

# Public Document Pack



## Executive Board

Thursday, 16 July 2009 2.00 p.m.  
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W R'.

**Chief Executive**

### **ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

#### **PART 1**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>(B) WIDNES WATERFRONT PHASE 2 MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK &amp; DELIVERY STRATEGY</b>	<b>1 - 136</b>

*In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.*

*Please contact Caroline Halpin on 0151 471 7394 for further information.  
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 10 September 2009*



# Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Delivery Strategy

Halton Borough Council



Final Report

April 2009

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- i) The Delivery Strategy addresses the key factors which will affect the implementation of the Masterplan Framework prepared by Taylor Young, together with BE Group and Faber Maunsell.

### **Delivery Framework Management**

- ii) Halton Borough Council should build on the successful delivery of projects to date and continue as the lead in co-ordinating development. The Major Projects Team should assume this responsibility.
- iii) Projects completed have been undertaken by a range of developers, with specific relevant market experience, and this should continue rather than the selection of a single developer for the whole of the Waterfront.
- iv) Partnerships with public funding providers, developers, landowners and businesses should be maintained and developed further.
- v) New and emerging business parks often secure a public sector occupier to anchor the new development. Halton Borough Council should actively seek public sector support through relocation to the Waterfront to act as a catalyst to attract other investors and occupiers.

### **Phasing**

- vi) The average take-up of employment land in Widnes over the past 10 years has been 4.62 ha per annum.
- vii) With over 100 ha identified in the Masterplan Framework, projects need to be prioritised to establish a programme of developments capable of being delivered up to and beyond, 2014.
- viii) Those existing Waterfront schemes that still have significant voids need to be promoted to occupiers. The successful letting and sales of these properties will demonstrate demand and underpin the improvements of future land values.

- ix) Development should continue to spread progressively from the Gateways to encourage a ripple effect across the Waterfront area. The Hive, Aston Land and Easter Park are likely to be the principal developments in the next 5 years.

### **Land Ownerships and Constraints**

- x) Many of the sites are constrained through land ownership issues, contamination and service infrastructure requirements.
- xi) Organisations holding land they intend to develop should be encouraged to do so. Halton Borough Council may consider selective acquisition of sites not matching these criteria, to unlock development, but public sector acquisition on a wide scale is not envisaged.
- xii) A detailed library of information on a site by site basis should be assimilated as a guide to future development.

### **Public Realm**

- xiii) Early delivery of soft leisure and public open space, particularly on land owned by Halton Borough Council, is recommended.
- xiv) A number of recreational uses, whilst requiring further market testing, could bring commercial returns, for example five-a-side football and National BMX Centre.
- xv) Linkages with other aspiration ventures such as the Mersey Regional Park and the Sankey Canal Restoration Society could generate additional investment.

### **Planning Framework**

- xvi) The Masterplan Framework needs to be embraced and supported by Halton Borough Council, and linked to the emerging LDF Core Strategy.
- xvii) Detailed development briefs should be drawn up for individual sites.

### **Costs and Values**

- xviii) The current economic conditions mean few schemes are viable at present, because either bank funding cannot be secured or property values have fallen.

- xix) Viability is also affected by the cost of dealing with the constraints and the quality of the environment.
- xx) The implementation of the Masterplan Framework should be undertaken in a way that will see a progressive improvement in land values whilst minimising new infrastructure costs. This will see the areas around the Gateway developed first and the most contaminated areas last.
- xxi) Historic investment in some sites means that the cost of acquisition at the present time is prohibitive. In particular this applies to key Gateway properties such as The Focus DIY building and the Barkin Centre.
- xxii) Infrastructure and remediation costs are considered to be extensive. No accurate costings have been prepared and further assessment is needed to accurately ascertain these potential costs.

## **Funding**

- xxiii) Schemes will be delivered through a mix of private and public investment. As stated earlier, the Council should actively seek public sector support through a relocation/new proposal to the Waterfront to spur other investments.
- xxiv) Limited funding from existing sources remains and Halton Borough Council must explore and exploit a range of funding sources to help deliver development. The Council needs to be alert to new funding streams as they emerge.
- xxv) The private sector should be engaged through partnership arrangements with the preferred route being different developers selected for their ability and experience in delivering different types of scheme.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Framework Phase 2 sets out a vision and strategic objectives for the development of Widnes Waterfront to 2014 and beyond. Whilst it will in part inform local planning policy and guide development proposals, as they are brought forward, it goes beyond being a document to support development control. The Framework should be the basis to enable Halton Borough Council and its partners actively achieve the regeneration of the Waterfront area.
- 1.2 Key to the success of the Waterfront regeneration is the delivery of the Framework through the physical implementation of the range of projects highlighted. In the current economic climate and with an area where development is challenged by a number of issues including multiple land ownerships, lack of utilities capacity, a need for improved infrastructure and considerable areas of contamination, the Framework has to be delivered by the public sector. This means Halton Borough Council assuming the leading role, working with the private sector to bring forward projects to meet the objectives of The Masterplan Framework. This requires the setting of a Delivery Strategy.
- 1.3 The Delivery Strategy recognises that there are projects capable of being brought forward in the short-term if the economic climate allows. Some require little or no public sector intervention, or are already supported by the public sector. Other projects will require intervention in the foreseeable future unless significant new private sector funding is secured.
- 1.4 The Delivery Strategy addresses the key factors which influence implementation of the Masterplan:
- Delivery Framework Management
  - Phasing
  - Land Ownerships and Constraints
  - Public Realm
  - Planning Framework
  - Costs and Values
  - Funding Considerations

**Delivery Framework Management**

- 1.5 Since 2002, Halton Borough Council has made great progress in the delivery of a number of key projects, which has seen around 27 ha of land reclaimed, re-used or developed out.
- 1.6 No single body has delivered these projects, but Halton Borough Council, through its Major Projects Team, has been closely involved, both in a guiding role and also actively delivering projects. Each developer involved has been experienced in the specific type of development completed.
- 1.7 These schemes have included those identified in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Widnes Waterfront Schemes**

Property Scheme	Total Floorspace, sqm and Number of Units	Unit Size Range, sqm
Heron Business Park, Phase I, Tanhouse Lane	4448 11 units	279-743
Heron Business Park, Phase II, Tanhouse Lane	6837 18 units	148-882
Turnstone Business Park, Mulberry Avenue, off Dennis Road	4985 20 units	218-323
Easter Park, Bennetts Lane	22,854 9 units	929-4645
Forward Point, Moss Bank Lane	1547 3 units	438-671
Widnes Trade Park, Dennis Road	4390 7 units (plus B&Q store)	325-2230

Source: BE Group, 2009

- 1.8 Widnes Regeneration Limited (WRL), the joint venture vehicle between Halton Borough Council and St Modwen, has also contributed. To date the extent of the delivery has been the provision of Heron Business Park Phases 1 & 2.
- 1.9 A further phase of development proposed by WRL required a Compulsory Purchase Order. This was halted in 2008 when St Modwen considered the acquisitions and subsequent development financially unfeasible. Similarly, The Hive has been a project promoted by a one off joint venture by St Modwen and Halton Borough Council, but is not yet delivered because of viability. This will now rely on additional funding secured by Halton Borough Council.



- 1.10 Consequently, to successfully deliver phases of projects there needs to be clear and focused leadership. This is seen as the role for Halton Borough Council's Major Projects Team, supported by other Council departments. The Major Projects Team should continue co-ordinating development, liaising with the various public sector bodies, landowners, developers and end users.

### **Partnerships**

- 1.11 The Delivery Strategy requires engaged and committed partnerships at more than one level. Key are the potential partnerships with public funding providers, private sector developers, landowners and established businesses within the Waterfront Masterplan area.
- 1.12 Partnership with these parties is important. Halton Borough Council has a good relationship with the Northwest Development Agency and Housing and Communities Agency. This needs to continue, as both are able to provide funding and be involved in direct purchase and development.
- 1.13 Developers, landowners and occupying companies already come together on a regular basis through the Widnes Waterfront Business Steering Group meeting. This informs and engages with these stakeholders. Continuation of this Steering Group is encouraged.
- 1.14 There is also a need to maintain separate regular dialogue with landowners and developers, to assist in the delivery of development.
- 1.15 The Major Projects Team forms the link between the private sector stakeholders and the various public sector bodies in the funding and approvals process including NWDA, Environment Agency, and the Planning Authority.
- 1.16 To date the development has attracted largely private sector companies as tenants or purchasers. Halton Borough Council should encourage the public sector to consider the Waterfront as a base for activities within the Borough, and should explore whether there is the possibility of a major relocation/new investment. Experience shows that public sector investment at other business parks has acted as a catalyst to successful growth. And if the public is not prepared to demonstrate its belief in the Waterfront product, why should it expect the private sector to?

## 2.0 PHASING

- 2.1 The Masterplan Framework identifies over 100 ha of land within the Waterfront area that could be brought forward for development in the future. In reality, the area is somewhat smaller as a significant proportion remains as operational land for established businesses. Many may or may not choose to expand or relocate in the future.
- 2.2 Nevertheless, with over 65 ha of land currently vacant this represents a land stock that could satisfy Widnes' employment land needs for at least the next 14 years. As identified in Table 2, Widnes' average annual take-up of employment land has been 4.62 ha over the past decade.

**Table 2 – Take-Up of completed employment land 1998-2008 – Halton**

Year	1998/9	1999/ 2000	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	Total	Average Annual Take-Up
	<b>Employment Development (ha)</b>											
Runcorn	0.33	13.32	16.65	12.02	10.46	4.05	4.70	14.22	18.80	18.49	113.04	11.30
Widnes	0.80	1.15	6.98	1.58	5.30	6.66	0.99	12.44	4.31	6.10	46.21	4.62
Halton	1.13	14.47	23.63	13.60	15.76	10.71	5.69	26.66	23.11	24.59	159.35	15.92

Source: Halton Borough Council 2008

- 2.3 The figures represent completed development on all sites in Widnes. Take-up for the Waterfront alone is not provided. The current economic climate has brought speculative development almost to a halt across the North West, and Widnes is no different. For the next three years or so, take-up is envisaged to be significantly reduced, with the exception of development of the 3MG site where major warehouse development associated with the rail freight industry is envisaged. However, this is a specialist area of industry and inclusion of projected figures for 3MG would distort the general forecasted take-up considerably.
- 2.4 Further developments completed over the past two years still have significant voids as shown in Table 3. The exception is the Trade Park which is now largely occupied.

**Table 3 – Current Schemes**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Floorspace</b>	<b>Number of Units</b>	<b>Occupancy Rate, percent</b>
<i>Offices</i>			
Forward Point	1533	3	0
Turnstone Business Park	4983	20	16
<i>Industrial</i>			
Easter Phase One	9467	4	50
Heron Phase One	4448	11	82
Heron Phase Two (site works not complete)	6837	18	0

Source: BE Group, April 2009

- 2.5 Developers, and more importantly, their funders are unlikely to commence further speculative development until these voids are reduced. A priority is to support the owners of these properties to ensure the voids are reduced. This will demonstrate that there is demand for both office and industrial space at the Waterfront. It also assists in strengthening land values within the area which is vital when seeking to create viable new schemes.
- 2.6 It is therefore important to establish a programme for the phasing of development, which will prioritise actions and activities that can be delivered. This applies to both the public realm, infrastructure and development projects. The categories can only be indicative but can be prioritised as follows:
- A Projects currently viable or deliverable

- B Projects which can be funded from existing funding streams and which do not face major constraints
- C Projects which cannot be funded at present, but where funding streams can be identified
- D Projects which are highly speculative but become viable in an improving market
- E Projects which are unlikely to be developed and which are highly constrained.

2.7 The principal projects and sites (where no specific project is yet proposed but is considered a development), can be put into these categories. Further, the Masterplan Framework splits the different areas into two phases – those deliverable up to 2014 and those unlikely to be delivered in that time scale. Table 4 categories the projects against these criteria.

**Table 4 – Principal Projects and Sites**

Project	Approx. Area, ha	Category Rank with A first	Phase
Easter Park	3.9	A	1
Aston Land	4.5	B	1
The Hive	6.0	B	1
Land at Johnsons Lane	8.0	C	1
Shell Green	4.0	D	1/2
Former Bayer Site	16.0	D	1/2
Gorse Lane North	2.2	D	2
Former Croda site	4.0	D	2
Routledge	5.8	D	2
UK Land Trade Park	1.0	D	1/2
Dennis Road area	5.3	D	2
British Gypsum	1.6	D	1/2
Clark Transport	0.6	D	2
Barkin Centre	1.5	D	2
Tanhouse Lane East - ATS	0.15	D	1/2
Tanhouse Lane East – Gateway Heritage	2.0	D	2
Tanhouse Lane East – Plasmor	3.0	D	2
Former Pilkington Sullivan site	11.9	E	2
<u>Saffil</u>	2.3	E	2
Thermphos	4.3	E	2

Project	Approx. Area, ha	Category Rank with A first	Phase
Muspratts	8.0	E	2

Source: BE Group 2009

- 2.8 Only three projects appear ready to proceed within the foreseeable future, and commencement will depend on market conditions. These are the Hive, Aston Land and Easter Phase Two.
- 2.9 Other sites, particularly those close to the access points into the Waterfront, present opportunities to bring sites forward within the period up to 2014.
- 2.10 There is a logic in promoting the sites around the Gateways as planned progressive development from the outer edge inward. The completion and letting/sale of existing developments and the commencement of new developments fanning out from these Gateways should create a ripple effect which increases confidence in the area and should see, in time, values begin to rise. .
- 2.11 The ability to deliver these sites will depend on a range of factors and constraints which are addressed in the next section.

