



Wirral Waters

Strategic Regeneration Framework

Guiding Principles: 13. Healthy Living

11 December 2009

Contents

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH
OF WIRRAL
DEPT OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
10 DEC 2009
CHESHIRE LINES
CANNING STREET
BIRKENHEAD CH41 1ND

1	INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY	1
2	ISSUES AND OPTIONS	5
3	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	7
4	RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS	9
5	MONITORING AND REVIEW	10

09/06509 ▼ 7

Introduction and Summary

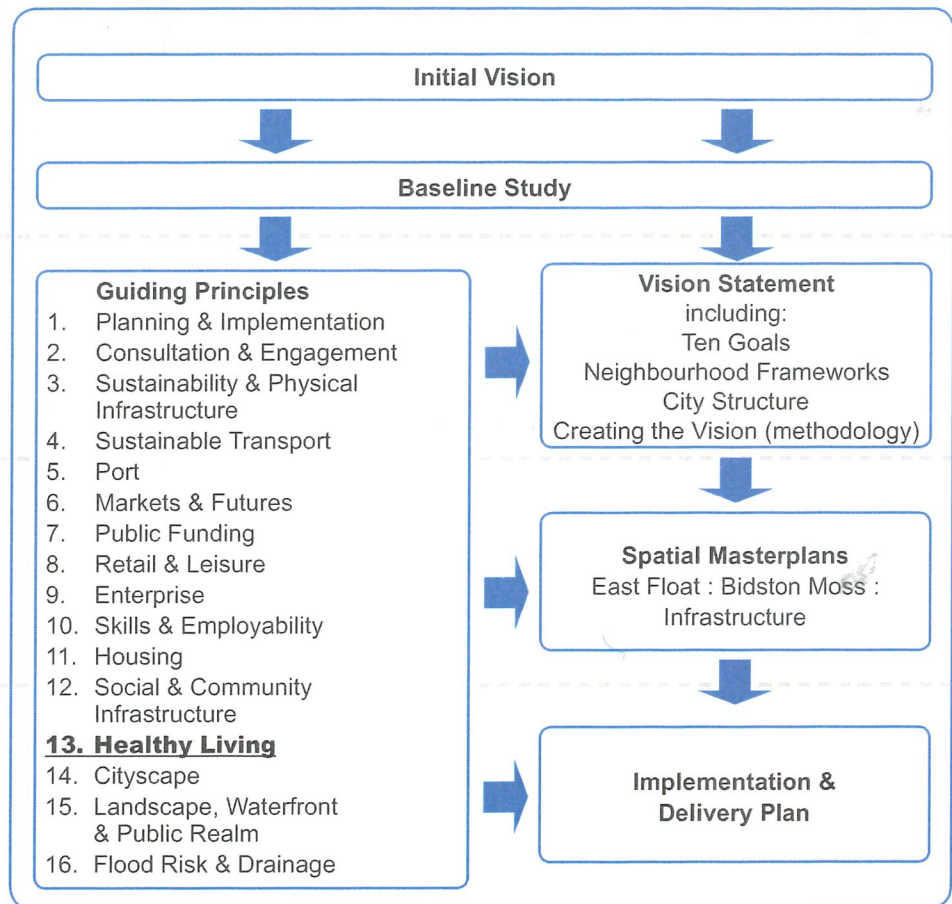
Strategic Regeneration Framework

- 1.1 The vision for Wirral Waters is to create a new city waterfront focussing upon the transformation of Birkenhead and Wallasey Docks and their surrounding neighbourhoods. East Float is to be the principle focus for significant investment, delivering a new residential, commercial, cultural and leisure destination. Delivery of the vision starts immediately and will be continued over a 30+ year timescale.
- 1.2 Wirral Waters is being brought forward through a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). This includes five key stages. Following the Initial Vision (Stage 1) and Baseline Study (Stage 2), a Vision Statement has been produced for Stage 3, which refreshes and expands the Initial Vision through the production of Ten Goals and a series of Spatial Frameworks across 15 neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 The Vision Statement demonstrates how Wirral Waters will act as a catalyst to the sustainable regeneration and growth of Inner Wirral and the wider City Region. It will guide and inform the future evolution of spatial masterplans and the project implementation process.

