



**Wirral Waters**

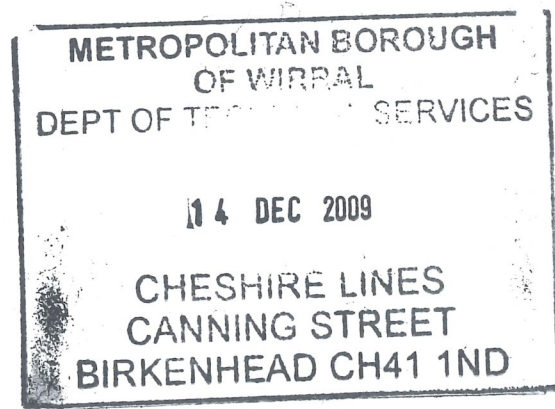
Strategic Regeneration Framework

# Guiding Principles: 1. Planning and Implementation

11 December 2009

# Contents

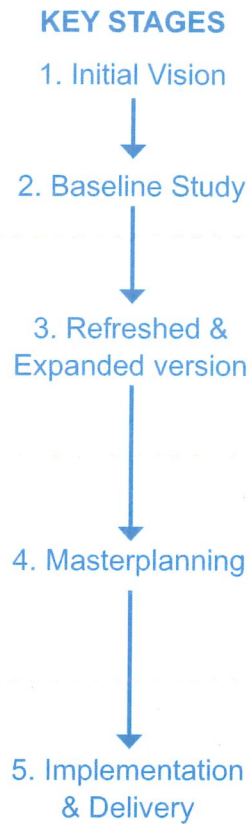
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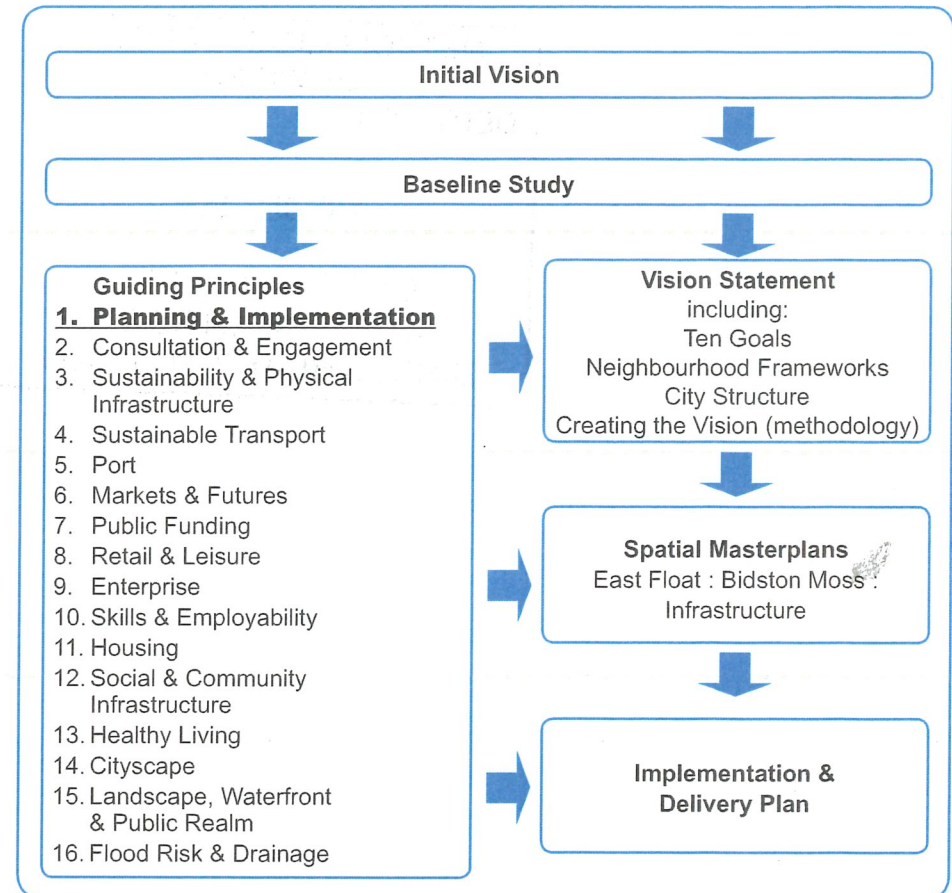
1	INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY	1
2	ISSUES AND OPTIONS	5
3	GUIDING PRINCIPLES	9
4	RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS	17
5	MONITORING AND REVIEW	18

### 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 principal 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.