### **3.0 LAND OWNERSHIPS AND CONSTRAINTS**

- 3.1 The Waterfront comprises a large number of different ownerships. These include owner/occupiers, property investors, developers and Halton Borough Council.
- 3.2 In assessing deliverability there is a need to distinguish between those sites which are in single ownership, where there is a willingness for the owner to bring forward development and those sites where there may be significant constraints to development arising out of either multiple ownership and occupation, or where land owners have unrealistic aspirations for the site.
- 3.3 Halton Borough Council, either through Widnes Regeneration Limited or on its own, has acquired land to bring forward development. Further acquisition remains a possibility, if funding support can be secured. However, widespread acquisition has been tried through the proposed CPO process, but has stalled. It is understood that this approach will not be pursued again as a means of acquiring large areas of land. Rather, selective acquisition may be undertaken as key sites become available, or where a single site is required to unlock development.
- 3.4 Developers holding sites they intend to bring sites forward themselves, should be encouraged to deliver the developments. In some cases sites and buildings are operational and occupied by the owners or leased to other businesses. Whilst in some cases there may be a longer term aspiration to see the land developed, for the foreseeable future it is realistic to assume these sites will continue as operational sites.
- 3.5 Constraints other than land ownership may prevent delivery in the short term and where detailed information is not known, further investigations should be undertaken. Where owners or developers hold information Halton Borough Council should seek to bring this together to create a detailed library of information.
- 3.6 Most sites will require an assessment of transport route provision, and the cumulative impact of traffic should be considered.
- 3.7 An assessment of each Waterfront site has been made, to consider ownership issues and other constraints to development.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Land at Johnsons Lane</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Halton Borough Council
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Site is identified for B2/B8 uses. Originally earmarked for companies being relocated due to the construction of the Mersey gateway, but now seen as a site for general industrial
<b>Constraints</b>	Estimated remediation and servicing costs £8 million
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Cost of services infrastructure. These costs should be reviewed to see how the site can be delivered at a lower level, possibly part open storage/lower quality uses.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	A review of the cost of delivery, minimising servicing costs, to be undertaken. Halton Borough Council should then seek funding to deliver the necessary services infrastructure. The site's location means it is unlikely to be a high profile development site and should not compete with Aston Land, Easter, Bayer sites. The area will provide plots for lower quality uses, or businesses seeking self-contained freehold plots.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Shell Green off Johnsons Lane</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Lythgoes Estates Ecocycle Waste Halton Borough Council
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None. The site houses a mix of industrial occupiers, a waste recycling facility and Halton Borough Council's household waste drop off site.
<b>Constraints</b>	Multiple occupation and operational facilities.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	The area serves a function providing premises for existing occupiers, which is likely to remain unchanged.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	General public realm improvements to landscaping; liaison with businesses.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Former Bayer site, Gorse Lane</b>
<b>Ownership update please</b>	Now acquired by Halton Borough Council/NWDA.
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. The Masterplan proposes B2/B8. The site presents the opportunity to bring forward a significant area for development over the next few years. Halton Borough Council will be preparing a Masterplan for the site.
<b>Constraints</b>	Bayer are currently decommissioning the site, which will be complete in 2010/2011. Work is ongoing to determine the extent of the remediation required. The NWDA will seek to ensure development meets their design on construction standards. There are NWDA funding claw back issues in particular for uses other than B1/B2/B8. Access to the site needs to be addressed.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Capacity at Halton Borough Council.
<b>Halton Borough Council</b>	The site for development through remediation, servicing and



<b>Involvement</b>	preparation of a development brief in association with the NWDA. This may be through a joint venture with a selected developer. Halton Borough Council can lead the regeneration of this area of the Waterfront, as has happened in phase 1 at the western end of the Waterfront area.
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<b>Property</b>	<b>Gorse Lane North</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Delavan Lewis Capital Investments
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. The Masterplan proposes quality offices at the junction, with industrial use retained on the remainder of the site. Delavan are interested in improvements to the site to create a contained corner site. The site is an important gateway and is seen as a catalyst to development on neighbouring sites.
<b>Constraints</b>	Currently in multiple ownership comprising of several operational sites. Funding may be an issue for Delavan.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Costs associated with the acquisition of sites create a development plot and the relocation of existing businesses. There are reasonable buildings that could remain long term. The market at present is unlikely to make a B1 scheme viable.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Selective acquisition should be considered if property becomes available, to create a development plot. Alternatively, work with existing owners to prepare a development brief.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Easter Park Phase 2, Bennetts Lane</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Easter Group
<b>Development Proposals</b>	A second phase of warehouse units
<b>Constraints</b>	None known
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	The performance of Phase 1 with 2 units still unoccupied and the market conditions will dictate delivery of the second phase. Two units remain.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Continued assistance in marketing, planning and other technical assistance.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Former Croda site, Gorse Lane</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Widnes Regeneration Limited
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. St. Modwen expected the site to be developed under the Widnes Regeneration Vehicle.
<b>Constraints</b>	Access is considered to be unattainable for development without a new route in from Johnson's Lane, although St. Modwen disputes this. This access could be difficult with a levels issue and the position of large chemical lagoons sitting within the site. Cost of services

<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Access needs to be resolved. Halton Borough Council can provide access through their Johnson's Lane site which may be the most cost effective.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	None if St. Modwen successfully service the site. If not Halton Borough Council should make provision for the access to be provided and the site viewed as an extension to their Johnson's Lane site, but with priority given to that land before opening up the Croda site.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Former Pilkington Sullivan site</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Broadthorn
<b>Development Proposals</b>	In the past the owners have attempted to secure a purchaser and also planning for the site. The Masterplan proposes a mixed use with open space/soft leisure uses. Current discussions are ongoing with planning for the New Earth proposal for a waste recycling facility.
<b>Constraints</b>	Significant contamination, remediation costed at up to £8 million. Access is also an issue as the principal access off Moss Bank Road is controlled by Industrial Chemicals, development associated with the focal point on the river and B2/B8. New Earth are currently considering three options for site access. Services and highways issues.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Broadthorn's ability to deliver the site is questionable and to date they have not addressed detailed technical issues. A third party organisation such as New Earth may be able to bring forward a deliverable solution.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Halton Borough Council ideally should seek to acquire the site to ensure future control if funding to deal with contamination and access issues is available. If the New Earth proposal proceeds Halton Borough Council should seek environmental improvements around Tanhouse Lane, to facilitate the objectives of the Masterplan.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Saffil, Moss Bank Road</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Saffil
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None. Operational site
<b>Constraints</b>	Future development would require site decommissioning.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	None. Not considered a development site.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Assistance with improvements to public realm.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Land to the west of Tanhouse Lane</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	J. Routledge & Sons
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Resolution by Halton Borough Council to grant consent for 600 residential units plus local retail centre and B1 offices. The Masterplan identifies the site as all residential.

<b>Constraints</b>	Significant contamination to the site. Access just from Tanhouse Lane is not acceptable, and a new route from the link from Earle Road will provide the main access point.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Site remediation costs yet to be determined. Access to be completed. Market conditions suggest no current interest as the remediation and land values make the site unviable.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Assistance in identifying the cost of remediation and preparation of a more detailed development brief for the site. Facilitate completion of access route and provision of services infrastructure. Licence is in place from Halton Borough Council to allow road construction

<b>Property</b>	<b>Thermphos</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Thermphos
<b>Development Proposals</b>	No proposals, the site is an operational plant and the company has not suggested any intention to relocate or close although it could be affected by the Mersey Gateway proposal.
<b>Constraints</b>	Major cost of decommissioning and remediation should plant close. Access at present is poor and would need improving.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Cost of relocation is estimated by Thermphos' property consultant at around £40 million, making redevelopment unviable.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	To monitor activities of the company.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Land at the junction of Gorse Lane</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Aston Land
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Mixed use with a scheme of small offices and warehousing.
<b>Constraints</b>	No major constraints identified. Development may be constrained by the area's lack of electricity capacity.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Development has been delayed because of market conditions. At present the owners do not intend pursuing the offices (which are not viable), but may commence work on the B2/B8 space during 2009 if the economic climate improves.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Assistance with marketing, planning and other technical issues arising from development.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Former Muspratts site, off Earle Road</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Cheshire Land
<b>Development Proposals</b>	The owners envisage the site as a residential site, and the Masterplan accords with this, although no formal or informal

	proposals have been put forward.
<b>Constraints</b>	Known to be heavily contaminated, but the extent of this has not been quantified. Access currently is via a railway underpass and is not suitable to support any future development. Should Thermphos be redeveloped this could present the opportunity to provide an improved access.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Determining level and cost of remediation. Securing a new access to the site across the rail line. Market conditions currently means the site will be unviable. The proximity of the Thermphos plant may affect future marketability.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Support the owners in addressing site issues, and delivering planning.

<b>Property</b>	<b>The Hive</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Halton Borough Council/St Modwen Developments
<b>Development Proposals</b>	The Hive is proposed as a new leisure park with a mix of entertainment facilities, restaurants and hotel. Planning Permission granted.
<b>Constraints</b>	Funding for the development is the only major constraint to the development commencing.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	St. Modwen cannot develop without public sector funding which is to be secured by Halton Borough Council. Tenants have been secured for most of the scheme. Question of utilities provision for full development of the site.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Secure funding to ensure development commences. Establish vehicle to facilitate a 'state aid-legal' public sector investment. Liaise with UK Land Estates to seek improvement to the Focus site. This is a key site at the main approach to the Waterfront, and at present is vacant. As it sits alongside The Hive, long term vacancy will detract from the proposed leisure scheme. If St. Modwen do not proceed, review development agreement to see how control of the site can be removed from them. Continue dialogue with utilities providers to secure sufficient capacity to meet development needs.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Trade Park area off Earle Road</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	UK Land Estates
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Currently leased to Focus, and a commercial car wash. No proposals, but the Focus DIY building is vacant and discussions have been held for use by a food retailer. Masterplan proposes a mixed use site, possibly hotel, retail, leisure.
<b>Constraints</b>	Existing lease to Focus DIY, and cost of extinguishing this to create a development site.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Planning and market conditions.

<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Assist through agreement on future uses within the planning framework and actively encourage UK Land/Focus to find a new occupier for the site.
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<b>Property</b>	<b>Dennis Road area</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Karalius Bros Monopol Holdings American E-Z storage Suttons Alco Waste Halton Borough Council JS & I Jones Tanhouse Garages
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. Identified in the Masterplan as a mixed use area with B1 offices, employment (B1/B2/B8) and some open space.
<b>Constraints</b>	Operational sites in multiple ownerships and occupation. No detailed review undertaken of contamination or services infrastructure, including highways.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Relocation of all occupiers will be costly and only likely to be achieved over a long period.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Selective acquisition to bring together development plots. Preparation of a detailed brief. Completion of the linear park and other site infrastructure.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Barkin Centre</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	BP Pension Trustees
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Currently leased to Plastech and Maltacourt (Subaru) but the site is vacant. No known proposals by the current owners, although it has been marketed for sale recently. Owner's expectations are retail use. The Masterplan shows the area as a mixed use B1/Trade counter.
<b>Constraints</b>	Owner's expectations and the existing lease which expires in 2012.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Existing lease Market conditions
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Liaison over future use of the site with current or new owners.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Langtree, Dennis Road</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Langtree Group
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Langtree were proposing a serviced office development following their Centrix format. This is now on hold.
<b>Constraints</b>	No major constraints identified.

<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Viability in the current market has been cited as the reason for the project being put on hold. Halton Borough Council have assisted with funding,.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Halton Borough Council have assisted in the funding of the acquisition, and should continue to press Langtree to develop or seek an alternative arrangement for delivery, when Langtree's legal option expires.

<b>Property</b>	<b>British Gypsum, Dennis Road</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	British Gypsum,
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. The site is vacant and on the market (offers c. £1 million)
<b>Constraints</b>	The site is regular, self contained and can be redeveloped in isolation. Demolition and site remediation will be required. Services capacity and transport issues will require investigation.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	If developed in isolation no significant issues. As part of larger site, land assembly will be necessary.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Halton Borough Council have identified the property as a potential for acquisition.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Clark Transport, Cornubia Road</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	Clark Transport
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. Clark Transport need to expand. Halton Borough Council may be able to provide land adjacent to the property. If not and the company relocated, the site could become a development opportunity.
<b>Constraints</b>	The site is constrained by size. Neighbouring uses will affect attraction of a developer if not improved. Access will require improvement. As a former transport yard there may be ground contamination.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Availability will depend on occupier's intentions to either remain or relocate.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Assist in the company expansion through provision of additional land.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Tanhouse Lane East</b>
<b>Ownership</b>	ATS Gateway Heritage Ltd Plasmor Ltd Forward Chemicals Suttons Various – Former Clariant
<b>Development Proposals</b>	None at present. The former Clariant site was acquired by Widnes Regeneration Ltd. and released for B2/B8 use. The Masterplan identifies the northern area as mixed use car show room, B1 offices and small industry with the remainder

	B2/B8.
<b>Constraints</b>	The site is in multiple ownership, with much of the area housing operational facilities. Highway issues.
<b>Delivery Issues</b>	Much of the site will remain as existing to service B2/B8 occupiers The Roll-in Motel owned by Gateway Heritage is now vacant and the owners are looking at future options. Development will require possible co-operation with Plasmor who control the current access.
<b>Halton Borough Council Involvement</b>	Preparation of a development brief for the gateway site involving ATS, Gateway Heritage and Plasmor. Possible acquisition.

## 4.0 PUBLIC REALM

- 4.1 The Masterplan highlights a range of soft leisure and public open space areas, together with a framework of public routes throughout the Waterfront.
- 4.2 These uses, which are outlined in the Masterplan Framework and Landscape Strategy, are proposed to complement the development projects and to fulfil one of the main objectives of the vision by attracting more uses to the Waterfront.
- 4.3 A number of recreational activities have been proposed, some of which could be implemented quickly, whilst others will require further market testing such as the National BMX Centre and a commercial five a side football centre.
- 4.4 As with emerging development sites, the open space and soft leisure uses can be prioritised taking account of ownership and other constraints and funding.
- 4.5 The main projects and proposals are set out in Table 5.