KEY STAGES

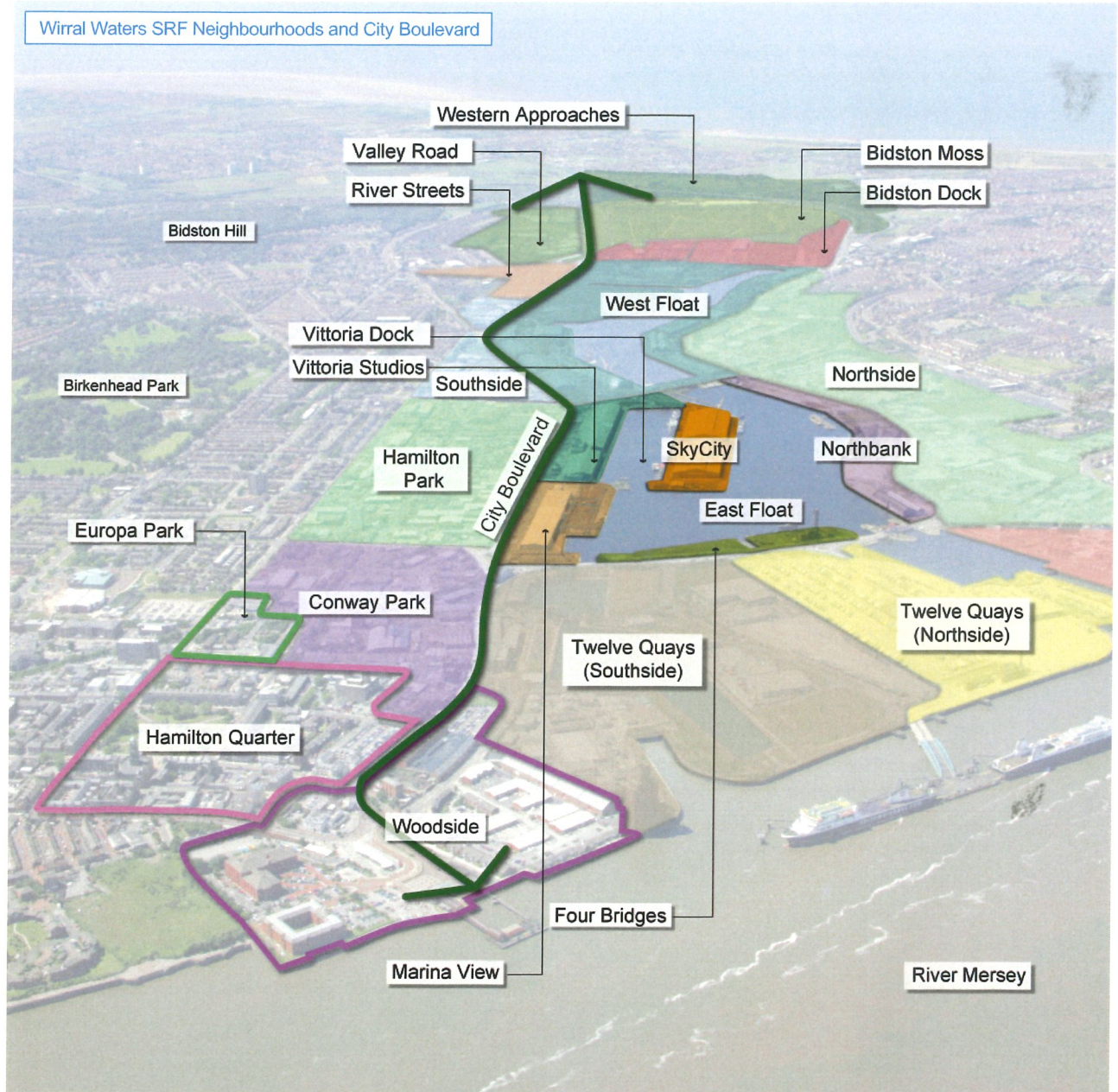


STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE



Guiding Principles

- 1.4 Alongside the Vision Statement, a number of documents have been produced that set out the 'Guiding Principles' of the project. These are the working embodiment of how Wirral Waters will deliver the Vision. Each Guiding Principles Document is owned by one of the Working Groups established between partners to inform, guide, shape and crucially, realise, the project.
- 1.5 It is intended that each Guiding Principles document can be read and understood in isolation. Further information relating to Wirral Waters can be ascertained by reference to the Vision Statement or other Guiding Principles documents, or indeed other aspects of the SRF such as the Baseline Study or individual project proposals. All such information is available on the Wirral Waters website:
<http://www.peelwaters.co.uk/wirralwaters.html>
- 1.6 Each Guiding Principles document is a snapshot in time and whilst they are intended to be timeless, the implementation process will evolve and be shaped by them. Wirral Waters will also be shaped by and need to respond to external factors, such as economic conditions and climate change, so it is important that the Guiding Principles are maintained and reviewed as and when necessary.
- 1.7 Each Guiding Principles document will be taken forward and delivered through individual masterplans and proposals brought forward within the SRF area, and through partnership working between Peel Holdings, Wirral Council and other key stakeholders such as the Homes and Communities Agency, the North West Regional Development Agency, Merseytravel and a range of other local, regional and national groups.



Document Structure

1.8 For simplicity, each of the Guiding Principles documents is structured in a similar manner, as follows:

- Section 1 introduces the document;
- Section 2 outlines the key issues and, where applicable, the options and opportunities available for addressing the issues;
- Section 3 sets out the overall Guiding Principles;
- Section 4 provides recommendations and next steps;
- Section 5 establishes requirements for monitoring and review.

Consultation

1.9 This document has been published in advance of the submission of the East Float planning application. The Wirral Waters proposals have been the subject of considerable consultation since 2006 to date, as set out within Guiding Principles (2) Consultation and Engagement. It is therefore hoped that these Guiding Principles reflect the aspirations of a wide range of consultees, both community groups and other interested stakeholders, locally, regionally and nationally.

