway
2. Maximise the economic contribution of the industrial complexes at Leasowe, Moreton and Upton to maintain accessible local employment opportunities
3. Safeguard and enhance the role of Moreton Town Centre as the main convenience and comparison retail, office and service centre for the Area
4. Safeguard and enhance the role of the local centres at Upton and Greasby, as the focus for neighbourhood level shops, services and community facilities to serve everyday needs
5. Focus local improvements in areas of need in Leasowe, Moreton, Upton and Woodchurch
6. Maintain and enhance public access to and along the river corridors associated with the Birket, Fender and Arrowe Brook; the woodland setting of Upton; and access to North Wirral Coastal Park
7. Increase the local provision of allotments and natural and semi-natural greenspace
8. Minimise tidal, river and other flood risks associated with the low-lying north Wirral coastal plain; the Birket and Fender valleys; Arrowe Brook; Greasby Brook; and surface water
9. Address any local limitations on water supply and/or the disposal of wastewater and take account of the capacity of the North Wirral Wastewater Treatment Works
10. Monitor and manage traffic flows to maximise highway efficiency on routes to and through Moreton Town Centre, along Saughall Massie Road and at Arrowe Park and to address traffic noise at Moreton and along the M53 Motorway
11. Maintain the physical separation between Leasowe and Wallasey; Moreton, Upton and Woodchurch and Birkenhead; Moreton and Hoylake; and the distinctiveness of the remaining rural villages at Frankby, Saughall Massie and Landican

2 Vision Statement

Vision Statement

By the end of the plan period, the Mid-Wirral settlements will continue to serve as highly accessible residential areas, with a diverse housing offer supported by an enhanced network of green infrastructure and sustainable transport links. The Area will continue to provide significant employment opportunities supported by key service centres at Moreton and Upton.

3 Reasoned Justification

3.1 Settlement Area 5, comprises the suburban commuter settlements of Leasowe, Moreton, Upton, Greasby and Woodchurch with access to major open spaces associated with North Wirral Coastal Park, Arrowe Park, Royden Park and the Arrowe Brook, to the immediate west of the M53 Motorway.

3.2 The Mid-Wirral Settlements were home to 52,900 people in mid-2010, of which 32,800 or 62% were of working age. The age-profile closely reflects the average for the Borough. The population has declined from 53,100 in mid-2008⁽¹⁾ and current trends could see the population reduce further, to 52,300 by 2027⁽²⁾.

3.3 Approximately a third of the population lives within an area of greatest need, mainly associated with the large post-war social housing estates at Leasowe, Moreton, Upton and Woodchurch, where worklessness is over 25%. There are areas of higher value housing at Greasby⁽³⁾.

3.4 524 new homes were built within the Area between April 2003 and April 2011, with a further 15 dwellings provided through conversions and changes of use. Only 46 properties were demolished. Social Housing accounts for approximately 20% of the housing stock. Just under 3% or 696 residential properties were registered as vacant in April 2011⁽⁴⁾. The Area has a low proportion of previously developed vacant land, with just 16 sites totalling 11.47 hectares⁽⁵⁾.

1 Based on ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates

2 based on the national 2008-based population projections

3 ONS Index of Multiple Deprivation for England 2010 and DWP Working Age Client Group (May 2010)

4 Wirral Council Tax Register April 2011- Total Housing Stock 24,500

5 National Land Use Database April 2010 to be updated to April 2011

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3.5 The Area could accommodate between 387⁽⁶⁾ and 1,529 new homes. Underlying long-term changes in population and households mean that the lower figure could lead to a further loss of population of up to 1,900 people, while the higher figure could lead to a gain of up to 600 people by 2027. The main opportunities for new building are associated with small, previously developed infill sites. Achieving the higher level would involve the provision of new housing on previously undeveloped greenfield sites, including the allocated housing site at Manor Drive, as well as sites designated for recreation and employment⁽⁷⁾.

3.6 The Area provided approximately 8,000 jobs in 2010⁽⁸⁾ but will now be affected by the losses at Burtons. Almost two thirds of residents who travelled to work outside the Borough, worked in Liverpool⁽⁹⁾.

3.7 Moreton town centre is the main convenience and service centre for the Area, with smaller centres at Upton and Greasby providing the local retail and service role for their respective catchments⁽¹⁰⁾. There are significant out-of-centre retail facilities at Woodchurch Road (Asda) and Upton (Sainsburys and other non-food retailing). Any development proposals at these locations will need to be assessed against Policy CSx.x (criteria for out-of-centre retail development).