**Table 5 – Public Realm Proposals**

Project	Location	Ownership/Issues
Linear Park	Runs from Earle Road to Tanhouse Lane along former rail line.	Halton Borough Council Funding in part received from NWDA; further funding required for completion.
Waterfront Destination	Part on Wharf (viewing platform), Part on former Pilkington Sullivan site at end of Tanhouse Lane.	Broadthorn Ltd Landowners aspiration is for a higher value use Could be gifted as part of a wider regeneration of the site.
Greenway	Running along western edge of Waterfront linking to the West Bank Area and Spike Island.	Network Rail/Halton Borough Council & others Ownerships to the west are not known and will need to be ascertained. The TEP Masterplan for Spike Island will dovetail with these proposals. Will be affected by the Mersey Gateway.
Boulevard Route	Running to Earle Road traffic signalled junction, following the Linear Park, and other roads through the Waterfront to Fiddlers Ferry Road.	Halton Borough Council Upgrading of existing routes, some work already done to street lighting/street furniture.
Gateways	Entrances to the Waterfront area at Earle Road., Tanhouse Lane, Gorsey Lane. Possible additional	Various ownerships including Halton Borough Council The proposal is wider than



Project	Location	Ownership/Issues
	entrance within Bayer frontage.	immediate road improvements and will involve landmark buildings on sites at the junctions and Gateway features. Some sites not immediately available.
Progressive Play and Public Art	Various on routes throughout the Waterfront.	Not determined. These areas can be Halton Borough Council land or surplus areas of development land or within highway corridors. Investment will vary depending on the scale of the space and could see early implementation.
National BMX Centre	Not determined but could be at the Waterfront on one of the larger sites.	Not determined, but along with other soft leisure may be on Broadthorn land, or adjacent to The Hive. Not seen as high value, but may generate capital receipts ahead of the other development for land owner. Aspirational project. Market testing with end user required. The Level of activity at this stage is not known and there may be traffic impact issues.
Commercial 5-a-side football	As National BMX Centre.	As National BMX Centre. Developers will pay a commercial price for sites.
5KM Trail	Along the canalside.	Halton Borough Council/Network Rail/Mersey Gateway Investment to provide running surface, lights and exercise equipment.
Youth Activity Park	Not determined but could be at the Waterfront.	Not determined, but along with other soft leisure uses could be on Broadthorn land or adjacent to The Hive.

Source: BE Group 2009

### Implementation of Public Realm

- 4.6 With much of the green space and public areas capable of being developed on land already in the ownership of Halton Borough Council, a number of the proposals could be implemented early, subject to planning and funding.
- 4.7 The soft leisure uses have not been fully market tested, although it is known that there is the requirement for the national BMX Centre, and Widnes is under-provided with regard to all-weather football pitches. One operator was contacted – Goals Soccer, but their target area is larger towns and cities. Other operators should be contacted to establish demand.

- 
- 4.8 No site has been specifically allocated although the land to the western side of the Pilkington Sullivan site is proposed in the Masterplan Framework. The owners Broadthorn Ltd are seeking a higher value use. However, should the planning application be successful there is the opportunity to seek some planning gain as a result of the New Earth requirement to build a waste resource facility, currently being proposed for the eastern part of the site. For example The Masterplan shows open space to the western end of the Pilkington Sullivan site, and a condition for Broadthorn/New Earth to provide this could be imposed as part of the wider landscape and environmental requirements.
- 4.9 Both the BMX use and five-a-side football facility would generate a commercial return whether through a sale or ground lease. This should be attractive to landowners as part as a wider redevelopment.
- 4.10 The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park covers over 70 miles of the coastline in the Mersey area and will involve a wide range of economic regeneration and tourism projects. One of the objectives is concerned with estuary development and management and is seeking to promote country parks, coastal trails and cycleways formal and informal urban parks. Funding has been made available from the NWDA for the Regional Park.
- 4.11 The Sankey Canal Restoration Society (SCARS) is involved in the restoration of the Sankey Valley Canal through Halton, Warrington and St Helens. There are benefits in working with SCARS to enhance and promote the canal which runs alongside the Waterfront area.

## 5.0 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The current planning framework and the emerging LDF form the basis for the development of the Waterfront area. The Masterplan Framework should inform planning policy and be used as an evidence base where policy needs to be changed or formulated. Clarification is needed as to how the Masterplan links to the LDF Core Strategy and the existing Supplementary Planning Document for the EDZ.
- 5.2 Therefore the Masterplan Framework needs to be embraced and supported by Halton Borough Council if implementation of the elements is to be achieved.
- 5.3 Consideration should be given to encompassing the principles of appropriate development in a further Supplementary Planning Document. This will provide the context for future development by which planning applications can be considered.
- 5.4 The Masterplan framework and any SPD, is designed to be flexible, setting out a vision and objectives and a range of uses across the area. It is not aimed at being prescriptive, but to bring individual sites forward there may be a need to refine the guiding documents into a series of development briefs that will provide more detail in terms of the following:
- Planning policy and context
  - Details of site and its immediate surroundings
  - Issues, constraints, land ownerships and required level of consultation/survey work
  - Description of acceptable/desired uses
  - Design guide in terms of scale, character, materials sustainability, landscape
  - Highways and parking.
- 5.5 The following sites should be considered for the preparation of development briefs.
- Former Bayer site
  - Johnsons Lane/former Croda site
  - Pilkington Sullivan site
  - Routledge/Muspratt site
  - Dennis Road area
  - Tanhouse Lane East.

- 5.6 Consideration should be given at an early stage to off-site highways infrastructure requirements, and additional transport requirements such as public transport provision.

## 6.0 COSTS AND VALUES

- 6.1 The options process undertaken following the production of the Masterplan baseline, provided a series of end values that might be achieved were the whole of the Waterfront area to be developed out.
- 6.2 These provided a means of comparing the different options, but in reality the likelihood of achieving such values in the short-term is remote. Even schemes that do not face any physical or legal constraints to development are not proceeding at the present time. This is because either bank funding cannot be secured for speculative development (which is a major cause of a halt in construction throughout the UK) or the fall in rents and investment yields now makes new industrial and office development unviable.
- 6.3 Viability will also be affected by the quality of the environment although this should improve over a period of time, as the Waterfront area sees the critical mass of new development increase alongside other environmental improvements.
- 6.4 The implementation of the Masterplan Framework needs to be undertaken in a way that will see a progressive improvement in land values. To achieve this the logical approach is to develop the immediately (or more) accessible areas first. In this way new infrastructure costs can be minimised. This will link and extend existing new developments. Thus, the most contaminated areas would be developed last, when values should be rising.
- 6.5 Each site will present its own challenges in terms of cost of procurement and delivering a viable output. Table 6 sets out where the cost may be required for each site.

**Table 6 – Site Costs Assessment**

Site	Potential Acquisition Cost	Remediation	Site Infrastructure
Land at Johnsons Lane	No	No	Yes
Shell Green	No	No	No
Former Bayer Site	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gorse Lane North	Yes	Yes	Yes
Easter Park	No	No	No
Former Croda site	No	yes	No
Former Pilkington Sullivan site	Yes	Yes	Yes

Site	Potential Acquisition Cost	Remediation	Site Infrastructure
Saffil	No	No	No
Routledge	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thermphos	No	No	No
Aston Land	No	No	No
Muspratts	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Hive	No	Yes	Yes
UK Land Trade Park	No	No	No
Dennis Road area	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barkin Centre	No	No	No
Tanhouse Lane East	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: BE Group 2009

### Acquisition Costs

- 6.6 Costs associated with the acquisition of land and buildings will range widely depending on the scale of property identified for acquisition, the nature of each property, aspirations of the owners and whether relocation of businesses is required.
- 6.7 Estimating global acquisition costs at this stage is unrealistic, and will be dependant on determining all the above factors. As a guide, industrial land may range from £247,000-£370,000 per ha, and existing industrial buildings from £200-£430 per sqm.
- 6.8 To illustrate possible acquisition costs, two key sites have been used to provide examples.

### Gorse Lane North

Site 1	
Devalan Ltd	
Floor area:	3440 sqm (37,000 sqft)
Estimated value:	£1.1 million
Site 2	
Cheshire House	
Floor area:	2300 sqm (25,000 sqft)
Estimated value	£2.2 million
Estimated acquisition cost	£3.3 million
Site area	2.17 ha
Land value	£1.52 million/ha (£615,000/acre)

**Barkin Centre**

Building 1	
Offices	
Floor area:	140 sqm (1500 sqft)
Estimated value:	£110,000
Building 2	
Car Showroom – floor area	570 sqm (6100 sqft)
Estimated value	£500,000
Building 3	
Plastech Warehouse – floor area	5760 sqm (62,000 sqft)
Estimated value	£2.1 million
Estimated acquisition cost	£2.71 million
Site area	1.5 ha
Land value	£1.8 million/ha (£728,000/acre)

**Infrastructure Costs**

- 6.9 To inform the Delivery Strategy, Faber Maunsell has estimated the total cost of providing new highways, site remediation and electricity substation provision to be in the region of £86.5 million. These figures are based on very broad estimates. In particular, the element for remediation costs is based on a rate/m<sup>2</sup> for the area and not on an accurate knowledge of each site. Therefore the costs should be treated with caution.
- 6.10 Highways accounted for £4.5 million, based on a boulevard link from Earle Road to Tanhouse Lane North; a highway link running from Earle Road to Tanhouse Lane South, and a greenway link connecting to West Bank. There is also the need to consider the cost of other transport improvements such as bus services.
- 6.11 The final preferred option also saw a possible new extension to form a new link with Fiddlers Ferry Road and a continuation of this link to open up further development land. There is also a proposed pedestrian link to Naylor Road, and improvements along the St. Helens Canal as part of the 5km trail.
- 6.12 Further revision and refinement of the highways costs need to be undertaken to provide more detailed costs for each element.
- 6.13 The remediation cost of £80 million assumes the treatment of 1 million sqm, with the assumption that the land is in a condition similar to the Pilkington Sullivan site. Whilst

this may apply to the Muspratt and Routledge sites, contamination will vary across the sites and each needs to be assessed individually.

- 6.14 The electricity costs assumes the provision of two new primary substations, reflecting the already identified need to improve power capacity.



## 7.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Delivery of the Masterplan Framework depends on a mix of public sector funding and private sector investment.
- 7.2 The private sector will drive those schemes that are financially viable now, or where there is potential to drive up land values through higher value uses. Beyond these, public sector intervention will be required.
- 7.3 Much of the funding available to Halton Borough Council for Phase One has now ended. Currently funding is available from the sources identified in Table 7.
- 7.4 In addition, Halton Borough Council should investigate further funding sources including new streams that may emerge for example from the Homes and Communities Agency and the NHS possibly through the local PCTS.

**Table 7 – Potential Funding Sources**

Source	Amount £	Activity
Working Neighbourhoods Fund/European EDZ Programme	2.5 million	Remediation and infrastructure provision
ERDF	Possible match funding to WNF	Support to individual sites
Mid Mersey Growth Point	1.33 million	Access road to be matched by developer contribution
NWDA Single Programme	Unknown	Land acquisition e.g. Bayer. Remediation costs.
Mersey Regional Park	Unknown	Promotion of Estuary tourism projects
HCA	Unknown	Emerging funding for neighbourhood renewal
NHS		Various funds linked to health and neighbourhood renewal

Source: BE Group 2009

- 7.5 This funding is limited to supporting a small number of projects. Therefore Halton needs to identify and secure funding for a range of capital works and projects with the main costs being:
- Site acquisition
  - Site remediation
  - Capital infrastructure works
  - Road and footways infrastructure

- Public realm and public open space.

7.6 The Masterplan Framework should be used as the basis for discussions with funding partners such as NWDA, HCA.

7.7 Private sector funding may be secured in a number of ways and Halton has experience of engaging with the private sector on various projects to date. Experience of these partnership arrangements will no doubt influence future relationships. These include:

*Single private sector partner leading development process.*

Pros	One organisation to plan, co-ordinate and fund development. Non viable projects should be cross-subsidised by higher value developments. Halton Borough Council can control development through agreements on draw down of land and performance targets.
Cons	Halton Borough Council tied to one organisation which if it does not perform could delay projects. Partner may select and promote higher value projects to the detriment of others.

*Halton Borough Council leading development process, with selected developers for each scheme.*

Pros	Halton Borough Council can drive the development process through site preparation. Developers will be selected with appropriate experience and ability to fund for each project. A mix of developers will be introduced and projects could be run in tandem. Halton Borough Council can control development through building agreements. Schemes can be driven by public sector investment, which may include a public sector end use, and this is considered vital in the current economic climate.
Cons	Halton Borough Council will have to undertake and fund site acquisition preparatory works and infrastructure, which may delay commencements of the scheme. If similar schemes are being promoted developers may be put off by competition.

*Halton Borough Council undertake preparatory works, and leave acquisition and development of site to the private sector.*

Pros	Halton Borough Council will not need to acquire and fund site preparation. Halton Borough Council can co-ordinate phasing of development through the phasing of infrastructure works.
Cons	Market led, and in a poor market, delivery will not happen. No selection of developer, which could compromise quality and ability to develop. Land could be acquired and banked in strategic locations with no commitment to develop in line with the Masterplan Framework.

- 7.8 The ability to fund acquisitions and site preparation will influence whether Halton Borough Council drives development or leaves the development of sites to the private sector. Following the experience of Widnes Regeneration Ltd, a single partner is unlikely to be the preferred option.



# Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2

April 2009



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Document: 4373\_Widnes Waterfront \_  
Masterplan\_Framework

Compiled By: PH  
Reviewed By: JF  
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# 1. Executive Summary

## Introduction

- 1.1. Taylor Young, supported by BE Group and Faber Maunsell, were commissioned by Halton Borough Council to prepare a Masterplan and Delivery Strategy (Phase 2) to take the regeneration of Widnes Waterfront forward to 2013.
- 1.2. The study builds upon the natural assets of this location, coupled with the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge, to attract inward investment and guide development to develop an ambitious and deliverable future for this important area of Widnes.