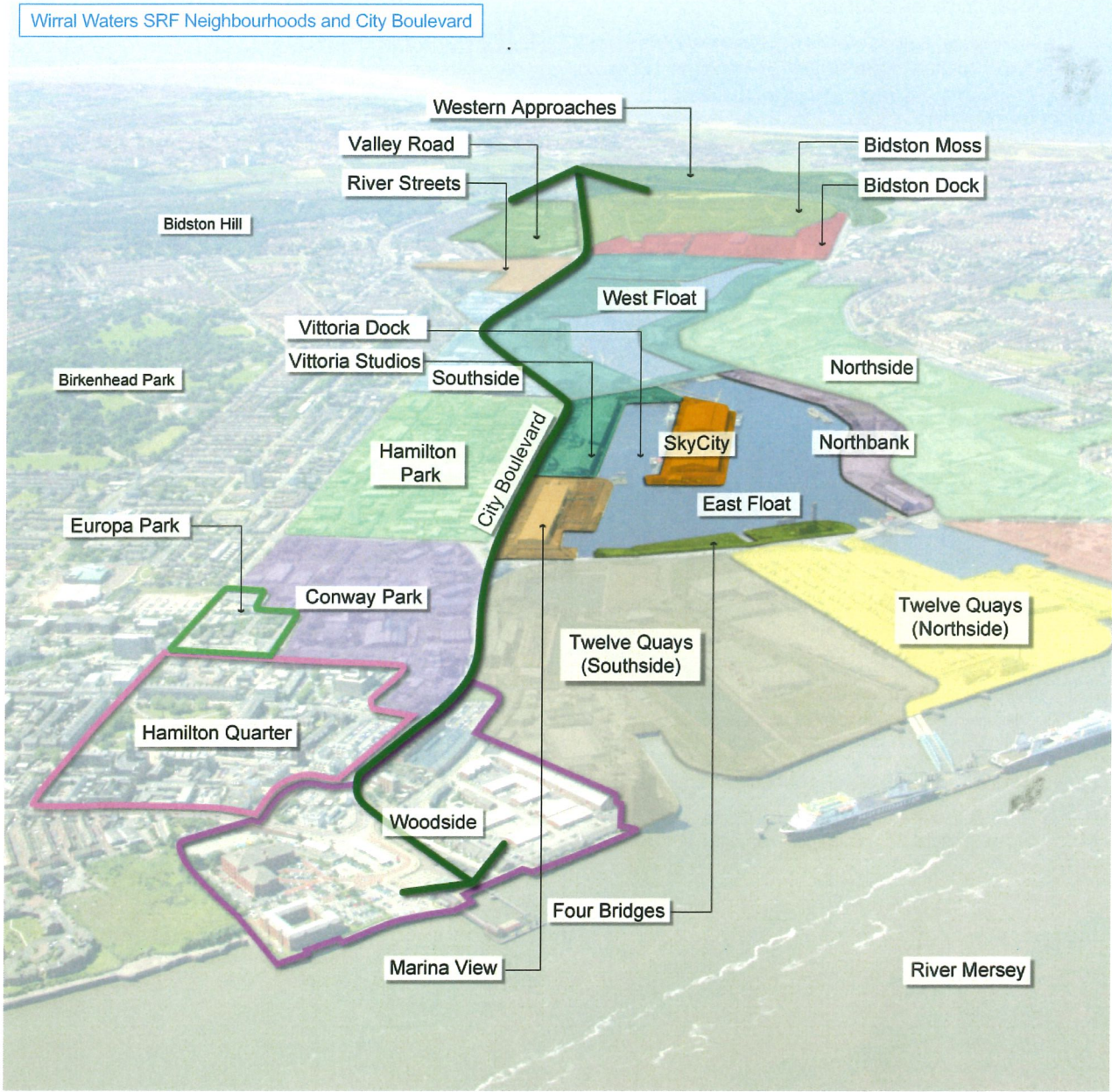


### STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE



## 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](mailto: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**

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

2

**Creating an internationally recognisable city waterfront**

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

3

**Creating places of distinction, destinations and market concepts for the 21st century**

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

4

**Creating a dynamic, prosperous Inner Wirral at the heart of the City Region**

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

5

**Creating world class connections, and access for all**

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

6

**Sharing prosperity, health and well-being**

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

7

**Creating an exemplar regional environmental resource**

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

8

**Securing long term success, starting today**

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

9

**Engage & inspire**

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

10

**A robust delivery framework**

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

## RELEVANCE OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

medium

major

major

major

medium

medium

medium

major

medium

major

## Summary: Guiding Principles for Planning and Implementation

- 1.11 This document establishes the strategic principles for the delivery of Wirral Waters through the planning system. The approach is central to the ability to deliver the Vision and applies to all of the Goals and Structuring Principles. It is particularly relevant to Goal 8 'securing long term success starting today' and Goal 10 'a robust delivery framework'.
- 1.12 It considers how Wirral Waters will be taken through the planning system, both in terms of the development plan (and other relevant policy) framework and in progressing proposals through the development management/control system.
- 1.13 It has evolved from an initial Briefing Note provided to Wirral Council in February 2008 for a two-day Workshop between Officers of the Council and representatives of the Peel Holdings Project Team, which endorsed our approach, and has since been updated to reflect progress on Wirral Waters and evolving circumstances.
- 1.14 The building blocks of the approach can be found within Section 1 (Introduction and Approach) and Appendix 1 (Policy and Literature Review) of the Wirral Waters Baseline Study of July 2008. The Baseline Study analysed in detail the strategic and local policy context for Wirral Waters and set out the process and approach of undertaking a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) to guide the project over its lifetime.
- 1.15 This document sets out the following:
  - The strategic policy fit of Wirral Waters, with national and regional plans, programmes, policies and initiatives;
  - The evolving local policy context, including the emerging Wirral Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration (BIRS) Study;
  - The overall approach to the planning programme for Wirral Waters, including the bringing forward of early phases, longer term catalyst neighbourhood projects and associated infrastructure;
  - The approach to, timing and nature of, major planning applications to be submitted;
- The approach to key aspects of the planning strategy including Environmental Impact Assessment, Design Quality and Planning Performance Agreements.
- 1.16 The Guiding Principles for Planning and Implementation specifically recognise that Wirral Waters is a project of immense scale and ambition and a project that will test the ability of the planning system to facilitate a unique opportunity for seeing major long term private investment.
- 1.17 Wirral Waters is likely to represent a procedural challenge to decision makers in terms of the project being brought forward early in the process of the new emerging Wirral LDF, within a policy system that is designed to be 'plan-led'. However, the 'opportunity' to Wirral presented by Peel is unprecedented.
- 1.18 As is explained below and elsewhere within the Vision and supporting documents, the support for and strategic fit of Wirral Waters are clear, whilst the 'need' to commence delivery is also evident.
- 1.19 It is hoped that the consultation undertaken on (and support for) Wirral Waters, combined with the strategic fit and robustness of the approach, will allow the project to progress whilst minimising risk of delay and unnecessary expenditure.
- 1.20 The key messages emerging from the Guiding Principles for Planning and Implementation are as follows:
  - There is a significant degree of strategic fit with national and local Government objectives and policies, notably arising through the Sustainable Communities agenda, the North West Regional Spatial Strategy and the Partnership for Growth initiative;
  - The SRF is a robust best practice approach to bringing forward Wirral Waters and a material consideration in future planning decisions. The status of the SRF will be further embellished as the Wirral Local Development Framework progresses, informed by the SRF and wider evidence;
  - The implementation details, in terms of the precise phasing and timing of Wirral Waters, are not yet fully known although it is clear that large scale outline planning permissions are vital to attract investment and must be secured early in the process;
  - Having secured planning permissions for Northbank East and the Hydraulic Tower, the approach to outline planning applications, for East Float in particular and Bidston Dock to a lesser extent, will involve large scale strategic applications, to be delivered over 30-40 years. These will be based upon defined parameters and principles that allow flexibility for the market to invest; and
  - The approach to assessing strategic outline applications needs to rely on the two-stage assessment principle, whereby an initial assessment is made of the principle, followed by a more detailed assessment of the detailed proposals brought forward. Similarly, identifying the needs and trigger points for infrastructure and other planning obligations can only be done in the broadest of terms at the outset, and requires a legal framework for future implementation; and
  - Project viability will be key to the ability to deliver Wirral Waters. Competing objectives will need to be managed through the implementation of planning permissions, taking account of policy objectives and economic conditions.