1.10 Comments are nonetheless welcomed and can be made in a number of different ways:

- By email to enquiries@wirralwaters.co.uk
- By completing the form on the website <http://www.peelwaters.co.uk/wirralwaters.html>
- By letter to Peel Holdings, Peel Dome, The Trafford Centre, Manchester, M17 8PL

OUR TEN GOALS

1	Celebrating the past, shaping places for the future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revealing the contrasting identities of the 'Wallasey Pools', and the northern and southern riverbanks 2. 'Completing' and responding to the Laird Town gridiron 3. Restoring the Great Floats as a 'seam' of waterside activity 4. Creating a City Boulevard 	minor
2	Creating an internationally recognisable city waterfront	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating signature skylines, buildings and structures 2. Creating city approaches and arrival points 3. Creating a world class waters edge 4. Responding to cultural and environmental assets 	minor
3	Creating places of distinction, destinations and market concepts for the 21st century	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating a critical mass of investment centred upon East Float and Bidston Dock capable of triggering the wider regeneration of the adjacent 'partnership' neighbourhoods and beyond 2. Defining East Float as a new city waterfront 3. Defining Bidston Dock as a new destination in the heart of the Wirral Peninsula 4. Creating opportunities for new ways of living, working, learning and playing within a lush parkland and waterside setting – all right in the heart of the City Region 	medium
4	Creating a dynamic, prosperous Inner Wirral at the heart of the City Region	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shaping clear roles for 'partnership' neighbourhoods joining 'catalysts' neighbourhoods to Wallasey, Birkenhead and the River Mersey waterfront 2. Supporting adjacent regeneration proposals and initiatives through partnership working, joined up thinking and actions 3. Defining West Float and 12 Quays as long term operation port facilities 4. Working in partnership with skills and training agencies 	medium
5	Creating world class connections, and access for all	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working with partners to promote and deliver a 21st century international, national and regional rail, port, and public transport system 2. Placing people at the heart of high density walkable neighbourhoods with a choice of public transport connections 3. Creating a legible 'City Structure' with safe, easily understood, attractive and animated streets, city parks and public realm 	major
6	Sharing prosperity, health and well-being	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting existing and creating new community 'hubs' and networks 2. Defining City Boulevard as a neighbourhood 'seam', a structural community, landscape, wildlife and recreational resource 3. Encourage healthy living and active lifestyles 	major
7	Creating an exemplar regional environmental resource	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining Bidston as a pivotal destination at the heart of a Wirral 'Windows on the Waterfront' parkland 2. Placing Bidston and East Float at the heart of a 21st Century waste, water and energy infrastructure network 3. Bringing about transformational change in environmental quality by working with partners in 'greening the city' through long term investment in green and blue infrastructure 	major
8	Securing long term success, starting today	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bringing forward 'Early Win' projects and events 2. Creating a critical mass of projects to build confidence 3. Raising the quality and profile of developments to set high quality benchmarks for others to follow 	minor
9	Engage & inspire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating an international profile for Wirral Waters to attract new markets and growth sectors 2. Engaging with local communities and interest groups to explore how Wirral Waters may influence established projects and networks 3. Building confidence and leading by example through our long term vision and investments 	major
10	A robust delivery framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting in place a shared programme of action that allows all partners and communities to play a role in realising the Vision 2. Ensure that the benefits and critical mass of the 'catalysts' neighbourhoods trigger and shape change across the 'partnership' neighbourhoods and Liverpool City Region 	medium

RELEVANCE OF THIS GUIDING PRINCIPLE

minor
minor
medium
medium
major
major
major
minor
major
medium

Summary: Guiding Principles for Healthy Living

- 1.11 The built environment can provide opportunities and constraints in the pursuit of the healthy living agenda. The goal for Wirral Waters is to ensure that the design and management of the project minimises such constraints and maximises opportunities where possible.
- 1.12 This document aims to frame the key issues relating to healthy living within Inner Wirral from which key goals and objectives for the Wirral Waters project can be established. These will set a framework for future discussion amongst the Housing and Communities Working Group as to how Wirral Waters may contribute towards healthier lifestyles amongst the communities of Inner Wirral. The document also considers what measures may be taken to achieve the project's healthy living goals.
- 1.13 The basis for the approach taken can be found within Section 7 (Community Cohesion) and Appendix 6 (Social and Community Infrastructure) of the Wirral Waters Baseline Study of July 2008. The Baseline Study analysed in detail the health issues facing Inner Wirral and the facilities currently present within the Wirral Waters area.
- 1.14 There is a national drive to improve the health of the nation and tackle the changing and expanding range of health related challenges facing the UK. These health issues are considered to be strongly linked to diet and lifestyle and specifically to a reduction in the level of exercise undertaken as part of our everyday lives. For example there has been a 20% reduction in the number of miles we walk as a nation since the mid 1980s and a reduction of 10% in the number of miles cycled. When all sources of activity are considered, only 37% of men and 24% of women currently meet the Chief Medical Officer's minimum recommendations for activity in adults (Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan, March 2005).
- 1.15 In responding to the health challenges that the nation faces, the government has set a range of health related targets which future health strategies, operating at all levels, should focus on. These targets include:
- reducing the mortality rate for cancer amongst people under 75 years of age by 20% by 2010, with a reduction in the inequalities gap by at least 6%;
 - Reducing the mortality rate for heart disease, stroke and related diseases amongst people under 75 years of age by 40% by 2010; and
 - reducing the inequalities gap by at least 40% and reducing health inequalities by 10% by 2010 as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth (HM Government (2009) PSA delivery agreement 18: promote better health and wellbeing for all. London: The Stationery Office).
- 1.16 Other targets have a more direct link to physical exercise as a key measure of healthy living. These include children and young people undertaking 60 minutes of at least moderate intensity physical exercise per day and adults undertaking 30 minutes of at least moderate intensity exercise 5 times per week (Department of Health. At Least Five-a-Week: evidence on the impact of physical exercise and its relationship to health. London Dept of Health 2004)
- 1.17 Whilst the design of the built environment cannot achieve these targets alone, it can influence our health in two ways:
1. It can have an impact upon the level of physical exercise we have the opportunity to undertake, including exercise as a secondary effect of how we go about our daily routines, as well as where exercising is the primary focus of activity; and
 2. It can influence our sense of well being as an alternative indicator of health - how safe we feel, our sense of belonging and the level of social contact we have with others.
- 1.18 There are a range of principles which for Wirral Waters are considered to be good practice in creating built environments which maximise opportunities for healthy living. These include:
- Building at high density
 - Creating mixed use areas
 - Maximising interconnectivity between defined areas and uses
 - Providing quality, animated and usable public realm
 - Prioritising the pedestrian within the street network
 - Providing quality, safe, attractive cycle networks
 - Providing accessible, well managed open spaces
- 1.19 In addition to the above there is also a range of operational measures which may be taken to ensure opportunities are maximised. These relate to management of facilities or the creation and promotion of initiatives related to physical activity and participation in social events.
- 1.20 The aim of this document is to ensure that careful thought is given as to how these idea and concepts can be incorporated into new development as the proposals evolve.