## Challenges & Opportunities

- 1.3. The supporting Baseline study identified a range of challenges and opportunities and these are summarised in the SWOT analysis table that follows:

Aspirational Images: High quality employment and maximising waterside opportunities





<b>S T R E N G T H S</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of strategic significance identified for growth</li> <li>• Excellent regional links and local connections</li> <li>• Proximity to Widnes Town Centre and neighbouring regeneration areas</li> <li>• Successful delivery of new developments identified in the BDP phase 1 masterplan</li> <li>• Natural environment including views across the estuary</li> <li>• Established employment uses</li> <li>• HBC experience in remediation of contaminated land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining industries</li> <li>• Widespread significant land contamination</li> <li>• High land remediation costs</li> <li>• Poor access to waterfront areas</li> <li>• Certain physical constraints</li> <li>• Utilities constraints</li> </ul>	<b>W E A K N E S S E S</b>
<b>O P P O R T U N I T I E S</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract major investment building on local major projects including West Bank and the new Mersey Gateway Bridge</li> <li>• Increase critical mass and employment opportunities</li> <li>• Diversify employment provision and create and attract high quality businesses</li> <li>• Investor interest in residential uses</li> <li>• Expansion of Widnes Town Centre and potential new rail station (long-term)</li> <li>• Linking Widnes Town Centre to the Waterfront</li> <li>• Improve access and soft leisure uses, especially along the waterfront</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted funding availability</li> <li>• Delays to surrounding major projects</li> <li>• Multiple land ownership</li> <li>• Potentially conflicting aspirations for the Waterfront</li> <li>• Regional competition from established and forthcoming employment sites</li> </ul>	<b>T H R E A T S</b>

## Vision

- 1.4. The agreed vision developed for the future of the Waterfront is below. This is supported by strategic objectives, developed in association with the project steering group.

**An exciting waterfront destination and gateway to Widnes offering a range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities. Widnes Waterfront displays notable sustainable design, making the most of this unique and well-connected waterside setting.**

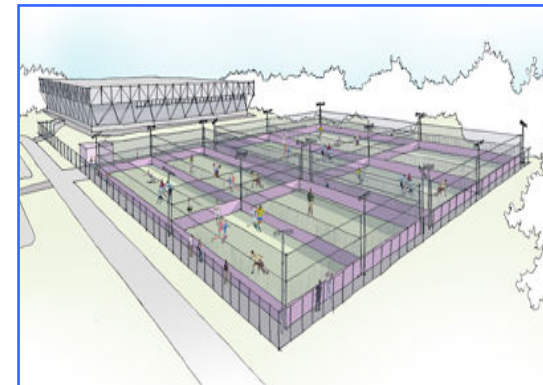
## Strategic objectives

- Create a sustainable employment-led mixed-use gateway location of long term regional significance
- Generate sustainable employment in key sub-regional priority sectors, including energy and environmental, advanced engineering and materials
- Support improvement of the competitiveness of existing employers and manage issues relating to 'bad neighbour' uses
- Create a sustainable mixed leisure and outdoor recreation destination
- Create popular sustainable neighbourhoods satisfying local and future aspirations
- Develop a strong sense of place, open up the area's assets and achieve a quality built and natural environment
- Transform the convenience and quality of linkages through the area to both Widnes town centre and key neighbourhoods, particularly promoting sustainable modes of travel

### Masterplan Framework

- 1.5. The following Masterplan Framework responds to the original brief and the ongoing consultation and input from the steering group and the expertise of the consultant team.
- 1.6. Key design principles of the Masterplan Framework
  - Opportunity to mix uses and introduce a sustainable residential element to Waterfront
  - Encourage greater usage through progressive play and soft and commercial leisure, creating a lively destination
  - Landmark gateway developments and high quality design throughout the Waterfront will alter perceptions
  - Consolidated industrial uses will retain existing employment base and avoid bad neighbour conflict

Aspirational Images: Attractive soft leisure uses and high quality contemporary design.



- 1.7. The following plan (Figure 1.1) shows the Masterplan Framework for Widnes Waterfront

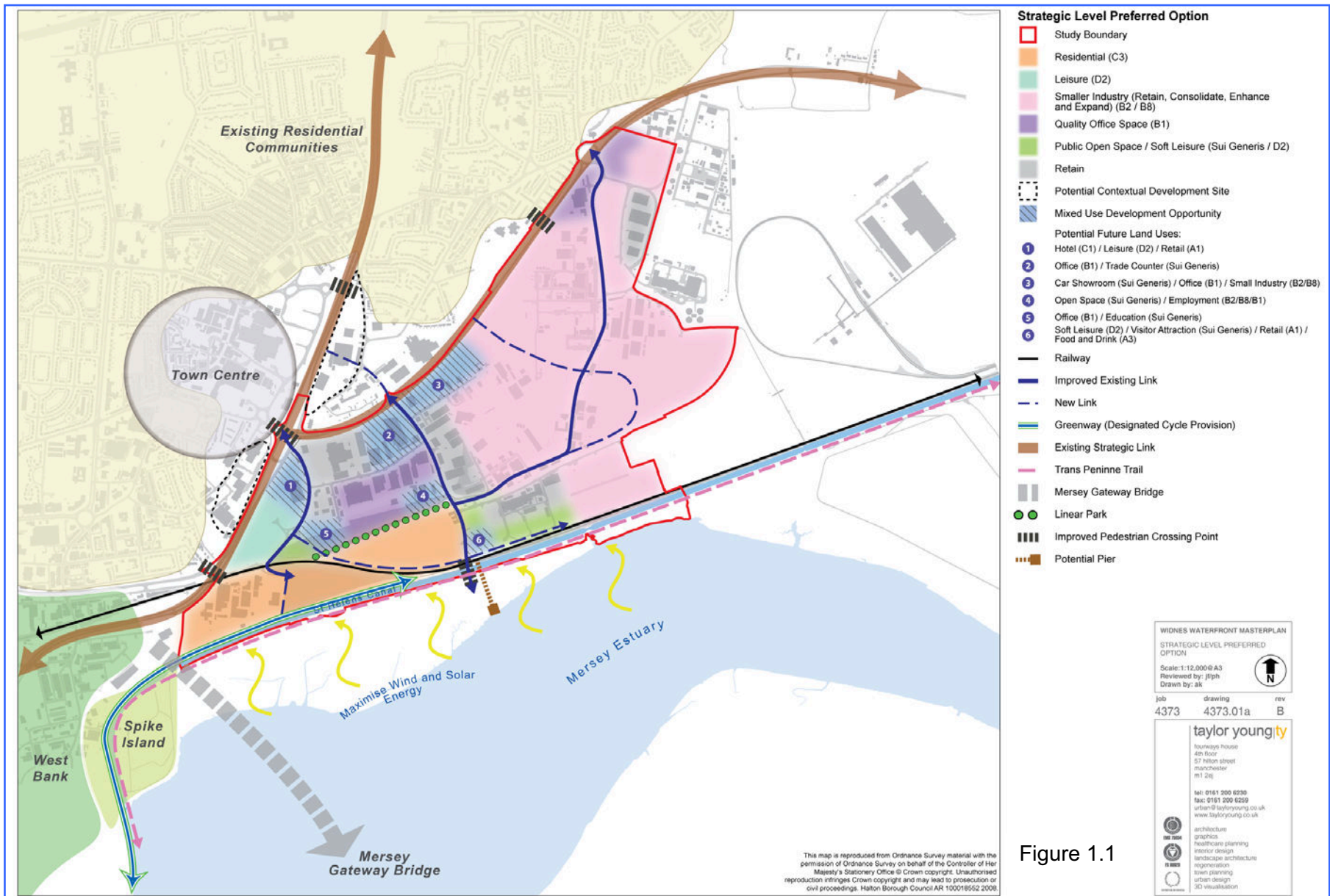


Figure 1.1

## Urban Design Framework

### Key design principles

- Enhanced gateways will announce the area and raise perception
- Views into and out of the Waterfront will be enhanced / maximised
- A progressive leisure route will draw visitors from the Town Centre
- Enhanced boulevards and vistas will benefit the wider Waterfront area
- The use of landmark buildings will aid orientation and way finding

## Landscape Framework

### Key Landscape Principles

- Introducing 5km fitness trail and 'green gym'
- Environmental improvements / tree planting along main routes
- Temporary viewing platform to observe bridge construction
- Potential to accommodate commercial 5-a-side football facility and BMX track

1.8. The accompanying plans for both the Urban Design Framework (Figure 1.2) and Landscape Framework (Figure 1.3) are presented on the following pages.