### Strategic Policy Fit

- 2.1 In broad terms, the strategic (national, regional and sub-regional) policy fit is already established. The location and status of Wirral Waters, on previously developed land largely located within the inner urban area of Wirral, is an area of significant and acute regeneration need. The major opportunity site at East Float is entirely located within the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) boundary and at the heart of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point initiative and is a Strategic Regional Site. These factors lend major support to the prospect of securing a transformational mixed-use regeneration exemplar.
- 2.2 Wirral Waters is the right location for securing housing and economic growth due to:
- Its location, adjoining areas in severe need of regeneration because of the scale and deep seated problems, e.g. economic and social deprivation, and hence in need of transformational economic activity;
  - Its status as previously developed, under-used and vacant land;
  - Existing transport connectivity and physical linkages to the City Region;
  - Its physical capacity and basic urban infrastructure that can accommodate a significant increase in population and activity.
- 2.3 Urban regeneration on this scale is the most sustainable pattern of housing and economic growth and needs to be treated as a local, regional and national priority.
- 2.4 There is a significant degree of strategic fit with the adopted Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (NW RSS – the North West Plan – 29 September 2008). This provides for a strong development plan policy context for Wirral Waters. RSS provides an increase in Wirral's housing provision to 500pa (and also confirms that housing provision figures are not to be treated as maximum ceilings). It is likely that the figure will increase by a further 20% to 600pa during the period 2008/09 to 2016/17, as a result of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point confirmed by Government in 2008.
- 2.5 NW RSS focuses economic growth and retail/leisure/ tourism development principally within the 'regional centre' of Liverpool City Region. Wirral Waters is mostly located within the 'surrounding inner area' where the emphasis of RSS (policies RDF1 and LCR2) is on providing a significant increase in residential population through confirmation that this area is the first priority for new housing. Specifically, RSS seeks a good range of quality housing in terms of size, type, tenure and affordability, with a high quality environment and accessible local facilities and employment opportunities.
- 2.6 There are some parts of the Wirral Waters SRF footprint that are located outside the 'surrounding inner area' and beyond the HMRI boundary. This includes Bidston Dock, Bidston Moss and surrounding areas to the north, west and south. These areas are located within the 'outer area' of the Liverpool City Region, where plans and strategies should meet the following criteria:
- Economic development in locations which accord with the spatial principles of RSS (policies DP1-DP9);
  - Intervention where housing market restructuring is required;
  - Development which allows the quality and choice of housing to be expanded;
  - Maintain and enhance the role of town centres; and
  - Identify, define and maintain the role of suburban centres.
- 2.7 Balanced against these priorities is the need to reverse the long term underperformance of Wirral's economy and to address significant issues in terms of the lack of availability of good quality office, commercial and other employment accommodation capable of attracting new investment. Wirral Waters therefore forms a major plank of the Wirral Investment Strategy that has been adopted by Wirral Council and is key to remedying some of these deficiencies in Wirral's employment offer.
- 2.8 Policy RT6 of the RSS contains a presumption in favour of safeguarding land close to ports for logistics, transport and port-related development where there is at least a reasonable likelihood of the land being returned to significant operational use within fifteen years and where the alternative use in contemplation is one, such as residential development, which will be difficult to reverse. Land with wharfside frontages should also be protected for future uses that require a water connection where there is a likelihood of such re-use in the short term.

Wirral Waters seeks to re-use redundant and under-utilised port land for major regeneration purposes. However, Wirral Waters responds to this policy through a rationalisation and relocation plan to ensure that the operational port is maintained and enhanced in line with the operational constraints of the various docks whilst also achieving sustainable regeneration at East Float.

### Evolving Local Policy

- 2.9 At the local level, the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 2000, has a general strategy of regeneration for the inner areas of Birkenhead and Wallasey, allied to a presumption against the development of greenfield / Green Belt areas outside the main conurbation.
- 2.10 Wirral Waters is supported by the UDP on both these counts as it will both provide and act as a catalyst for substantial levels of new investment and for the physical, economic and social regeneration of Inner Wirral. Against the backdrop of an increased housing provision there is a need to focus new housing and economic development in the inner areas, whilst ensuring a continuous supply that does not leave West Wirral exposed to development pressure caused by a lack of supply in the urban/inner areas.
- 2.11 The removal of the former UDP designation of Birkenhead Docks in September 2007 (policy EM10) as port land means that, in addition to this general strategic support by the UDP, there is no conflict with the UDP. It is right however, to acknowledge that the existing statutory UDP clearly did not foresee, or set the local spatial planning policy context for, the scale and type of development likely to occur through Wirral Waters. In receipt of RSS policy RT6 Peel Ports is in the process of bringing forward a Port Master Plan for the entire Port of Liverpool, including Birkenhead Docks and the Manchester Ship Canal. Proposals for East Float will need to be accompanied by an appropriate relocation strategy. Similarly, it is acknowledged that current town and district centre boundaries were not drawn with the scale of Wirral Waters in mind. Thus, there is a need for new policies to respond to Wirral Waters. The Wirral Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) provides significant support for the housing and economic growth/regeneration opportunities arising through Wirral Waters.

- 2.12 There are a number of local regeneration strategies and masterplans guiding development activity and HMRI intervention in nearby areas. There is the HMRI Strategy for Inner Wirral and a number of accompanying HMRI Masterplan Frameworks and Neighbourhood Action Plans (North Birkenhead, Birkenhead, Seacombe, Egremont, Poulton). These seek to guide the regeneration of fragile housing areas through carefully planned intervention and development management.
- 2.13 The Woodside Masterplan establishes the vision for a new mixed urban quarter linking the ferry terminal with the Hamilton Quarter.
- 2.14 Wirral Waters is complementary to all these existing plans and strategies, but will clearly have significant implications for each, in terms of accelerating the pace of change and introducing new pressures and issues which may not have been foreseen prior to the launch of Wirral Waters.
- 2.15 Wirral Council has recently adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) relating to Car Parking, self-contained apartments and A3/A4/A5 uses. The Council has around 40 'old-style' Supplementary Planning Guidance notes (SPGs) and whilst some may provide useful guidance many are past their shelf life and have been overtaken by more recent planning and design practice/guidance. Many may be of limited relevance to Wirral Waters which represents a scale of development not foreseen when these documents were written.
- 2.16 The emerging Wirral Local Development Framework is in its early stages. In terms of the key aspects of the LDF, and how it relates to the WW SRF, the following points are of relevance:
- 2.17
  - The Evidence Base is being compiled including studies relating to housing, employment land, retail/leisure and flood risk. Stages 2 and 3 of the Wirral Waters SRF are informing the LDF Evidence Base and vice versa (as well as BIRS), the intention being to create a comprehensive analysis of the context, issues, challenges and opportunities, such that LDF policies and the SRF come to similar conclusions about the location and nature of development, the broad manner in which it will be delivered and the key infrastructure requirements and strategic

development and design principles. The Wirral Waters Baseline Study has now been endorsed by the Council's Cabinet to this effect.