Introduction and Background

2.1 A comprehensive policy and baseline review is provided at Appendix A from which key issues relating to healthy living can be identified. The key policy messages to emerge from this review are as follows:

- New development should prioritise the need for people to be physically active as a routine part of their daily lives;
- Pedestrians and cyclists should be given the highest priority when developing streets and roads;
- A comprehensive network of routes for walking, cycling and other modes of physically active transport should be planned for;
- Public open spaces should be designed so they can be easily reached on foot and by bicycle;
- Local people should be engaged in decision making regarding the facilities they use

2.2 The key messages can be broken down, into (i) health indicators and (ii) the opportunities for healthy living. In terms of health indicators, the following key messages emerge:

- There are high concentrations of deprivation in Inner Wirral;
- There is a high mortality rate and low life expectancy in Inner Wirral;
- Inner Wirral performs worse than the national average against a number of health indicators

2.3 In terms of opportunities for healthy living, the following key messages emerge:

- The main existing outdoor recreation areas around the Wirral Waters development area are Bidston Moss, Central Park and Birkenhead Park;
- The great floats and Dock areas act as a physical barrier to accessing some of these recreation areas and to movement between them;
- Bidston Moss provides an existing network of cycle paths with links to the national cycle route network;
- Birkenhead Park is the area's primary outdoor recreation area providing a wide range of sports pitches and opportunities for physical activity;
- Central Park is smaller in size but provides a range of leisure and recreation opportunities including sports pitches, a lake and children's play facilities;
- Seacombe to New Brighton promenade provides a near car-free waterfront recreation/activity area.

2.4 Having set out the policy and baseline context in which the Development Principles for Healthy Living are being delivered, the key issues which they should seek to respond to can be identified and a series of options can be considered.

including economic inactivity due to sickness and long term illness limiting daily activity or the type of work undertaken.

Issues

2.5 The 2006 Wirral Core Strategy Draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report which considered this baseline and policy context forms an appropriate starting point in defining the issues.

2.6 The Scoping Report identified key sustainability issues and objectives based on a full baseline review of the Borough. This incorporated social, economic and environmental issues and objectives which form the foundations for future policy, many of which have a healthy living dimension including:

- Promoting cohesive and sustainable communities;
- Tackling local inequalities including health, education and employment to provide access and equity;
- Continued enhancement of urban environmental quality
- Reducing crime and disorder;
- Maximising opportunities to reduce crime through good design

2.7 Other issues, whilst related more closely to other goals, such as environmental protection, overlap with the goal of creating opportunities for healthy living. These include:

- Reducing distances between residences and work places;
- Reducing car use and dependency;
- Improving public and non-motorised forms of transport

2.8 From these issues, the Scoping Report identified the following objectives of relevance to this document:

- Reduce incidence of multiple deprivation;
- Promote healthy, inclusive communities;
- Reduce traffic intrusion in residential areas;
- Maintain and promote a locally distinctive sense of place;
- Protect and improve the general attractiveness of the area;
- Maximise opportunities for culture, sport and leisure;
- Promote sustainable travel choices;
- Minimise opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour.