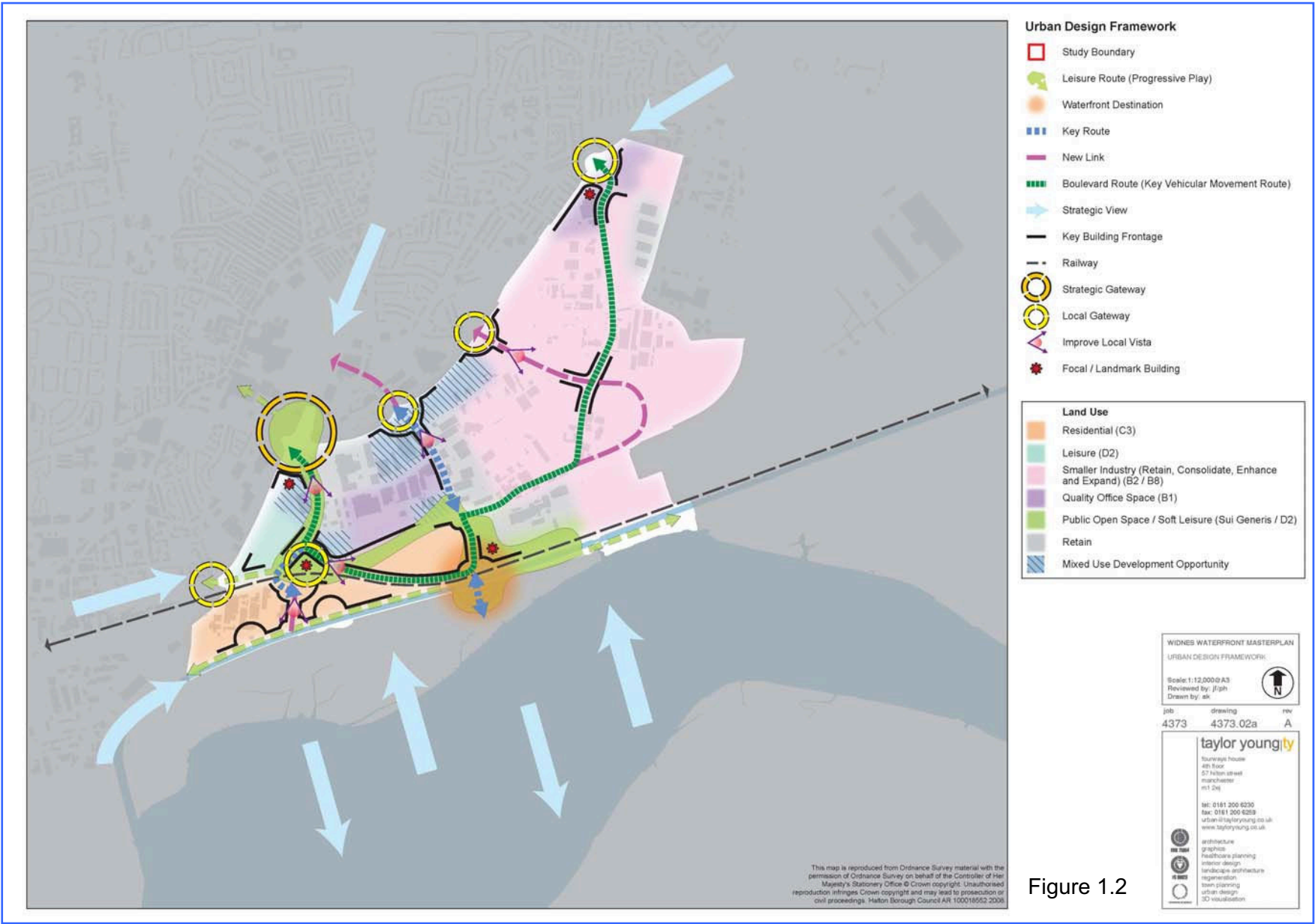


Figure 1.2

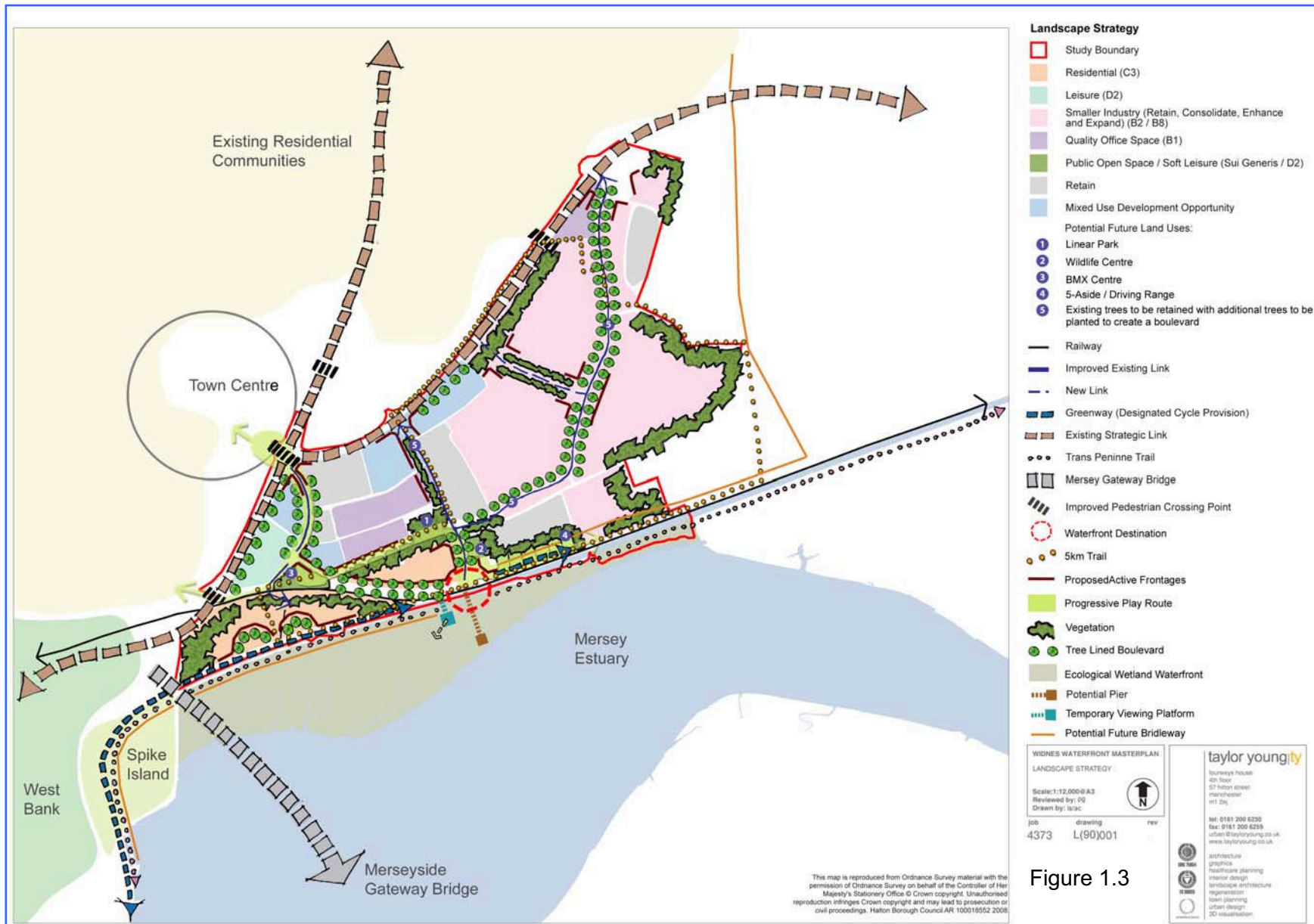


Figure 1.3

## Next Steps

- 1.9. The study will be supported by a Delivery Strategy to be prepared by BE Group. This will provide a guide for implementation of the Masterplan Framework. The key to delivery here is flexibility and thoughtful phasing of the development will be crucial in the current economic climate and looking forward towards economic recovery.
- 1.10. In terms of immediate next steps, quick wins should be progressed and land assembly considered to enable and attract developer interest once the property market recovers. Some projects appear certain and fixed, such as The Hive leisure development and Phase 2 of Easter Park. It is the completion of these projects that will strengthen developer confidence and begin to change perceptions of this area.
- 1.11. In policy terms, it is considered that Halton Borough Council should update the existing Waterfront SPD to take into account this Masterplan Framework.



## 2. Introduction

### Widnes Waterfront Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

- 2.1. Halton Borough Council has commissioned the production of a revised Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for Widnes Waterfront to cover the period 2009-2013. This will form an indicative masterplan framework to attract inward investment and guide physical development until 2013 and beyond.
- 2.2. In November 2008, a full Baseline Review study of the Widnes Waterfront was undertaken by the Taylor Young, BE Group and Faber Maunsell team, updating and building upon the previous BDP baseline study compiled in 2003. The second stage of this commission was the production of an Options Paper highlighting the process of development of a preferred approach on which to build the masterplan. This was completed in January 2009 and has successfully informed the development of a preferred approach.
- 2.3. This is the final stage Masterplan Report that presents the overall Masterplan Framework for the Widnes Waterfront area. This will aim to build upon the agreed Strategic Objectives and the overall vision and create a sustainable, viable and commercially competitive mixed-use destination for Widnes and the wider region.

### Structure

- 2.4. The report is structured in the following format. This introduction forms Chapter Two, followed by a review of the overall context in Chapter Three. The fourth chapter provides a review of challenges and opportunities. The agreed Vision and Strategic Objectives are presented in Chapter Five of the report, whilst the overall options process is set out within Chapter Six. The resulting masterplan is found in Chapter Seven, whilst Chapter Eight outlines the broad delivery strategy. The conclusions and next steps form Chapter Nine.

## 3. Context

### Key Baseline Findings

- 3.1. The baseline review stage has built upon the information presented in 'New Widnes Waterfront' (BDP, July 2004). This information has provided a solid foundation on which to base the options stage leading to the final Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework. The key findings of this stage are summarised below. For further information on any of the areas covered in this section, the Widnes Waterfront – Baseline Review Report (Taylor Young, November 2008) should be referred to.

### Planning

- 3.2. The final Masterplan Framework will in part inform local planning policy and as such must fit with the adopted national, regional and local policy. Therefore, the proposals for Widnes Waterfront must:

- Exploit the area's strategic location in the region to attract investment and new residents;
- Maximise the area's location as an important gateway to Widnes. The area has the potential of linking to the town centre and accommodating its retail and leisure expansion, which should help enhance the economic development of Widnes (see Figure 3.1);
- Promote social cohesion and address worklessness in the area by providing a varied range of job and training opportunities;
- Support the sustainable economic development of the area, achieving greater critical mass and employment opportunities;
- Provide residential units responding to local housing needs, the Growth Point agenda and Regional Spatial Strategy targets, contributing to the combined requirements of 600 homes per year. Housing must be developed in sufficient locations which offer good access to a range of community facilities, jobs, key services and infrastructure;
- Meet the high environmental standards in terms of building design and layout. New development should be planned to be adaptable to change to any future requirements on the area; and
- Lift perceptions of Widnes, building on the strong local sense of community, and place.

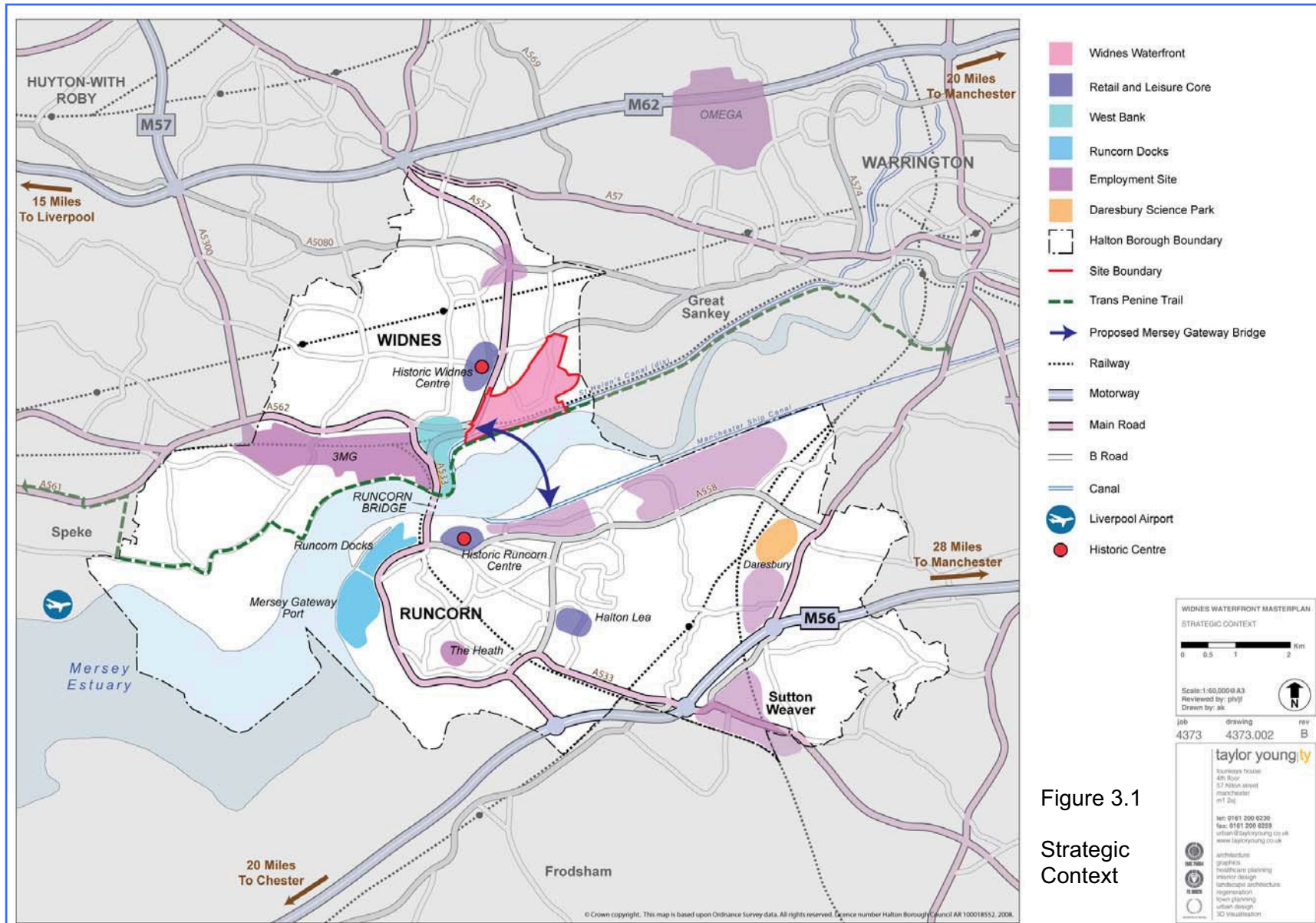


Figure 3.1  
Strategic Context

### Physical Analysis

3.3. Through a robust physical and urban design analysis of Widnes Waterfront, the following points are acknowledged as shown in Figure 3.2:

- The existing character of the site is defined by industrial land uses, heritage, and its waterside location and green natural environment consisting of features such as St Helens (Sankey) Canal, salt-marsh and the Mersey Estuary;
- The key gateways to the study areas are indistinct and poorly defined;
- The topography gently slopes southward towards the Mersey and causes the edge of the site to be relatively exposed. This creates panoramas and strong views to historical, built and landscape elements to and from the site;
- The main node of activity is located about Fiddlers Ferry Road and Tanhouse Lane roundabout supported by out-of-town retail and landuses;
- There is no street hierarchy in the site owing to industrial landuses. Routes, movement and access points are dictated by industrial requirements;
- The site presents weak and non-continuous frontages to main gateways and routes through the site, in part, owing to the layout of existing industrial development;
- East-west landscape links, such as the St Helens Canal and recent linear park, are more prominent than north-south landscape links;
- Along the southern edge of the site the main east-west movement corridor consists of the railway, Trans Pennine Trail, National Cycle Route (62) and the canal, and creates a 'softer' and quieter pedestrian and cycle alternative to the 'harder' main routes;
- The A557 and Fiddlers Ferry Road provide key strategic links from the Waterfront to the M62 motorway, Runcorn and Liverpool. These routes also create a barrier to movement between the study area, Widnes Town Centre and surrounding residential communities;
- The type, quality and value of landscape varies across the site and includes tree-lined routes and mature structural landscape planting;

- St Helens (Sankey) Canal, salt-marsh and the Mersey Estuary (the Widnes Warth Nature Reserve) and associated green and ecological environment provide informal openspace; and
- Parts of the River Mersey are identified as Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Areas (SPA).