- The Council is also preparing its own 'Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters' which should bring previous studies/strategies and the SRF Stage 3 work into a single strategy. Importantly this work will provide further definition to what will happen in the 'partnership neighbourhoods', set out within the Vision for Wirral Waters, and how they will be delivered. It will also consider the role of Birkenhead town centre.
  - Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal (SEA and SA) will be undertaken through the Wirral Core Strategy and Allocations Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The Wirral Waters Sustainability and Physical Infrastructure Strategy sets out the approach to delivering sustainable development.
- 2.18 In terms of the Core Strategy, the issues identified, options considered and the process undertaken through Stage 3 of the SRF are at the broad spatial level. Reasonable alternatives for the spatial planning of the area have been considered to allow them to inform the Core Strategy and its strategic site allocations for Wirral Waters. This approach is explained further in the 'Creating the Framework' document. The Council's draft consultation on Issues/Vision/Objectives in early 2009 confirms that Wirral Waters is a major opportunity to shape the future of Wirral. Peel is keen to ensure that key principles for Wirral Waters are established through a 'strategic site' allocation within the Core Strategy.
  - 2.19 There is a clear rationale for strategic site allocations and area policies for Wirral Waters within the Core Strategy, based on the need to:
    - Provide new site-specific policy to replace the unallocated, undesignated status of the dock system left by the lifting of the UDP EM10 designation;
    - Provide a site-specific development plan policy to a previously unforeseen major regeneration project;
    - Provide certainty in order to harness private sector investment through the development plan framework;



- Align the LDF Evidence Base, Wirral Waters SRF and Core Strategy together, to facilitate early delivery of major economic and housing growth;
  - Ensure a strong policy platform, as early as possible, to resist less sustainable proposals being put forward elsewhere in Wirral;
  - Respond to the growth emphasis and priorities of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
- 2.20 The approach could follow the neighbourhoods approach to the SRF, which is thought to be an appropriate spatial scale for the Core Strategy.
- 2.21 Wirral Waters has undergone extensive consultation and additional background work on the SRF, whilst the Northbank East proposals have been brought forward through planning applications. The application for the East Float catalytic neighbourhood areas are to be submitted in Winter 2009. This follows the publication of the Stage 3 Framework and the determination of the Northbank East applications.
- 2.22 In terms of the Core Strategy, based on current timescales, it is projected by WMBC that adoption will occur in late 2011. The Council has recently published the Issues/Vision/Objectives consultation document, which be followed by consultation on Options. Submission to the Secretary of State is anticipated to be sometime in 2010.

- 2.23 For Wirral Waters to progress, it is imperative that planning permissions are sought and gained as expediently as possible for the catalyst neighbourhoods. The option of holding back the submission of these major applications until Core Strategy adoption, or at least submission, is not an option for Peel. To the communities upon whom Wirral Waters may depend are desperate to see the project progress as quickly as possible. The strategic policy fit, SRF approach, timetable of the Core Strategy and the need to establish permission in the shorter term to assist delivery, mean that a 'plan led' approach in this case is not only possible, but also is not a reasonable avenue to follow. The planning applications for the catalyst neighbourhoods will therefore be submitted and progressed at an early stage of the LDF process and in advance of Draft Core Strategy submission.
- 2.24 The implications of the timing issues and relationship to the Core Strategy in particular, are explored further below.

Wirral Waters: East Float today



### Overview

- 3.1 Working within the framework of legislation, policy and best practice, the decision was taken following Counsel advice and agreement with WBC to create a Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), which would sit alongside statutory DPDs as a Peel-led framework, incorporating the entire process and suite of documents relating to Wirral Waters.
- 3.2 As consulted upon with the Council and key stakeholders (including GONW and the CABE Urban Panel), by taking a holistic and considered approach the SRF is hugely beneficial in terms of ensuring the creation of sustainable communities and the right form of development as catalysts to that aim. The SRF approach was devised in part to sit alongside local and sub-regional policy, including the emerging Core Strategy.
- 3.3 This approach has been used extensively elsewhere for public programmes such as for Urban Regeneration Companies and Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders, where there is a need to guide a major programme in a specific manner that complements the statutory policy basis.
- 3.4 In this case, the fact that Wirral Waters is being led by a single private interest with a single land ownership for a catalyst project makes it different from other public programmes. However, much of the approach is the same and the level of engagement and support (see Consultation and Engagement Strategy) reinforce the strength and validity of the SRF.
- 3.5 Also Wirral Waters is to be delivered over a period that extends beyond any development plan document or other policy. Hence it is considered appropriate to capture, shape and deliver the project through a separate, bespoke vehicle.
- 3.6 To complement, inform, and utilise the SRF, planning policy documents will inform, and also be shaped by Wirral Waters, to fit their own purpose and shelf life. It is anticipated that the Wirral Waters SRF will inform and become embedded in emerging local and sub-regional policies and that emerging policy will shape the future detailed masterplanning for Wirral Waters. This will ensure that what is delivered will meet the needs and aspirations of the community.
- 3.7 The Baseline Study and the Vision (Stages 2 and 3) confirm the holistic approach to Wirral Waters. These set the proposals within a wider context and identify what else may need to happen in order to ensure the creation of successful, long term sustainable regeneration.
- 3.8 The approach can be summarised as follows:
- To shape and guide the project using a best practice Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) approach, led by Peel Holdings as the main driving force behind the proposals, owner of the dock estate and long term investor/developer;
  - To use the SRF to not only shape and guide the proposals of Peel Holdings, but to set the agenda and secure the delivery of how such proposals can integrate with surrounding communities and act as a catalyst to regeneration and wider housing and economic growth;
  - To use the SRF as a Peel-led vehicle for informing evolving planning policy and shaping and guiding detailed proposals that will emerge;
  - To work proactively in consultation with Wirral Council and other stakeholders, including the Secretary of State, Government Agencies and neighbouring authorities, to ensure that the planning system facilitates Wirral Waters and provides a statutory policy basis for promoting sustainable, low carbon economic growth and sustainable communities, whilst delivering high quality development, public realm and physical and community infrastructure;
  - To secure planning permissions and deliver a number of early projects, including conversion and new build proposals for the Hydraulic Tower and the creation of the first new Wirral Waters community at Northbank East; and
  - To secure planning permissions for the major component of Wirral Waters, allowing for full and proper preparation and consultation. This is absolutely essential in starting the process of slowly building investor and market confidence in an area where all markets, whether financial or occupier, have largely collapsed.
- 3.9 The strategy adopted by Peel at the launch of Wirral Waters in 2006 was that the major applications would be tracked alongside the Core Strategy and submitted in mid 2009. This approach would have allowed the

Core Strategy and its Evidence Base to be progressed alongside the Stages 2, 3 and 4 work of the SRF, to mutually inform and shape a robust planning basis for Wirral Waters. It would also have allowed for strategic site allocations and development management policies to be written into the Core Strategy to align with the Wirral Waters proposals;