Options

2.9 Whilst these issues and objectives apply to Wirral Waters, they are designed to inform policy documents which may cover the whole Borough and a range of themes. It is therefore necessary to create a more specific and focused set of healthy living options for Wirral Waters taking into account the policy and baseline context. These options are as follows:

- Ensuring areas providing formal and informal recreation opportunities are easily and safely accessible;
- Linking key areas of activity within Inner Wirral through an extensive network of safe and attractive cycle and pedestrian routes;
- Increasing the range and quality of formal recreation facilities;
- Ensuring effective management of recreation areas to ensure they retain their quality and remain safe and attractive;
- Taking advantage of the natural recreation setting provided by Bidston Moss;
- Maximising community involvement and education in healthy living initiatives and events;
- Encouraging local clubs and schools to utilise the facilities provided



1	2
3	4

1. Facilities for local clubs
2. Diana Memorial Garden, Kensington
3. Ecological learning
4. Using natural recreation settings for exercise classes and team sports

3.1 This section of the Guiding Principles document identifies a range of tailored measures that can be put forward for further consideration. At this strategic level, such measures are deliberately broad and offer ideas and themes for future consideration rather than specific actions. How such measures are incorporated into development on the ground will come out of individual masterplans which will be informed by these principles.

3.2 The Housing and Communities Working Group will work together to explore how opportunities for healthy living may be maximised focused on the following key themes:

Connectivity

3.3 Wirral Waters provides an opportunity to physically connect the three recreation areas of Bidston Moss, Birkenhead Park and Central Park and facilitate safe and easy movement between them. This will open up access to these facilities for the users of Wirral Waters, and its communities and those of the surrounding area. This will also increase use of these facilities thus improving their management and sense of safety and security.

3.4 It is important to establish a network of strategic and interconnected footpaths and cycle routes to facilitate movement through Wirral Waters and into these areas, the various attractors, the promenade and the surrounding towns. Wirral Waters, including Bidston, can act as the central pedestrian and cycle interchange between these areas – a focal point where the network of paths and routes meet.

3.5 Access to coastal areas will also need to be improved. The Coastal area is of great importance in stimulating

healthy lifestyles and its accessibility via the National Cycle Network must be enhanced through Wirral Waters acting as a central hub to facilitate access to the coast from surrounding residential areas.

3.6 Added to this, the physical connectivity to all key areas of Wirral Waters and the surrounding area is important in encouraging exercise as a by-product of walking from A to B. Wirral Waters will need to be physically integrated into its built setting and detailed consideration will need to be given to the layout of development to maximise permeability.

Quality Public Realm

3.7 At the more detailed level, good connectivity will only have a strong positive effect in increasing walking and other physical activity if the public realm is designed to accommodate and encourage it. Detailed consideration as to how this can be achieved, and learning from other successful examples from the UK and overseas, is important. The impact that this will have on health has a number of dimensions. For example the quality of the public realm is important in encouraging people to walk to places within Wirral Waters and the wider East Wirral area. It can help to tackle crime and fear of crime, and can also encourage active and passive social engagement which is important for general well-being.

3.8 It is necessary to consider at every stage of the design process, how the public realm can open up opportunities for more intensive and positive use of the open space. Established urban design principles such as the use of shared surfaces and 'home zones' will be important considerations in this respect.

Management of existing open spaces

3.9 Options for how best to manage the existing open spaces to ensure they remain attractive, safe and user friendly will be considered. This includes both newly created open spaces within the Wirral Waters development site and those within the wider area which take on a greater importance in light of the Wirral Waters proposals.

3.10 A range of management measures are likely to be important but, in broad terms, these may focus on maintenance of facilities to ensure that people feel that they can use open spaces without fear. The provision of information to ensure users are fully informed of how they can get the best out of the open space facilities within the area is important.

Recreation Facilities and Activities

3.11 Whilst accessibility to recreation facilities is important, this must be matched by the provision of quality facilities within key recreation areas. Wirral has a number of recreational assets in Birkenhead Park, Central Park, Bidston Moss and the coastal area. The increased emphasis that will be placed on these areas, as the recreational focal points for Wirral Waters, supports the need to work on how the facilities they provide (in terms of the type, quality and maintenance) can encourage their more intensive use.

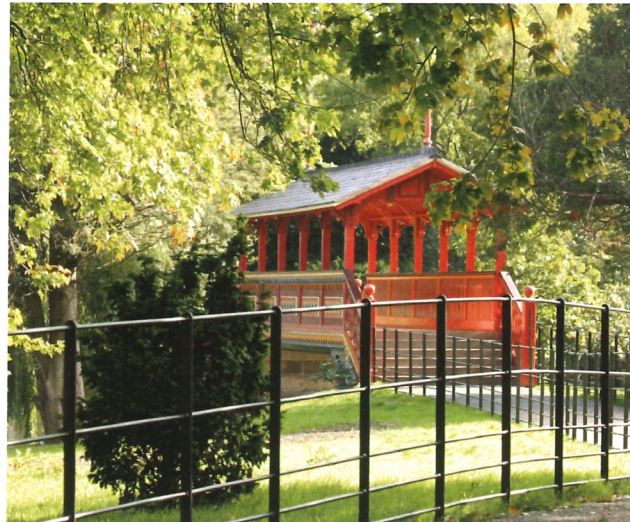
3.12 Actions to be progressed should address existing deficiencies in the provision of formal and informal facilities within the parks and other recreational areas, and identifying opportunities for introducing new facilities and initiatives to these areas.

3.13 It will be necessary to consider how these areas can provide additional opportunities for formal and informal recreation through investment in equipment or facilities and expanding the range and frequency of use which takes place, such as encouraging and promoting regular club use.