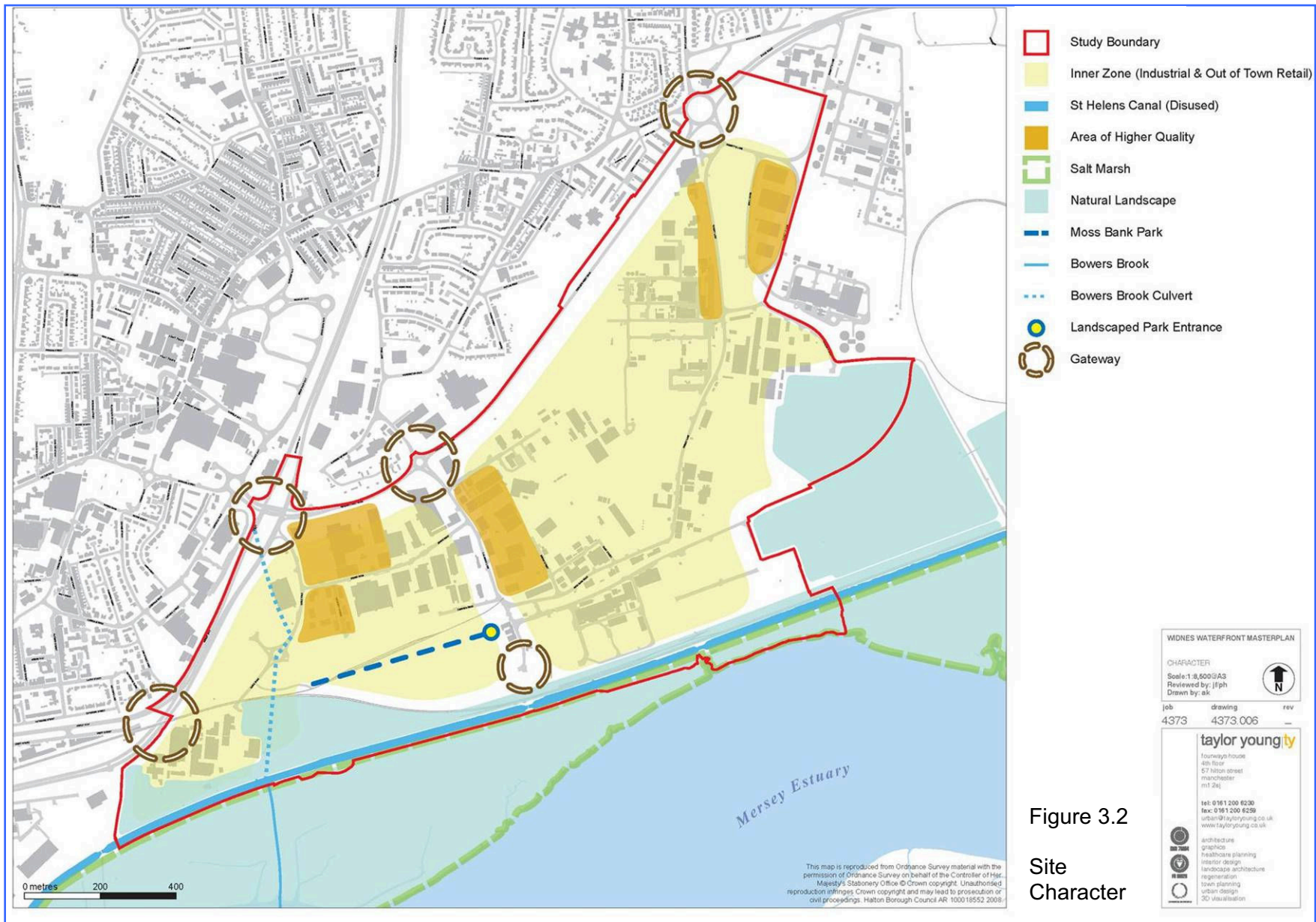


Figure 3.2  
 Site  
 Character

### Transport and Access

3.4. Studying the linkages, transport and access related to Widnes Waterfront it becomes evident that (see Figure 3.3):

- The Widnes Waterfront Site is well served by the strategic road network. However it is reliant on the heavily congested and over-capacity Silver Jubilee Bridge for road connections to the south and east;
- Bus connections within the site are limited to the the number 13 service, connecting to Widnes Town Centre and Hough Green Station. Beyond the Waterfront, the nearest bus stop cluster is located to the northwest at the Green Oaks centre in Widnes Town Centre. This is considered too far to walk for the majority of bus users within the site, creating the need for better bus permeability;
- The nearest rail access to the site is Widnes station to the northwest with frequent trains to Warrington, Manchester and Liverpool. The station is located some 2km from the Waterfront which is not within easy walking distance;
- The Warrington to Ditton interchange freight line passes through the site, and there exists the possibility of bringing this back into passenger use in the longer term, serving a Widnes South station with connections to Warrington and the West Coast Mainline via Runcorn;
- The Mersey Gateway Bridge is a proposed second river crossing that is scheduled for completion in 2014, subject to the outcome of the enquiry, linking Widnes with the Central Expressway in Runcorn, providing relief for the Silver Jubilee Bridge and increasing accessibility across the Mersey; and
- Once the second crossing is in place, the Silver Jubilee Bridge will be effectively downgraded to a localised route more in keeping with its design capacity. Finally, it is worth noting that both of these bridges will be tolled.

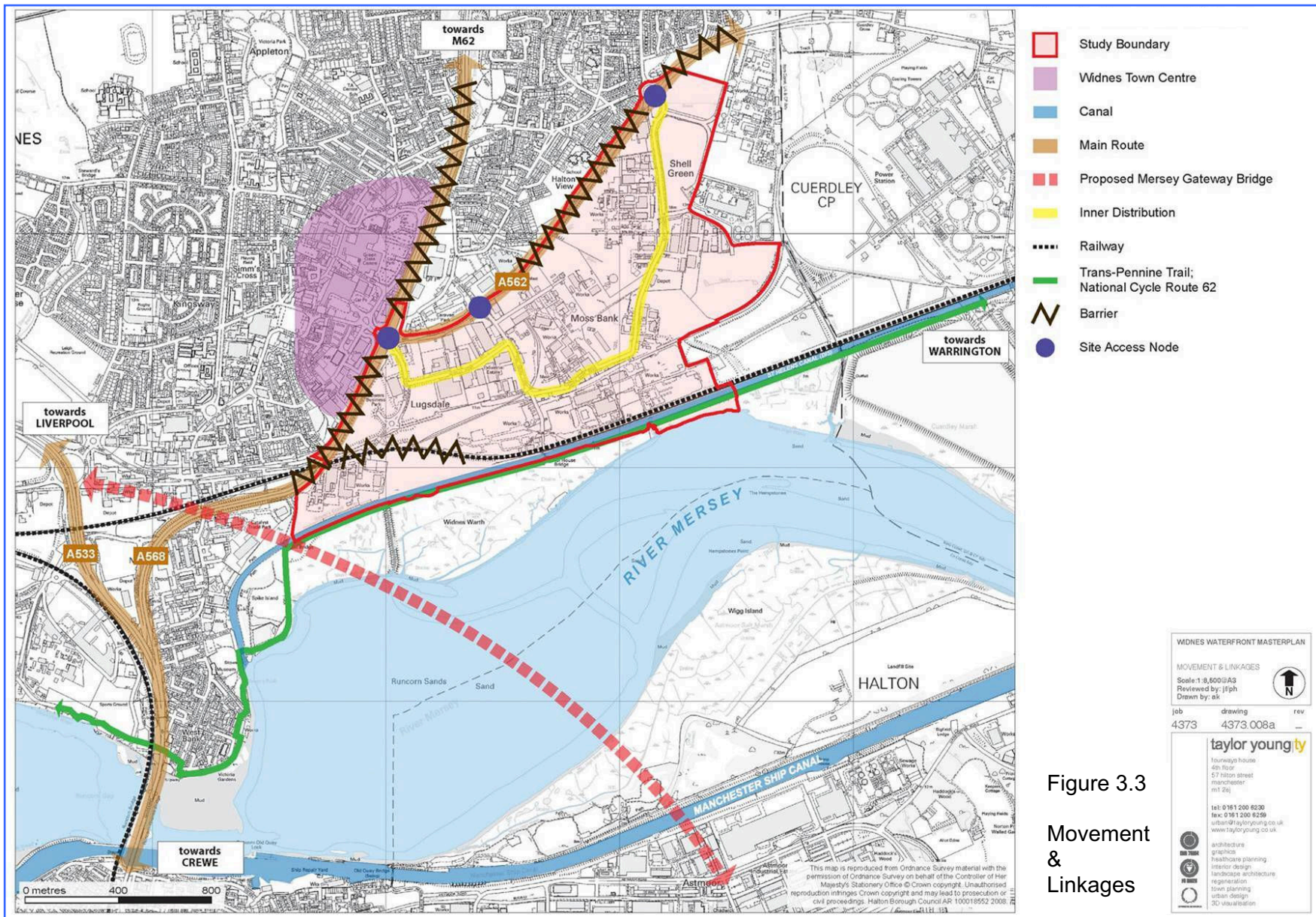


Figure 3.3  
 Movement  
 &  
 Linkages



## 4. Challenges & Opportunities

- 4.1. This section presents the key challenges and opportunities that face the Widnes Waterfront area (see Figure 3.4). The key findings, identified below, formed the foundation of the development of the Final Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) are identified in a table which concludes this section.
- 4.2. Widnes Waterfront, owing to its close proximity and linkages to the Town Centre and significant natural assets, offers real opportunity to create a strong mixed-use gateway development to reshape and redefine this key waterfront location. However, there are physical constraints and challenges that need to be overcome if these opportunities are to be maximised. The potential development sites are shown in Figure 3.5.
- 4.3. The **key challenges** identified at the baseline stage could potentially impede the regeneration of Widnes Waterfront. This Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy will address these challenges and offer remediation and mitigation measures to overcome them. The key challenges are discussed below.
- The current employment offer on the Waterfront is **focused on declining industries**. This approach is unsustainable and not economically viable in the long term and needs to be changed. In addition, the Waterfront is competing for investment with existing and forthcoming employment sites in the sub-region such as Daresbury and Omega.
  - The study area is subjected to physical constraints. Some of the study area falls within **Flood Area FZ3A** as identified by the Environment Agency. Also, large amounts of the **land within the study area are contaminated** and therefore subject to high land remediation costs.

- Delivery of the Masterplan Framework is complicated as there are **multiple land ownerships** within the area. Also, as public and private investment streams diminish there could prove to be restricted capital and revenue funding available (especially short to medium term).



- 4.4. As well as addressing the key challenges the site presents, any design and delivery proposals must acknowledge and maximise the benefit of the **key strengths and opportunities** the site provides;
- 4.5. The Waterfront is **well linked to the regional and national road network**, as well Widnes Town Centre allowing for ease of movement for both public and commercial transport. This is soon to be strengthened by the Mersey Gateway Bridge. The Waterfront is also well linked to St. Helens Canal and the National Cycle network which provide the opportunity for a sustainable movement network within and around the study area. The Waterfront must maximize the benefits of its proximity to Widnes Town Centre and neighbouring regeneration areas.
- The role of Widnes Waterfront in contributing to the **Mid Mersey Growth Point** agenda has been recognised as the area's potential is identified in the related Programme of Development which supports the Growth Point Bid for Halton, St. Helens and Warrington.

- The study areas topography and natural setting allow for **stunning views across the Mersey Estuary**. This, along with the biodiversity-rich estuarine mud flats provide excellent natural assets that will be maximised in the Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy.
- The Masterplanning Framework must build on the success of the existing **financially viable employment uses** in the area. It is also recognised the importance of **diversifying the employment provision** from the existing declining heavy industries, to new higher quality employment opportunities. This would aid the continued regeneration of the Waterfront.
- In addition, recognising and embracing current investor interest in the Waterfront is crucial, especially in the current economic climate.

Key Opportunities include St Helens Canal, high profile gateway sites and Mersey Estuary.



4.6. The following SWOT table summarises the main conclusions identified in the Baseline Review.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of strategic significance identified for growth</li> <li>• Excellent regional links and local connections</li> <li>• Proximity to Widnes Town Centre and neighbouring regeneration areas</li> <li>• Successful delivery of new developments identified in the BDP phase 1 masterplan</li> <li>• Natural environment including views across the estuary</li> <li>• Established employment uses</li> <li>• HBC experience in remediation of contaminated land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declining industries</li> <li>• Widespread significant land contamination</li> <li>• High land remediation costs</li> <li>• Poor access to waterfront areas</li> <li>• Certain physical constraints</li> <li>• Utilities constraints</li> </ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract major investment building on local major projects including West Bank and the new Mersey Gateway Bridge</li> <li>• Increase critical mass and employment opportunities</li> <li>• Diversify employment provision and create and attract high quality businesses</li> <li>• Investor interest in residential uses</li> <li>• Expansion of Widnes Town Centre and potential new rail station (long term)</li> <li>• Linking Widnes Town Centre to the Waterfront</li> <li>• Improve access and soft leisure uses, especially along the waterfront</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted funding availability</li> <li>• Delays to surrounding major projects</li> <li>• Multiple land ownership</li> <li>• Potentially conflicting aspirations for the Waterfront</li> <li>• Regional competition from established and forthcoming employment sites</li> </ul>	<b>THREATS</b>

### Flood Risk

- 4.7. As shown in Figure 3.4 the Environment Agency consider that only part of the site is at risk from flooding. The main risk comes from the Mersey and Bowers Brook. All other forms of flooding such as the St Helens (Sankey) Canal, groundwater, overland flow, potable and foul drainage networks etc. also need to be assessed, but at present are not thought to be an impediment to development.
- 4.8. Any proposals for areas identified as susceptible to flooding need to fully take into consideration the guidance set out in PPS 25, for example the inclusion of non-habitable (at ground floor) uses, and appropriately located public open space and car parking areas, while commercial and residential uses should be proposed for areas relatively free from any flood risk, or designed with sacrificial ground floors.
- 4.9. Halton Borough Councils own Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the area which has been passed by the local and regional EA officers shows the majority of the Widnes Waterfront sites in Halton's lowest flood risk area.

### Geo-Environmental Review

- 4.10. The assessment of the Widnes Waterfront site has identified several potential constraints to the proposed development in relation to contamination, ground gas, soils and geology, buried foundations/obstructions, coal mining and groundwater. These will require further investigation through both detailed desk studies and intrusive ground investigation and subsequent monitoring to assess the magnitude of the constraints and to design potential mitigation measures.
- 4.11. The key baseline findings have influenced the development of the Masterplan Framework which is presented in the following chapters, coupled with greater detail on mitigations to respond to the issues raised in this Context chapter.
- 4.12. This section has identified the key challenges and opportunities relating to Widnes Waterfront. Whilst there are significant challenges to delivery, such as land remediation, there remains a wealth of opportunity to develop and maximise such as the stunning natural setting.