- 3.10 The major planning applications were to be progressed alongside the Core Strategy, and with Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal requirements met through the LDF.
- 3.11 This approach was intended to allow for the examination of the key principles of the proposals without the need for a separate inquiry into a major planning application.
- 3.12 Owing to unforeseen delays in the production of the Core Strategy, the project programme is now running well ahead of the Core Strategy. Peel have ensured that their proposals are robust prior to submission, by setting the Framework and draft Masterplan. At the current time, it appears likely that the major planning applications will be submitted at or around the time of Spatial Options, but in advance of Preferred Options and the Draft Submission version of the Core Strategy and any Wirral Waters Allocations.
- 3.13 Peel does not feel that delaying progress is the right thing to do. Hence it considers it not essential that the Draft Submission version of the Core Strategy is in place prior to the submission of the major planning applications, provided that the SRF sets out a robust and well consulted upon approach to creating integrated communities and economic growth, provides the required infrastructure, and achieves high quality, low carbon development. The SRF has, since its inception, been prepared so as to comprehensively and robustly address those points. Consultation on Wirral Waters has been extensive, as demonstrated in the Guiding Principles for Consultation and Engagement.
- 3.14 There is widespread agreement as to the scale of need in Inner Wirral and the pressing urgency of making a meaningful start on the transformational change in an area where low demand and lack of investor/occupier confidence is ingrained. As a first step in this process securing outline planning permission for Wirral Waters is fundamental in bringing about the necessary level



of certainty with regard to the creation of new high quality and sustainable neighbourhoods for living, working and playing for Peel to be able to attract funding and occupier interest. Any concerns over the submission of major applications in advance of the LDF do, therefore, need to be balanced against the costs, delay and uncertainties which a major Inquiry into the proposal would cause and the resultant risks to the achievement of the early regeneration of the area.

- 3.15 The overarching principle is therefore to establish major outline permissions, without undue cost and delay, through the strategic fit, robustness of approach and comprehensive consultation and engagement on the proposals.
- 3.16 It is important that the LDF progresses in parallel, but Wirral Waters must be progressed over a shorter time period. The LDF should not be unduly fast-tracked and overly streamlined simply to accommodate a more timely path for Wirral Waters – as there are many other major issues to be addressed through the LDF. To assist in addressing the policy context for Wirral Waters, the Council is also undertaking its own 'Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters'. This will be a relevant consideration for the proposals.
- 3.17 In terms of the potential requirement for SEA and SA and also for Habitat Regulations Assessment ('Appropriate Assessment'), it had previously been the intention of Peel and Wirral Council that SEA and SA and HRA/AA of the DPDs would have been undertaken by the time of the major decisions on Wirral Waters. However, the Wirral Waters Strategic Regeneration Framework is not a formal public plan or programme, therefore SEA/SA process is not required. Nevertheless, this process has in fact been followed to a large degree through the SRF and considerable environmental information exists, consultation has been undertaken and reasonable options have been considered.
- 3.18 The Stage 3 Vision/Framework and series of Guiding Principles therefore are intended to provide both a robust basis for early decision making and information to feed into emerging policy. The approach being taken to the submission of the major planning applications supported by the SRF Masterplans, EIA and other documentation is therefore sound and robust in the circumstances of the pressing need for regeneration.

## Early Delivery

3.19 A fundamental part of Peel's overall approach to phasing and delivery is to see high quality development (together with associated public realm improvements and the raising of inner Wirral's investment profile) commenced as early as possible. Peel identified a number of potential 'early delivery' projects to be brought forward. Although the deliverability of these has been slowed by the recession. These proposals will largely make best use of existing infrastructure (modified and supplemented where needed). The early projects are:

- Hydraulic Tower - Conversion to Restaurant and New- Build Hotel: The Planning application was approved in May 2008. This project was being brought forward as an advance scheme to ensure safeguarding and conversion of a Listed Building at Risk through introduction of a viable restaurant use and an adjacent new build hotel. Owing to the significant costs of repairing and converting the Listed Building, and the limited market confidence, the project is presently not financially viable. The intended use of the Hydraulic Tower site may be subject to review as a result of discussions regarding the use of adjoining sites for an education campus, which could see the Hydraulic Tower site brought forward for complementary office uses. Peel will commence site clearance and making the building safe on the Hydraulic Tower as soon as possible, to ensure that it does not deteriorate further.
- Northbank East: Two planning applications for a new residential-led mixed use were approved by Planning Committee in August 2009. The Proposals will create a new community on the north-east side of East Float, immediately to the east of the listed grain warehouses. The proposals are partly detailed and partly in outline, to allow for early commencement on site of a deliverable first plot, to include new residential accommodation and local retail facilities. Later plots will include more housing, new offices and potentially some leisure uses. The residential units will comprise high density living in a mix of living formats and sizes. The proposals will also incorporate public realm enhancements along, and access to, the dock edge.

- Woodside: this project has some momentum following the Council's adoption of a Masterplan in 2005. The proposals are for a new mixed-use urban quarter, linking Woodside Ferry Terminal with the Hamilton Quarter. These are being brought forward by joint development partners including Peel Holdings. Wirral Council and Merseytravel are major landowners and also partners in the proposals. The planning application is expected in 2010. The application is likely to be made in outline, with certain development principles, parameters and details provided in order to ensure design quality. It is considered that the proposals will be brought forward broadly in accordance with the existing development plan framework. The proposals are largely being progressed separately to Wirral Waters, but, in the wider sense, represent a key project in terms of delivering complementary major new investment and development in inner Wirral and a potential gravitational shift of the town centre.
- Rivers Streets: This area of vacant land is owned by Wirral BC and provides the opportunity to deliver a range of employment uses, transport infrastructure and some community, leisure/retail and potentially residential uses. Rivers Streets is likely to be directly affected by the catalyst neighbourhood proposals and City Structure. As such, it will be important that proposals are complementary and facilitative. Proposals have been brought forward by WBC for a Police Command Centre, which will help complement Wirral Waters.

## "Catalyst Neighbourhoods" and "City Structure"

- 3.20 Peel also wishes to secure planning permission, as soon as is practicably possible, for the full extent of development that it envisages on both of its "Catalyst Neighbourhoods", at Bidston Dock and East Float. This will establish an overall outline spatial masterplan whereby the agreement of design details and legal agreements can be expedited with certainty between Peel, Wirral Council and other consultees. This has three clear fundamental benefits:

- It demonstrates to investors and occupiers that Peel has an in principle approval to the broad vision of Wirral Waters in terms of aspiration, scale etc and can deliver (free from major planning complexities which often plague major schemes). This will be particularly crucial in creating market confidence attracting major corporate investors;
- It provides a greater degree of certainty to the public sector and in particular public funding partners over the nature, scale and location of development and its supporting infrastructure; and
- It provides Peel Holdings and its financial backers with the certainty that allows funds to be drawn down for investment in infrastructure (both physical/engineering and social/community) early in the delivery process.

3.21 The combined effect of these benefits will be crucial to the overall success of Wirral Waters, in terms of the overall pace of delivery and the quality and quantum of built development, public realm, infrastructure, investors and occupiers.