Community Involvement and Partnership Working

3.14 Opportunities to increase community involvement in the management of Bidston Moss and Parks should also be explored. This will give local communities a stake in these facilities and help engender a sense of pride in the area.

3.15 At the same time it will be important to work closely with Wirral MBC to explore how best to enhance existing parks and open spaces, the best means of implementing improvements, where resources are best targeted and how areas and facilities should be managed.

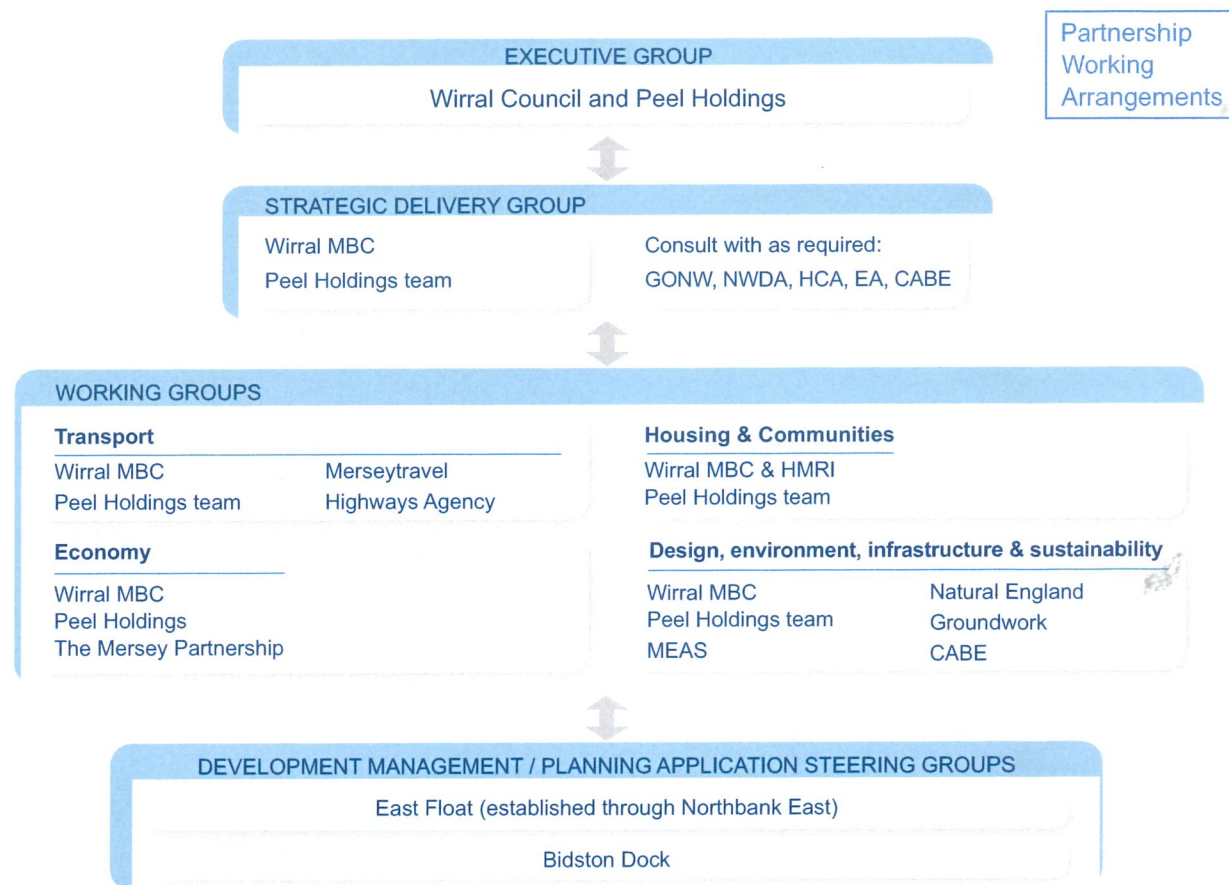


1	2
3	4

- 1. Parc Diagonal Mar, Barcelona
- 2. Millennium Park, Chicago
- 3. Birkenhead Park, Wirral
- 4. Wirral Coastal Walk, West Kirby

Recommendations & Next Steps

- 4.1 The Healthy Living Guiding Principles identify a number of areas on which the project should focus in order to respond to the healthy living issues and challenges that East Wirral faces. These issues and challenges relate to the population and the built environment.
- 4.2 Having established the key areas of attention with regard to the healthy living agenda, the emerging masterplans for each Wirral Waters project will be required to be delivered in accordance with the priorities and objectives of these Guiding Principles. These priorities can be summarised as follows:
- Connecting key areas of recreational opportunity through the provision of a strategic network of footpaths and cycle routes;
 - Provision of quality public realm to create a safe and attractive footpath and cycle network;
 - Enhancement of existing facilities and services within key recreational areas to address deficiencies and encourage active use;
 - Increasing public ownership and management of key recreational areas to engender a sense of pride in areas and promote their increased use.
- 4.3 Further discussions within the Housing and Communities Working Group is now required to consider how these topic areas and general principles can be translated to development on the ground. Through this dialogue, further ideas as to how individual projects can contribute to the overriding aims of the Guiding Principles can be identified and tested before agreement is reached on what approaches should be pursued.