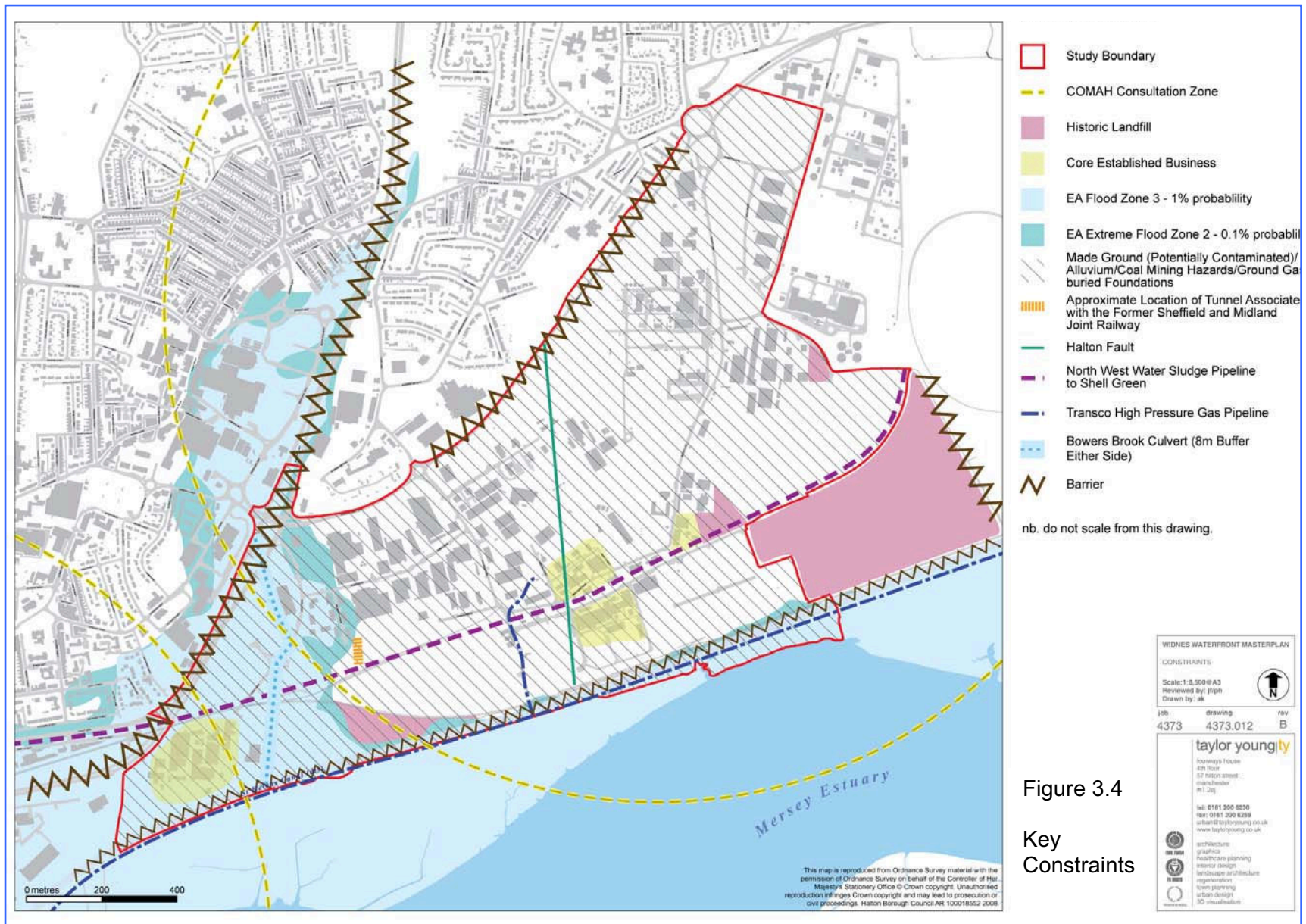


Figure 3.4  
Key Constraints

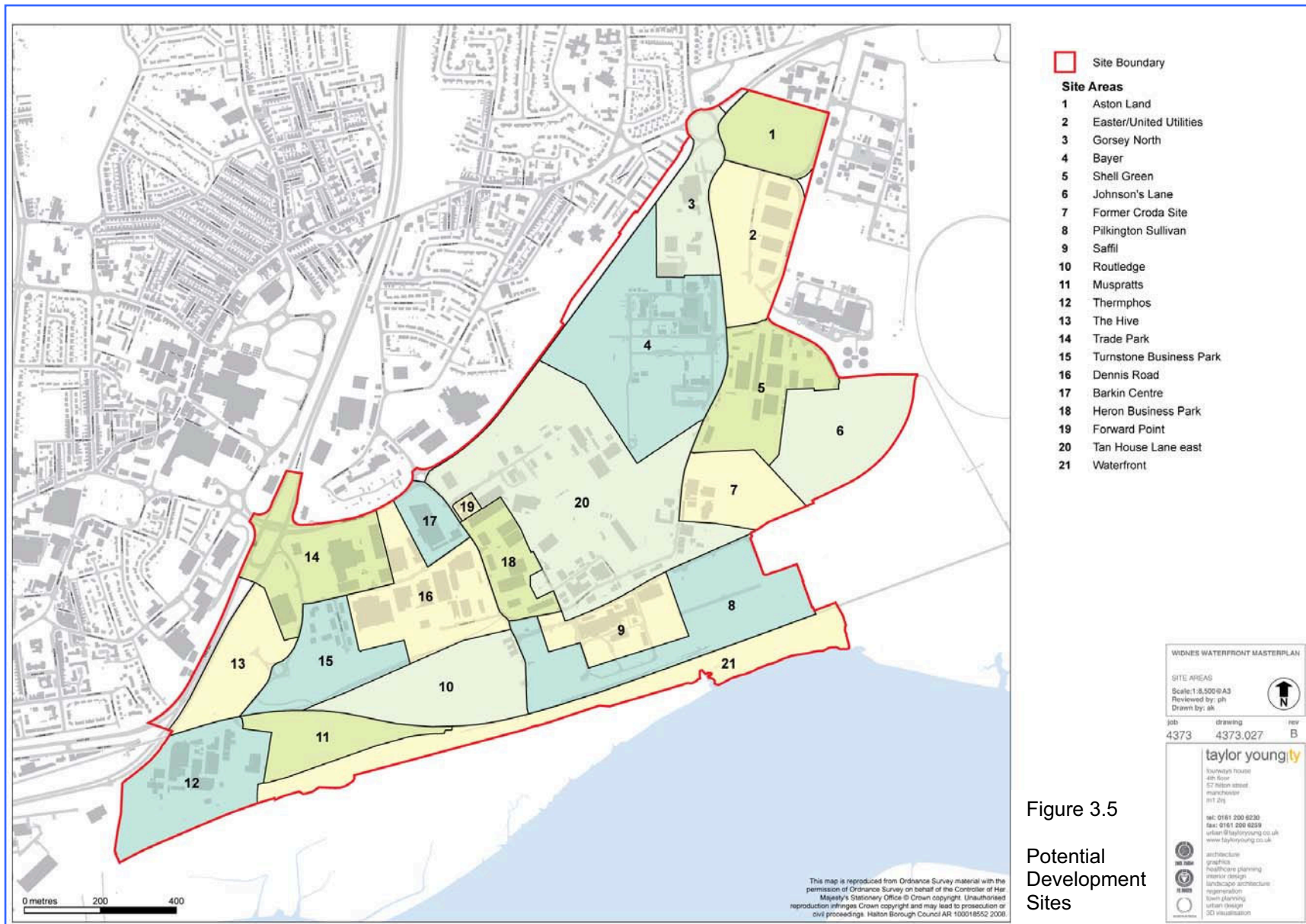


Figure 3.5

Potential Development Sites

## 5. Vision & Strategic Objectives

- 5.1. This section of the report outlines the agreed vision and strategic objectives that guided the development of the three options. These were developed in partnership with the steering group and provide a solid foundation for the study, and the vision is:

*“An exciting waterfront destination and gateway to Widnes offering a range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities. Widnes Waterfront displays notable sustainable design, making the most of this unique and well-connected waterside setting”*

Aspirational Images: High quality public realm, contemporary design and a range of mixed uses.





### Strategic Objectives

- 5.2. Strategic objectives are an important tool in underlining the key high-level requirements of the project, providing the link between the work stages from initial concepts to the Masterplan Framework particularly through the options assessment process as set out in the preceding Options Paper. The objectives have been developed through an understanding of key existing strategies, as well as an understanding of the potential of the waterfront area and discussion with key stakeholders.
- 5.3. The agreed Strategic Objectives of this commission are outlined below.

- **Create a sustainable employment-led mixed use gateway location of long term regional significance**

The revitalisation and encouragement of employment as the primary land use in the Waterfront area is a key objective of this study. To accompany and support employment uses, elements of leisure and residential uses could be introduced to widen the range of uses and users. Widnes Waterfront has historically provided a core employment area for the town and the wider sub-region and many heavy industries have located here which aesthetically do not offer the best gateway into Widnes. By introducing exemplar sustainable design into the proposed leisure and residential mixes, a high quality, landmark gateway can be created altering the perceptions of residents, visitors and investors alike. The transformation of the Waterfront could raise the status of the area in the regional hierarchy; capitalising upon the catalytic impact of the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

- **Generate sustainable employment in key sub-regional priority sectors, including energy and environmental, advanced engineering and materials**

The generation of a variety of viable employment uses in the Waterfront area forms a key underlying principle of this study. This acknowledges both the historic and existing mix of uses in the area, whilst steering future development into the sub-regional priority

sectors. The sectors of 'energy and environmental', 'advanced engineering' and 'materials' have been identified by BE Group as possible approaches for future employment. It is considered that focusing development into these sectors would not result in competition for already saturated sub-regional markets, but provide a viable, realistic and deliverable Masterplan Framework.

- **Support improvement of the competitiveness of existing employers and manage issues relating to 'bad neighbour' uses**

The Masterplan Framework aims to retain existing viable employers and, where necessary, relocate and consolidate 'bad neighbours' to avoid potential conflicts. Through carefully considered urban design and appropriate landscape treatment, these areas of consolidated compatible uses could be appropriately screened and buffered to minimise conflict, and create a location of choice for a range of new users and potential investors. Interventions such as the enhancement of building frontages and public space could also be used to alter perceptions of the Waterfront area and provide an opportunity for existing employers to flourish. Through targeted business support and the continued development of a strong local business forum, further 'non-physical' assistance could be provided to both existing and new employers in the Waterfront.

- **Create a sustainable mixed leisure and outdoor recreation destination**

Using the forthcoming Hive development as a catalytic leisure project, the Masterplan Framework seeks to attract a range of complementary leisure and recreation uses to the Waterfront. Introducing a range of non-employment uses would increase the diversity of Waterfront users, and consequently would vary the hours of use into evenings and weekends. Activities such as fishing, bird watching, walking and cycling could be attracted to the area around the St Helens Canal and the Mersey Estuary. Attracting more formal leisure uses, such as commercial 5-a-side football or a golf driving range, can be achieved in Widnes Waterfront, thereby minimising the potential revenue requirement for Halton Borough Council. By creating a leisure destination, attracting a wider range of uses and broadening hours of use, the Waterfront would become a safe and attractive destination, creating a worthy gateway into Widnes.

- **Create popular sustainable neighbourhoods satisfying local and future aspirations**

There exists a great opportunity to incorporate a residential element to the mix of uses in the Waterfront. This would enable the assets of this location to be unlocked, including views across the estuary and proximity to the Town Centre, leisure and employment opportunities. These residential opportunities would contribute toward Halton's growth target under the Growth Point agenda. Utilising high-density development complying with Building for Life standards coupled with the inclusion of, for example maximising solar gain, grey water re-use and sustainable urban drainage, would create a sustainable neighbourhood. The introduction of residential uses would have positive impacts upon community / user safety as well as providing both local needs and aspirational housing in a key location in the town.

- **Develop a strong sense of place, open up the area's assets and achieve a quality built and natural environment**

Marketing and utilising the area's natural assets to their greatest potential would develop a strong sense of place, changing perceptions of the Waterfront and Widnes itself, for residents and visitors alike. Requiring high quality design standards, especially in key gateway locations, would also help to redefine the image of this area. The natural assets of the estuarine location, in terms of both flora and fauna could be developed to achieve a striking new impression of Widnes Waterfront. The key opportunities, connected with the natural views and existing (and forthcoming) transport linkages could be realised, creating a unique and desirable setting.

- **Transform the convenience and quality of linkages through the area to both Widnes Town Centre and key neighbourhoods, particularly promoting sustainable modes of travel**

The internal and external linkages in the Waterfront would form the skeletal structure of the Masterplan Framework. Incorporating new and enhanced crossing points on existing routes which sever connectivity, such as Ashley Way and Fiddlers Ferry Road, could greatly enhance accessibility for pedestrians. It is acknowledged that recent improvements have been made to the Ashley Way crossings and

surrounding network, but further investment is needed in other areas to ensure that the Waterfront is easily accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. Along with improved linkages into the town centre and surrounding residential neighbourhoods, it is considered imperative to connect the Waterfront to the Spike Island area, creating enhanced linkages onto the Trans Pennine Trail and into more distant districts such as West Bank. In terms of promoting sustainable transport, enhancements to the existing bus service, further investment into the cycleway network and improved pedestrian permeability would all encourage car-free movement within the Waterfront and beyond.

## 6. Options Process

6.1. Following a thorough Baseline Update process, the study progressed through into the formulation of three options approaches, which each respect the agreed strategic objectives and the vision set out for the Waterfront.

### Option Approach One:

6.2. The first option (see Figure 6.1) was developed upon the basis of the Waterfront becoming a **quality business / leisure / recreation park** emphasis.