### East Float

3.22 The East Float proposals will have a long term delivery (estimated at 30+ years) and the market needs to be created to attract world class occupiers to new forms of high density economic and residential development in Wirral. The purpose of the East Float planning application is therefore to establish the planning basis (one of a large number of ingredients) for making that vision a reality. The approach will be for Stage 4 Masterplanning of the SRF to shape the content of a single outline planning application for East Float, accompanied by fixed development principles and parameters that will underpin an Environmental Impact Assessment, together with further detailed and indicative/illustrative design information such as an Outline Design Code, as appropriate. It is also likely that a "Design Panel" will be established to guarantee the quality and key principles of the project as it evolves.

3.23 The level of design information, particularly for tall buildings, will need to be consulted upon in order to demonstrate the commitment to design quality as and when appropriate. It is not possible or worthwhile



designing any aspect, including tall buildings, in full detail at the outline application stage given that occupiers are not known and building design, architecture, engineering and technology will change during delivery of the development. Designing a tall building which is unlikely to be built is a highly costly and abortive exercise and a waste of private investment.

- 3.24 The timescales are that the application submission is targeted for late 2009, by which time the Masterplanning team will have responded to consultations with CABE and the Urban Panel, together with other stakeholders, and will have prepared a robust package of application material that will be capable of securing the support of stakeholders.

### Bidston Dock

- 3.25 The Bidston Dock site is available for immediate delivery. The project is anticipated to be a major leisure and retail destination that is complementary to Birkenhead Town Centre but is only at concept stage at present. The potential value uplift of the Bidston proposals can be reinvested in Wirral Waters and used as an infrastructure catalyst to the wider proposals. The Bidston Dock proposals can help deliver a sustainability exemplar, local employment/regeneration benefits and a healthy living agenda in inner Wirral. However, its out of centre location and retail content raises significant issues. This will be subject to a separate planning application.
- 3.26 The final content of the proposals will be informed by the Wirral Retail Study that has been commissioned by Wirral Council. Further work by Peel is ongoing, including conceptual masterplanning, to understand issues such as site capacity, technical feasibility, population growth assumptions and appropriate design principles.
- 3.27 Work is also ongoing to consider the extent of cross-subsidisation of infrastructure investment possible through a major destination at Bidston Dock, together with the potential benefits to investors, occupiers and residents to inner Wirral. Peel is also investigating the potential benefits to the local employment and healthy living agendas arising through the Bidston proposals, both of which are potentially very significant given the challenges and headline strategy messages coming through the Stage 3 work.

- 3.28 Stage 4 Masterplanning for Bidston Dock will therefore be shaped by both the Peel team through the SRF and Wirral Council through the Retail Study and the LDF. It is not possible at this stage to know what type of application will be submitted in respect of the Bidston site or what the detailed quantum and precise nature of floorspace will be. However, building on the options analysis of 'Creating the Framework', it is Peel's intention that Bidston Dock should meet the following criteria:

- Be a high quality leisure and retail destination of regional/national scale;
- Complement Birkenhead town centre and other centres;
- Link into improved green infrastructure at Bidston Moss;
- Be a sustainable development exemplar;
- Be accessible to local communities by a range of transport modes, including a new transport link and hub; and
- Create regeneration/employment and healthy living opportunities for local communities
- Complement Wirral's tourism/leisure strategy

- 3.29 It is proposed to work towards a submission in Spring 2010.

### Physical infrastructure proposals

- 3.30 Physical infrastructure proposals will also be brought forward. These will include proposals for tangible "off-site works" and infrastructure within catalyst sites. At this stage, it is difficult to be precise about what will be involved, although the largest and most obvious aspect is the "southern transport corridor / City Boulevard" together with other identified improvements in transport infrastructure such as at the bridges or road junctions.
- 3.31 Energy and other infrastructure proposals, as may be identified through Stages 3 and 4, will also need to be brought forward at the appropriate time.

### Approach to Planning Applications

- 3.32 A long term approach for Wirral Waters is the correct way to address the significant deprivation issues facing the area. However, the approach to planning applications for a quantum of development likely to take 30+ years to implement raises a number of procedural complexities. The Peel team has been investigating both guidance and current practice and is satisfied that, with the work on Stage 4 of the SRF in place, robust and determinable outline planning applications can be made.
- 3.33 The key to a successful outline planning permission for 30+ years development (on East Float) will lie in its ability to manage the overall parameters and principles of development, whilst responding to evolving circumstances that influence the timing and format of detailed delivery. It is likely that legal agreements and conditions will be needed to cover a range of issues over the longer term, including environmental performance, affordable/special housing provision, delivery of longer term infrastructure (community and physical) and so on. Such agreements and conditions may in themselves need to be linked to policy evolution and future targets, indicators, outputs not yet known.
- 3.34 Phasing of the major schemes will not be known at Stage 4 and will only become certain through the subsequent implementation process. It will therefore be necessary to produce phasing plans and to demonstrate how each phase fits in with previous and later phases, as part of future detailed submissions (Reserved Matters).

### Design Fixity

- 3.35 The level of design information required for outline applications was clarified in changes made to the development control system in Circular 01/06. The issue at Wirral Waters requires particular attention owing to timescale, overall scale and the approach to tall buildings. CABE's Tall Buildings Guidance (July 2007 version) allows for an outline application approach in certain circumstances, where a credible and robust Masterplan is in place, as would be the case at Wirral Waters.
- 3.36 Evidently, undertaking a full design exercise on a series of tall buildings that may not be built out for many years

would result in large amounts of unnecessary and abortive detailed work. This would not be acceptable to Peel and Peel's ongoing consultation with CABE, through the Urban Panel and Design Review Panel, confirms that East Float does fit within the Tall Buildings Guidance for outline proposals, such that full and proper consideration can take place of the right issues at the right stage of the process.

- 3.37 As highlighted above, a Design Panel would be established to be the custodians of design quality at Wirral Waters. This is likely to include a range of partners. The mechanics, terms of reference and membership of the Panel will be established through Stages 4 and 5. This is a model which has worked well in other locations where large, complex, masterplanned developments have been successfully delivered, including Liverpool One.

### Approach to EIA

- 3.38 The approach to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be to undertake individual Environmental Statements (ES) for each application, with cumulative assessments considering the whole as appropriate.
- 3.39 Recent UK case law and subsequent changes to the EIA Regulations have established that it is highly likely that Reserved Matters submissions for phases of development beyond the initial 'fully assessable' quantum will require fresh and full EIA, owing to changes in circumstances such as baseline conditions and the transport policy context.

### Planning Performance Agreements

- 3.40 The use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) is envisaged. It is hoped that this will allow Wirral Council and Peel to approach planning applications on a clear and informed project management basis whereby the scope, content and approach to the application are agreed at the outset. The Council already operates a Development Team Approach which incorporates many aspects of this best practice.

### Infrastructure Delivery

- 3.41 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Transport have been developed, which establish the overall principles for Wirral Waters. The Transport Steering Group (TSG)

Precedent example image: Vancouver





is developing the tools and models to undertake a full quantitative assessment of the development as far as it can reasonably be assessed, which is thought to be 10-15 years hence. The TSG will identify required infrastructure and a precise delivery strategy for that period.