- 5.1 An important factor in implementing the Guiding Principles will be to ensure that it is continually monitored and reviewed. This will require:
- A commitment from partners to the ongoing reviewing and updating of the Guiding Principles document to ensure it is able to respond to changing circumstances as necessary;
 - On-going monitoring to focus on both practical and measurable impacts such as the use of recreational areas as well as establishing how far the development is going in meeting its overall objectives of improving the health of the population of Inner Wirral;
 - Monitoring on a regular basis led by the Housing and Communities Group of Peel Holdings and Wirral Council;
 - Publishing the results of monitoring.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Policy and Baseline Review

Policy Review

Promoting and Creating Natural or Built Environments that Encourage and Support Physical Activity (January 2008)

This Guidance has been produced by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and provides advice on how built environments can be created to encourage physical activity and foster healthier lifestyles. The Guidance sets out a range of recommendations for action targeted at different stages of the planning process from the production of strategies and Local Development Documents to the design of new development.

Recommendation 1 is concerned with the production of strategies, policies and plans involving changes to the physical environment. It encourages community involvement in the production process, new development which prioritises the need for people to be physically active as a routine part of their daily lives and the assessment, in advance, of the impact that proposals are likely to have on physical activity levels.

Recommendations 2 and 3 are concerned with transport issues. Recommendation 2 states that pedestrians, cyclists and other users of transport modes which require physical exercise should be given the highest priority when developing streets and roads through reallocating road space to support physically active modes of transport, restricting motor vehicle access, introducing road charging schemes, introducing traffic calming schemes and creating safe routes to schools.

Recommendation 3 states that a comprehensive network

of routes for walking, cycling and other modes of transport involving physical activity should be planned for, providing convenient, safe and attractive access to workplaces, homes, schools and other public places.

Recommendation 4 is concerned with the design of public open spaces. It states that public open spaces should be located and designed so that they can be reached on foot, by bicycle and by other modes of transport which require physical exercise and that these should be maintained to a high standard.

Recommendations 5 and 6 are concerned with the design of buildings. Recommendation 5 states that campus sites should be designed to enable different parts of the development to be easily accessible on foot and by bicycle. Recommendation 6 states that staircases within buildings should be located and designed to encourage their usage through appropriate signage, lighting and decoration for example.

Choosing Activity: a physical activity action plan (March 2005)

Choosing Activity was produced by the Department of Health in 2005. It sets out a range of goals and key actions to achieve the government's physical exercise targets. A key objective of the guidance is to create 'Active Communities' through providing a range of physical activities and sporting opportunities within the local community.

The Guidance recognises the barriers that the urban environment can present to physical activity and encourages action to be taken to overcome these.

Identified barriers include road safety issues, pollution and fear of crime. The Guidance also recognises the role of softer measures such as increasing publicity and awareness of physical exercise opportunities, better management of facilities and providing social support groups certain groups.

Key identified actions to respond to these issues include:

- Well planned, designed, managed and maintained streets, open spaces and buildings to encourage physical activity as part of everyday movement;
- Engaging with local people in decision making regarding the services they receive;
- Ensuring the provision of new facilities for physical activity where most needed, and protecting those that already exist.

Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (April 2001)

Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG 13) was published in 2001. Whilst the issue of health is not the main focus of PPG13, its principle concern with encouraging more sustainable movement of people and goods and initiating a modal shift from private car use to walking, cycling and the use of public transport means that the guidance it provides has a strong healthy living dimension.

PPG 13 seeks to integrate land use and transport planning through controlling the physical relationship between new development and the transport network. This is relevant to both spatial planning and the design of new development.

The Guidance sets out a number of key actions in seeking to achieve its overriding objective of sustainable travel which can serve to encourage more physical activity. These include:

- Locating day to day facilities which need to be near their clients in local centres so that they are accessible by walking and cycling;
- Give priority to people over ease of traffic movement and plan to provide more road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in town centres, local neighbourhoods and other areas with a mix of uses;
- Ensuring that the needs of disabled people as pedestrians, public transport users and motorists - are taken into account in the implementation of planning policies and traffic management schemes, and in the design of individual developments; consider how best to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and seek by the design and layout of developments and areas, to secure community safety and road safety;

The Guidance goes on to state that new development should help to create places that connect with one another providing the right conditions to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport and that places should be designed to enable their safe usage at all times, by all people and for a variety of purposes.

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002)

PPG 17 provides national guidance for the provision of new open space and sport and recreation facilities. It recognises the benefits that the provision of high quality and accessible facilities can provide in supporting an urban renaissance, promoting social and community cohesion, aiding health and well-being and promoting more sustainable development.

The Guidance provides a variety of advice to encourage more productive use of open space and sport and recreation facilities, including:

- promoting the compatibility of the uses made of open spaces and sport and recreational facilities with adjoining land uses;
- encouraging better accessibility of existing open spaces and sports and recreational facilities, taking account of the mobility needs in the local population;

- promoting better use of open spaces and sports and recreational facilities, by the use of good design to reduce crime.
- Promoting accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport and ensuring that facilities are accessible for people with disabilities;
- Locating more intensive recreational uses in sites where they can contribute to town centre vitality and viability;
- considering security and personal safety, especially for children; and
- improving the quality of the public realm through good design

Baseline Review

Whilst this policy is an important consideration in ensuring healthy living opportunities are opened up at Wirral Waters, it is vital to have a full understanding of the unique health challenges faced by Inner Wirral if appropriate objectives are to be set and tailored measures taken which can respond to the key health challenges operating at the local level.