3.8 Besides the hospital complex at Arrowe Park, the main employment areas are at Moreton (58 hectares) and Arrowe Brook Road, Upton (24 hectares). The former advance factory units at Arrowe Brook Road have now all been converted into more flexible, smaller units and few plots remain at Tarran Industrial Estate (14 hectares), which has provided small plots for small and medium scale self-build projects since the early 1970s. There are, however, large former playing field sites, at either end of the Pasture Road food complex and a small greenfield site adjacent to the biomedical complex at Reeds Lane. The land available would be sufficient to provide for past rates of development throughout the plan period and could also provide for an increase in research and development, advanced technology and manufacturing and the biomedical sector⁽¹¹⁾.

3.9 Despite access to the major open spaces within the surrounding Areas and urban parks at Lingham, Upton and Greasby, there is a local shortage of allotments and natural and semi-natural greenspace⁽¹²⁾. The whole of the North Wirral coastline is of international importance for nature conservation. Inland, the main sites of biodiversity value are associated with the coastline or with the low-lying coastal plain,

6 sites with planning permission and previously developed sites with no conflicting designation

7 based on SHLAA 2008, which will be updated to April 2011

8 Business Register Employment Survey 2010

9 ONS Commute-APS and 2001 Census

10 Wirral Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 and Town District and Local Centre Study and Delivery Framework 2011

11 Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 and Update 2011 (forthcoming)

12 Wirral Open Space Assessment 2011 (forthcoming)

which contains one of the last remaining examples of wetland meadow. The remaining woodlands in and around Upton are also important for protected species, as well as local amenity⁽¹³⁾.

3.10 Large parts of the Area, associated with the low-lying, coastal plain and the main river corridors are at significant risk from coastal, river and local surface water flooding. A number of areas already benefit from existing flood defences. Residual flood risk can be managed and the policy for the area is generally 'hold the line'. Separate assessments, to consider all sources of flooding, will, however, need to be carried out on a site-specific basis and infiltration systems may be limited by Environment Agency Source Protection Zones⁽¹⁴⁾.

3.11 Parts of Leasowe have only medium water resource availability, with connectivity issues requiring network reinforcement. The sewer network is limited by pumping stations, storage tanks and the impact on Combined Sewer Overflow discharges. Almost 70% of the Area drains to the North Wirral Wastewater Treatment Works at Meols. The expansion of process capacity, addition of process streams or improvement in the quality of treated effluent may be required to enable the demands of future growth to be met without breaching current and future water legislation standards and consent conditions, which could affect the early phasing and location of development until a further study can determine the timeframes required to complete any necessary upgrades. Developers will need to seek clarification from the utilities provider and from the Environment Agency to ensure that appropriate capacity is available⁽¹⁵⁾.

3.12 [This list of transport corridors will be replaced by a map in the finalised Publication Draft] The main transport corridors, which also cross the Borough from north to south and east to west, include passenger rail services between Liverpool and West Kirby at Leasowe and Moreton, and between Bidston and North Wales at Upton; A551 from Wallasey Village to Heswall and Junction 2 of the M53 Motorway; A553 from Hoylake to Birkenhead and Junction 1 of the M53 Motorway; A5027 to Birkenhead and Junction 2 of the M53 Motorway; Saughall Massie Road from A5027 to West Kirby; B5139 Frankby Road from Upton to West Kirby; and A552 Woodchurch Road to Birkenhead and Junction 3 of the M53 Motorway. Other main public transport routes include Gardenside, Twickenham Drive, Castleway South, Birket Avenue and Reeds Lane through Leasowe; Ford Road to Upton Village; and Greasby Road to Greasby Village.

3.13 Department for Transport Traffic Master Data highlights existing traffic congestion on routes to and from Moreton Town Centre, along Saughall Massie Road and at Arrowe Park⁽¹⁶⁾. Traffic noise has also been identified as a problem on

13 Wirral Biodiversity Audit 2009

14 Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2009, Wirral Water Cycle Study 2011 (forthcoming) and North West and North Wales Shoreline Management Plan (February 2011)

15 Wirral Water Cycle Study 2011 (forthcoming)

16 Travel in Merseyside 2010

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routes through Moreton Town Centre and along the access roads to Junction 2 of the M53 Motorway⁽¹⁷⁾. There is little scope to implement major highway infrastructure improvements, so the focus will be on monitoring traffic levels, traffic management measures and minor highway improvements, with enhanced provision for public transport, walking and cycling.

3.14 National Cycle Network Route 56 runs through Woodchurch between Beechwood and Landican. Other off-road routes run along the River Birket to the coast, between Leasowe and Moreton; along the Arrowe Brook, from Upton and Greasby to off-road routes through Arrowe Park; and through Woodchurch. A road-side cycle lane also runs from Upton By-Pass along Saughall Massie Road and continues off-road to Three Lanes End, where additional connections are required to Meols and West Kirby. There is the need for a safe route between Greasby and Newton and to East Float from Leasowe.

3.15 Merseytravel have identified the need for the provision of a potential new rail station on the Wirral Line between Moreton and Meols at Town Meadow. Full details of the infrastructure requirements for Settlement Area 5 can be found in Appendix X.