- 3.42 Beyond that period, transport effects will be difficult to predict with certainty, and the clear identification of mitigation may not be possible. Through analysis of precedents, however, legal mechanisms will be established for undertaking future reviews of the transport and accessibility issues and carrying out mitigation/infrastructure provision as necessary; i.e. after a certain quantum of development has been delivered, thus preventing further development until issues are resolved. For further information, refer to the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Transport.
- 3.43 Aside from transport infrastructure; which itself will include roads, cycle/pedestrian routes, parking areas/buildings, public transport services and infrastructure; the provision of community infrastructure potentially covers a very wide remit, including:
- Health and education facilities;
  - Social and community buildings (including libraries, civic buildings and places of worship);
  - Emergency services, security, CCTV etc;
  - The public realm, parks, open spaces and recreation/sports facilities; and
  - Drainage, telecoms, energy and waste facilities.
- 3.44 Infrastructure will be delivered through a mix of land within Peel's ownership and on other land such as adopted highway land and other sites which may come forward. There is presently no fixed means by which this needs to be done and no standardised Section 106 tariff regime, as exists in some areas. Wirral Council has an emerging Section 106 Strategy, but in the circumstances, a bespoke approach is envisaged for Wirral Waters.
- 3.45 Considerable work has already been done in looking at the quantitative issues that may need to be addressed, together with qualitative improvements that may be needed in order to create the right facilities and services

for achieving a sustainable community at Wirral Waters. The various Working Groups are tasked with identifying what is needed and when, who will pay and how it will be delivered. Reference should be made to the Sustainability & Physical Infrastructure, Housing, and Community Infrastructure Guiding Principles.

- 3.46 Peel is keen to keep infrastructure delivery as simple as possible and not to over-complicate the mechanisms required for delivery. However, there are various options available for implementing and delivering community infrastructure, including:
- Direct provision of works by the developer, required by condition and/or s.106. Given the extent of Peel's land holdings these could be used quite widely;
  - Use of 'small area contracts' for individual projects brought forward between parties, whereby their contribution may be required through Section 106 and a lead party would be responsible for delivering the project e.g. a new community building on publicly owned land. This approach could also apply to items of infrastructure joint funded by private and public sector contributions;
  - Potentially, use of a 'tariff-based approach' to fund community infrastructure, whereby the payment of an agreed sum per unit or per square metre of floor space is made into an infrastructure fund for the delivery of a number of projects and initiatives. The outcome of the Government's proposals for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) may have a bearing on how infrastructure is delivered, although the timescales for setting this up may extend beyond that for considering the planning applications for Wirral Waters. Such an approach may only be worthwhile if other developers are also contributing, otherwise it may be more effective and better targeted if Peel and (public and private) partners directly provide infrastructure relating to Wirral Waters.
- 3.47 The best solution may involve using a mixture of all of the above options, with a different approach for different aspects of infrastructure. The approach to the management of the public realm and community infrastructure will also need to be addressed through the planning application stage.

## Affordable Housing

- 3.48 Affordable housing is a key priority of national planning policy for housing. The approach to affordable housing at Wirral Waters is complicated by a number of factors, including the historically poor market conditions in the immediate area, the prevailing nature of the surrounding housing market (a HMRI area), the need for jobs, current market condition and the ongoing review of affordable housing targets locally. Peel recognise the 'affordability' issue both in West and Inner East Wirral and the different underlying causes for each. In light of this, it is not yet possible to determine how much and what type of affordable housing can be provided by Wirral Waters, and when this may be.
- 3.49 Peel has agreed key principles for affordable housing with Wirral Council and is agreeing a commitment and mechanism for affordable housing through the Northbank East project. The approach to affordable housing is explained more clearly in the Guiding Principles for Housing.

## Preliminary Indicative Programme for Catalyst Neighbourhoods

- 3.50 The underlying principles for a preliminary indicative programme at this stage are as follows.
- 3.51 Firstly, the early delivery projects are expected to be marginal in terms of their viability and will not be capable of cross-subsidising major infrastructure. Their role is primarily about creating a series of high quality developments, accompanied by public realm and infrastructure needed to support them, to begin to transformation of the area and create the right environment for the major schemes to gather momentum.
- 3.52 The Hydraulic Tower is currently not financially viable, and the gap may need to be offset through public funding. Additionally, the approved new build residential scheme for apartments to the east of the listed warehouses which has already been granted planning permission is proving not to be a viable project given current market conditions. However, as the property market comes out of the recession the consent of East Float will help boost confidence and values.

3.53 Public funding in Merseyside has been available principally through European Regional Development Fund over recent years, which has stimulated much of the recent renaissance. However, this is coming to an end, although there are opportunities being explored for utilising the final available funds. There are different UK Government funding streams with which Wirral Waters is being aligned, including the Growth Fund and Community Infrastructure Fund. Other streams, particularly in relation to housing, are also being examined. However, the economic climate is presently very challenging to be bringing forward a project such as Wirral Waters. See Guiding Principles for Funding for further information on the wider funding and economic aspects.

3.54 In terms of the sequencing and programme, it is assumed that the funding of infrastructure will primarily be achieved through levering in other investment via the major schemes. Of those other schemes, the leisure and retail destination at Bidston Dock is possibly more immediate and straightforward to deliver. The site is available and ready for redevelopment, and the proposed uses are more certain than other parts of the Wirral Waters proposals to generate values to allow for reinvestment in infrastructure.

3.55 Immediate delivery at Bidston Dock is less complex and costly than East Float where, aside from the early wins at the Hydraulic Tower and Northbank East (itself a 10-15 year project), there are existing tenants to be relocated and the type of development and markets sought will take longer to realise. Northbank East and Hydraulic Tower are to be delivered as early as possible in the implementation programme but will not generate funding for cross-investment. Bidston Dock is therefore seen as a potentially high value development that will be of sufficient scale and market certainty to allow for investment by Peel in major infrastructure elsewhere in Wirral Waters.

3.56 In that context, although the timings may change, the likely sequence of events, as far as is known at this stage is:

1. Early projects and as identified above – Hydraulic Tower and Northbank East (Plot 1) (considering Woodside principally as a separate major project);

2. Bidston Dock, both to create a major destination and generate value to cross-fund the provision of other new infrastructure. The justification will need to be provided for significant leisure and retail development early in the wider proposals for housing and economic growth;
3. Delivery of infrastructure and aspects of East Float (potentially to comprise Northbank East Phases 2-5, Four Bridges, and parts of Vittoria Studios and Marina View), including the southern transport boulevard and other measures to be identified; and
4. Sky City (by which time tenants will have been relocated) and other East Float Quarters, which it is anticipated will become inner Wirral's unique selling point to the wider world, and the most significant catalyst to the City Region.

3.57 The availability of any substantial amount of public funding, for example through the Growth Fund or final ERDF monies or other sources, could alter how the project needs to be programmed and allow for more upfront investment in infrastructure, being less dependent upon development value.