The Baseline Study endorsed by Wirral MBC provides a full overview of Wirral's socio-economic conditions. In summary the review identifies significant health disparities between east and west Wirral, with East Wirral performing poorly against West Wirral in all indicators of health. East Wirral contains some of the nation's most deprived neighbourhoods which is reinforced by the following key headlines drawn out of the baseline Wirral:

- 25% of East Wirral's Super Output Areas (SOA) are within the 5% most deprived nationally
- Both male and female life expectancy in Wirral is below that of England and the northwest
- The mortality rate in Wirral is 106 against a national average of 100
- Coronary heart disease, digestion disorders, self-harm and lung cancer are major causes of premature mortality within Wirral

- In 2001 28.2% of people in East Wirral's most deprived SOA's had a long term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activity or the type of work they can undertake against a national average of 17.9%
- In 2001 31.6% of residents in East Wirral's most deprived SOA's were economically inactive due to sickness or disability against an average of 18.4% in West Wirral

These statistics demonstrate the scale of the health issues facing Wirral, and particularly those wards of East Wirral which lie at the heart of the Wirral Waters project and which the scheme must seek to respond to. The scale, prestige and influence of Wirral Waters provides an unprecedented opportunity to positively respond to these challenges. The aim of this Strategy is therefore to ensure that opportunity is realised.

Whilst understanding the health issues that Wirral (and specifically East Wirral) face is important to creating a tailored Healthy Living Strategy for Wirral Waters, of equal importance is an understanding of what opportunities for and constraints to pursuing healthier lifestyles, the existing built environment currently provides. This will allow the Strategy to target its approach to areas where it can have the greatest positive effect.

The main recreation opportunities around the development area are provided by Bidston Moss to the west of the docks, Central Park to the North and Birkenhead Park to the south. The extent to which these recreation areas are used to pursue healthy lifestyles depends on the facilities they provide and the quality of these, as well as their accessibility.

In terms of their accessibility, the great floats currently act as a physical barrier to much of the area, restricting movement between and accessibility to these recreational areas, particularly north to south. This fragmentation impacts on their level of usage and therefore on the viability of providing facilities and formal activities which would serve to increase this use and encourage healthier lifestyles.

Furthermore, such disconnection between areas creates a place that is difficult to move around on foot. An impermeable environment can have a significant impact upon levels of secondary physical exercise that a community as a by-product of going about ones daily routine. A key urban design goal of Wirral Waters is therefore to open up access to all areas, not only those that are used for physical exercise, by creating safe, attractive and pedestrian friendly connections.

Whilst the issue of accessibility to key recreational areas presents major challenges to the communities of East Wirral in pursuing healthier lifestyles, the quality of such facilities and the experience of using them is of equal importance.

Bidston Moss is a local nature reserve approximately 80ha in size and located immediately to the west of the development area. It provides a network of cycle routes linked to the National Cycle Network by the Millennium Bridge. Under the Newlands proposal, Bidston Moss will be enhanced for mountain biking with routes linked to existing facilities. The National Cycling Route 56 runs between Leasowe and Wallasey and onto the coast to New Brighton from where it continues along the coast to Seacombe.

Whilst the area around Wirral Waters is relatively well connected to the national cycle network the development area does not form part of this connection. There is a clear opportunity to link the development to the cycle network surrounding thereby facilitating easy access from Wirral Waters to key areas surrounding and particularly Bidston Moss given its proximity to the development area.

Beyond this, Bidston Moss provides a largely natural environment consisting of significant areas of pond, reed bed and marshland, reflected in its designation as a Local Nature Reserve in 1994. The area is considered to provide opportunities for both recreational activities which require a more natural and rural setting and nature based learning and education initiatives.

Birkenhead Park is located to the north of the Wirral Waters development area and is approximately 65 ha in size. The park was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton in 1843 whose vision was to create an idealised countryside landscape of open meadows and naturalistic woodland belts. The lakes are shaped to appear as sinuous rivers with views across

them to features such as the Boathouse and Swiss Bridge.

The park provides a boating lake, tennis courts, cricket and football pitches, a formal play area, a performance area and bowling greens. A range of formal organised activities take place at the park including bowls, cricket and natural trails.

Birkenhead Park is considered to be a major asset to the area and the focus for recreational activity within East Wirral. The 2004 Wirral Playing Pitch Assessment identified significant deficiencies in the quality of the football, rugby and cricket pitches provided at Birkenhead Park particularly in terms of their drainage and maintenance.

Central Park lies to the south of the Wirral Waters development area and is approximately 19 ha in size. Central Park contains a number of formal gardens and a visitor centre as well as a range of formal sports pitches, nature ponds, a lake, a children's play area and extensive open spaces used for informal recreation activities. Formal children's activities are regularly arranged at the park including scavenger and treasure hunts.

The 2004 Wirral Playing Pitch Assessment identifies deficiencies in the quality of pitches at Central Park relating to drainage and vandalism.