3.58 As such, the sequencing and/or timing may be subject to change. Additionally, the attraction of a major footloose tenant which, for example, could be a commercial occupier or large leisure or education user, could alter the sequencing, by bringing a bespoke project forward on part of Wirral Waters in the shorter term. Retaining a flexible and responsive approach is vital to enhance competitiveness.

3.59 At this stage, using the above sequencing, it is difficult to be overly prescriptive about exact timescales. However, based on progress to date, the following represents a best **indicative estimate of the potential programme** of development:

#### Early Wins – planning 2008/09 – Implementation as follows:

1. Hydraulic Tower – 2010/2011
2. Northbank East – 2011-2020+
3. Woodside – 2011-2020

#### Major Schemes – planning 2008-2010 – implementation as follows:

1. East Float Vittoria Studios – 2015-2020
2. East Float Four Bridges – 2011 onwards
3. East Float Marina View – 2015-2020
4. Bidston Retail/Leisure – 2012-2017
5. Southern Transport Corridor – 2012 phase one, completion subject to funding and capacity requirements
6. Other Major Physical Infrastructure – 2011+ subject to funding and demand/needs
7. Northbank West – 2012 onwards
8. Sky City – 2013/14 onwards

#### Planning Strategy – Partnership Neighbourhoods

3.60 In looking at Wirral Waters SRF as a comprehensive strategy for the regeneration of the wider area, the Stage 3 work has shown the need for adjoining neighbourhoods, the “Partnership Neighbourhoods”, to respond to Wirral Waters and, indeed, for Wirral Waters to respond to the needs of the area and integrate with its surroundings.

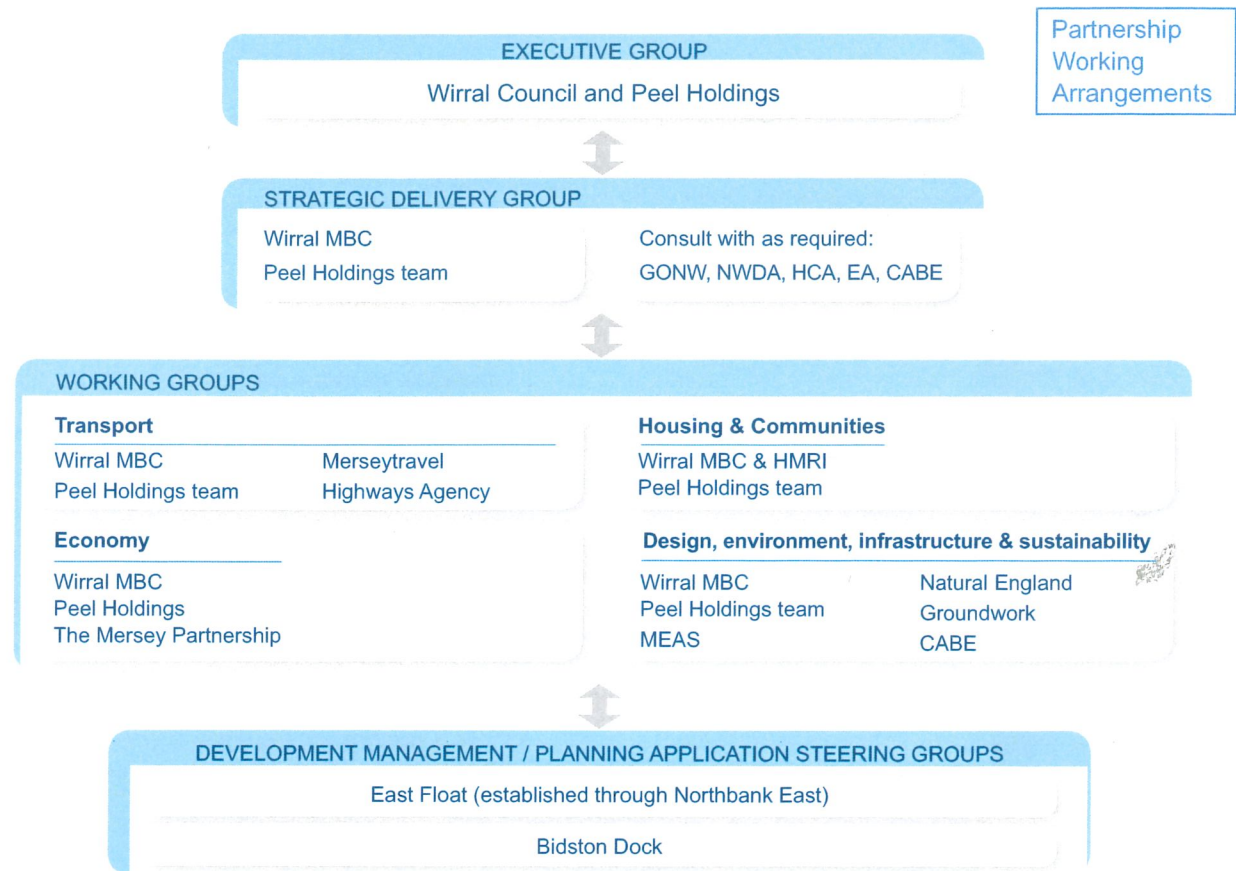
3.61 Wirral Council will take the lead in progressing the strategy for these areas, working with other partners, including the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), established on 1 December 2008, is a key partner. Discussions between Wirral Council, Peel and HCA in late 2008 and through 2009 will shape the strategy for these areas. The Wirral Waters Vision and Development Frameworks sets an overall ambition and spatial framework for the areas around the docks, which will be taken forward by Wirral Council and the HCA as lead partners, with Peel and others assisting delivery across the SRF area. More detail will be provided through the ‘Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters’ being undertaken by the Council.

# 04

## Recommendations & Next Steps

4.1 The recommendations and next steps for the Guiding Principles are as follows:

- Publish for review and comment by Wirral Council, Government Office, HCA, NWDA and other key stakeholders;
- Update/amend the Guiding Principles to reflect any significant issues;
- Monitor (see below) and respond to changes in circumstances, policy, funding and so on, to ensure that an up to date record of the overall approach is maintained.



## Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 Peel Holdings is responsible for the Guiding Principles for Planning and Implementation, and for keeping the document up to date and responsive to circumstances. The Strategic Delivery Group, comprised of executives of Wirral Council and Peel Holdings, is the primary vehicle for identifying the need to update and refresh the Guiding Principles. It is envisaged that this will take place if and when any major changes in circumstance occur during the core planning process i.e. Frameworks, Masterplanning and Planning Applications.
- 5.2 Thereafter, as Wirral Waters goes through a transition from planning to delivery, it is likely that Implementation Reports and Studies will be undertaken to monitor the effectiveness of the project against its planned objectives. Suggested mechanisms for this will be established in due course.