### Design Principles

6.3. The key design principles of this approach aim to create:

- Waterfront as leisure destination with new Marina
- Leisure Hub enhanced by new soft leisure, progressive play and sports facilities linking to wider network (Trans Pennine Trail)
- Legible hierarchy of key routes with new connections to improve permeability
- Improve linkages to Town Centre and existing communities
- Connections to West Bank enhanced via creation of new Waterfront Boulevard
- Maximise sustainable energy through wind, solar and CHP power generation
- Maximise potential for high quality office space along key routes
- Support and enhance existing businesses in appropriate areas within the Waterfront
- Enhance safety and security through principles identified in Secured by Design

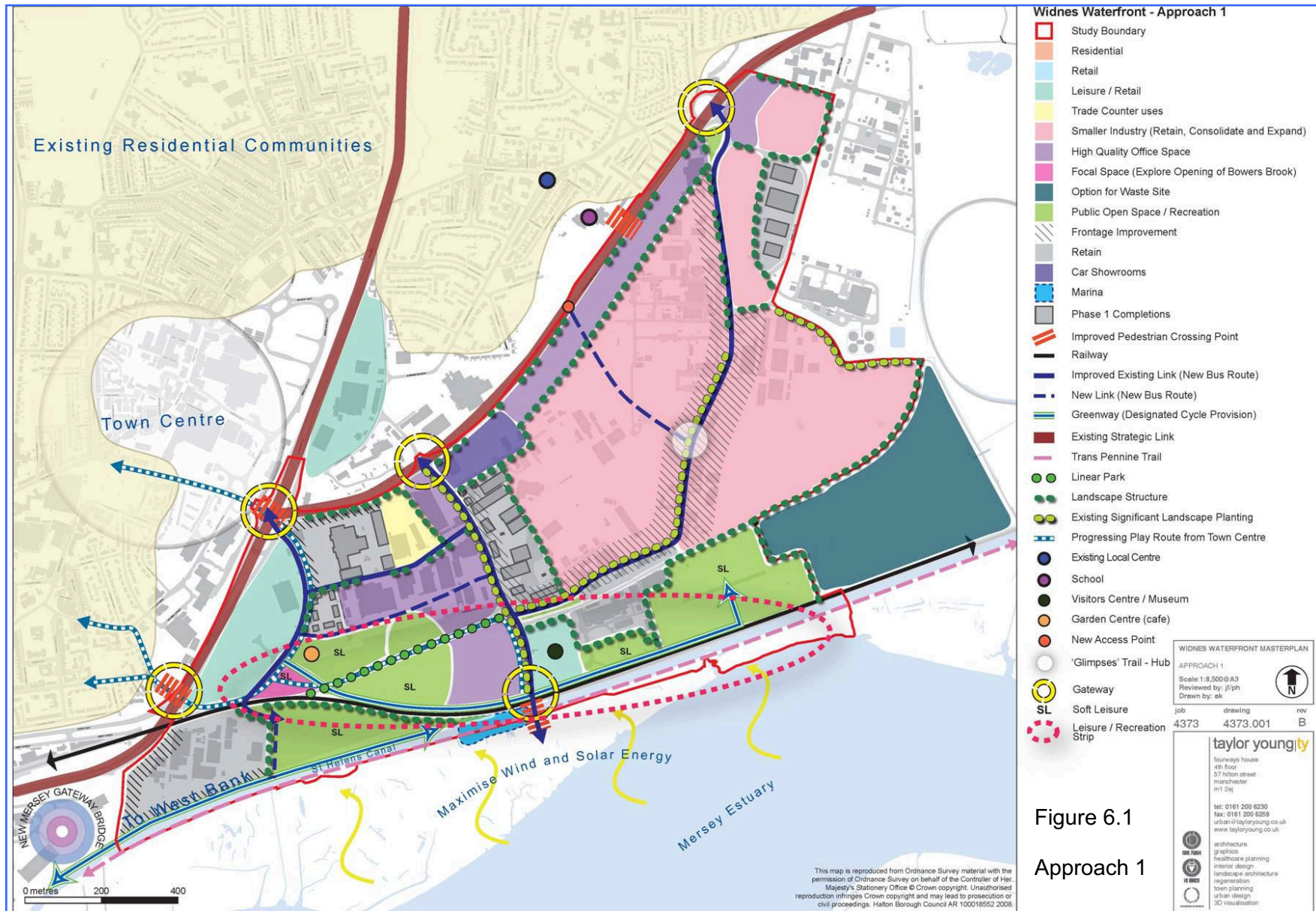


Figure 6.1  
Approach 1

### Option Approach Two:

- 6.4. The second option (see Figure 6.2) was developed on the basis of the Waterfront incorporating **two new sustainable residential communities**.

### Design Principles

- 6.5. The key design principles of this approach aim to create:

- Waterfront as leisure destination with new Marina
- Activate waterfront with bespoke sustainable housing supported by new local centre
- Connect existing residential communities with new housing to the north east with improved crossing to existing local centre
- Network of functional green spaces and landscaping with strong connections to the Town Centre and Waterfront
- Legible hierarchy of key routes with new linkage from A557
- Improve linkages to existing communities
- Connections to West Bank enhanced via creation of new Waterfront Boulevard
- Maximise sustainable energy through wind, solar and CHP power generation
- Maximise potential for high quality office space along key routes
- Support and enhance existing businesses in appropriate areas within the Waterfront
- Enhance safety and security through principles identified in Secured by Design

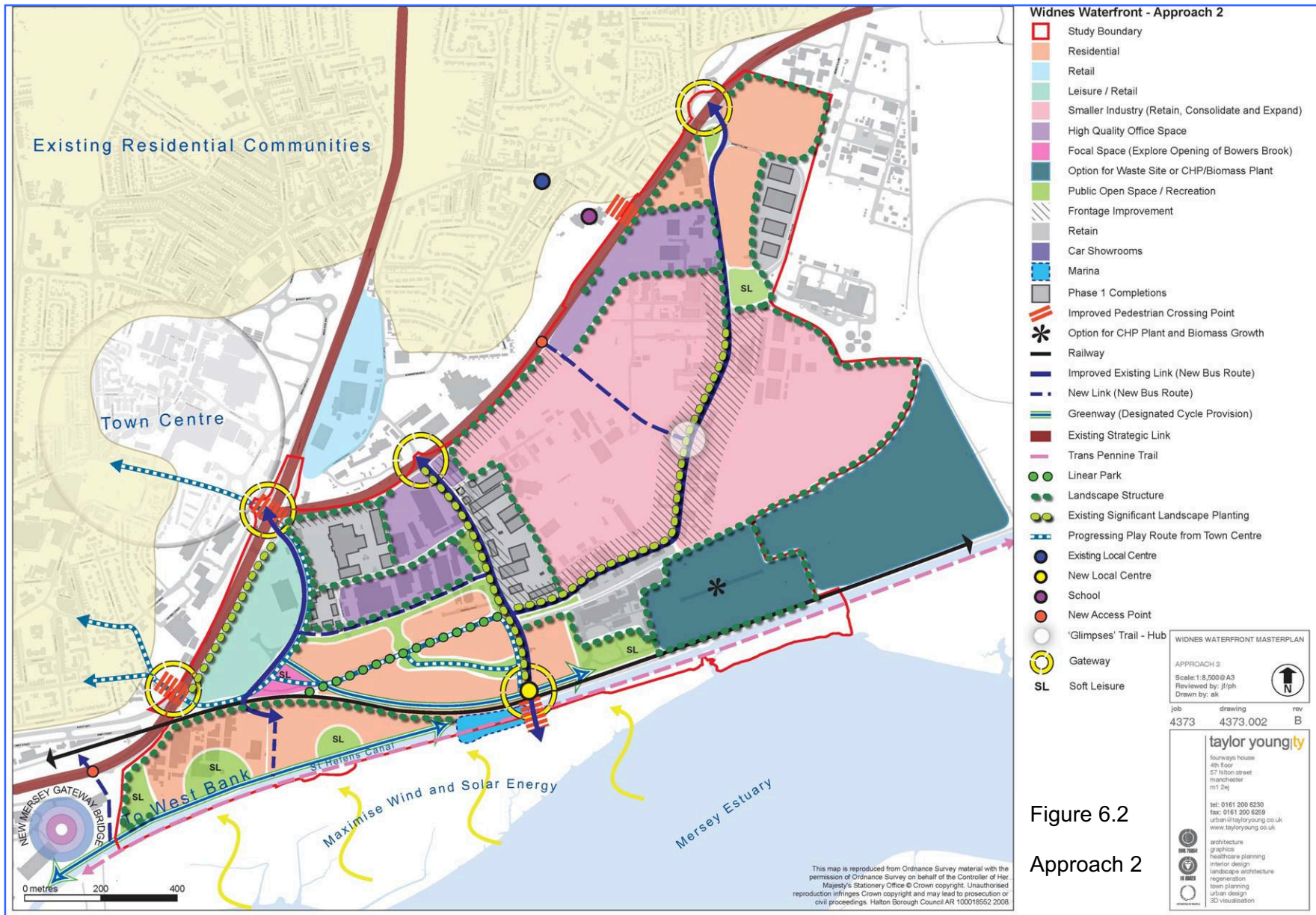


Figure 6.2  
 Approach 2



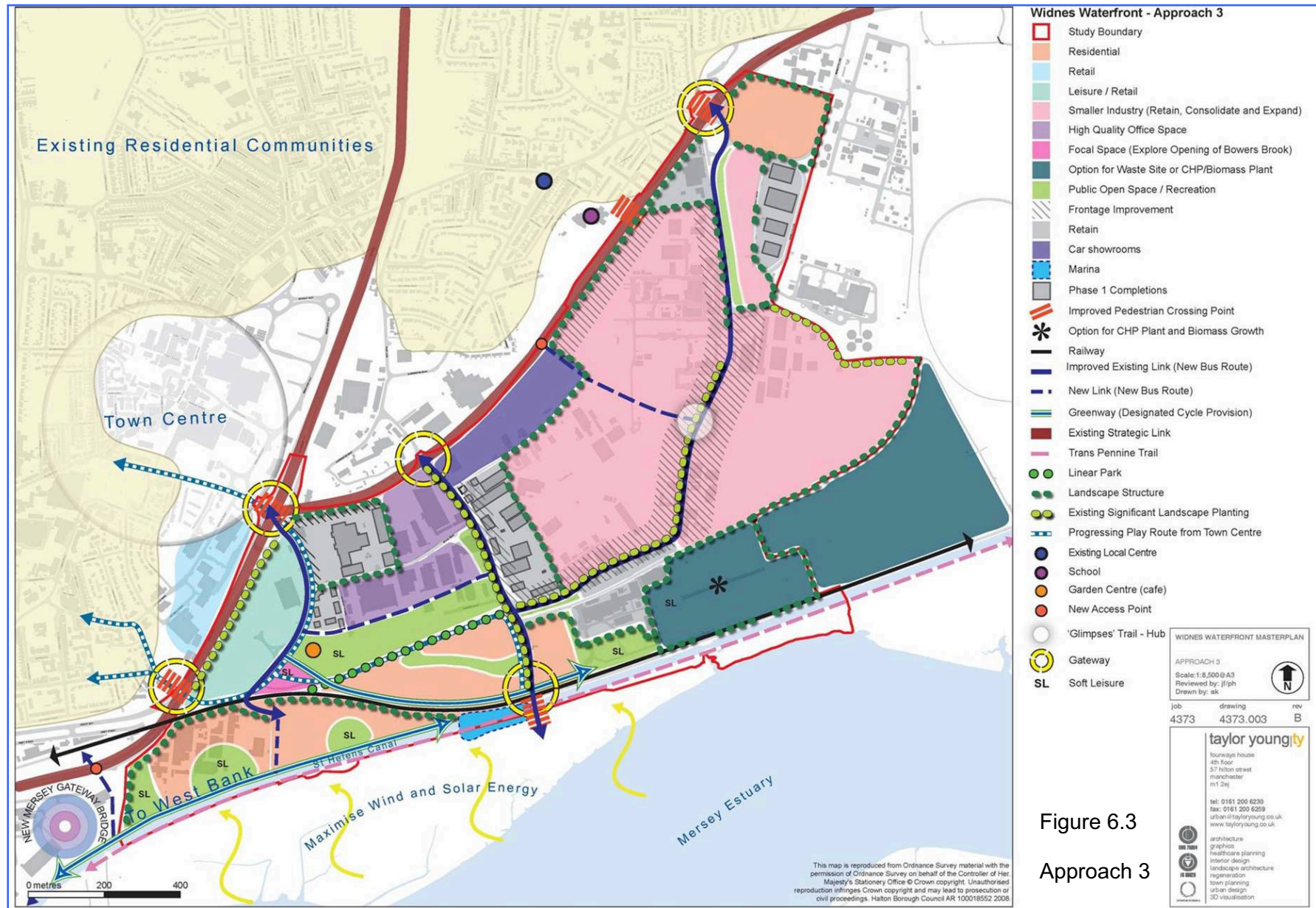
### Option Approach Three:

- 6.6. The third option (see Figure 6.3) was developed on the basis of the Waterfront developing into an **integrated employment-led, mixed-use** area.

### Design Principles

- 6.7. The key design principles of this approach aim to create:

- Waterfront as leisure destination with new Marina
- Create mixed-use hub including sustainable residential community, leisure and high quality office space
- Activate waterfront with bespoke sustainable housing supported by new local centre
- Connect existing residential communities with new housing to the north east with improved crossing to existing local centre
- Network of functional green spaces and landscaping with strong connections to the Town Centre and Waterfront
- Legible hierarchy of key routes with new linkage from A557
- Connections to West Bank enhanced via creation of new Waterfront Boulevard
- Maximise sustainable energy through wind, solar and CHP power generation
- Support and enhance existing businesses in appropriate areas within the Waterfront
- Enhance safety and security through principles identified in Secured by Design



- 6.8. The three options approaches were presented and debated at a steering group meeting held in December 2008. Consensus was reached on positive and negative elements of each option and an amalgamation of the positive aspects formed the basis of the preferred approach.
- 6.9. Assessment against the agreed Strategic Objectives was also undertaken. The table below illustrates whether each approach meets the objectives, and if so how well it does so.

Strategic Objectives	Approach1	Approach 2	Approach 3
Create a sustainable employment-led, mixed-use gateway location of long-term regional significance	√	√	√√
Generate sustainable employment in key sub-regional priority sectors, including energy and environmental, advanced engineering and materials	√√	√	√
Support improvement of the competitiveness of existing employers, and manage issues relating to 'bad neighbour' uses	√√	√	√√
Create a sustainable mixed leisure and outdoor recreation destination	√√	X	√√
Create popular sustainable neighbourhoods satisfying local and future aspirations	X	√√	√√
Develop a strong sense of place, open up the area's assets and achieve a quality built and natural environment	√√	√	√√

Transform the convenience and quality of linkages through the area to both Widnes Town Centre and key neighbourhoods, particularly promoting sustainable modes of travel	√	√√	√√
Sustainability	√	√√	√√
Deliverability	X	X	√

Key: √√ = fully achieves objective, √ = partially achieves objective, XX = fully contradicts objective, X = partially contradicts objective.

- 6.10. **Deliverability** of each option was also carefully considered following presentation of figures by BE Group. For further information on the breakdown of these figures, reference should be made to the accompanying Delivery Strategy Report.
- 6.11. Finally, each of the options was assessed in terms of its **sustainability** credentials, scoring it against the eighteen economic, social and environmental criteria set out in Halton Borough Council’s Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Generally approaches 2 and 3 scored higher than approach 1, and this is again fed into the development of the preferred option.
- 6.12. In conclusion, the transparent and inclusive options process allowed for consensus to be reached between the consultant team and the steering group team as to the preferred way forward; whilst the Masterplan Framework has been developed through an amalgamation of positive elements primarily from Approach 3 together with some from Approach 1.

## 7. Waterfront Masterplan Framework

7.1. This chapter of the report sets out the various elements of the Masterplan Framework. The chapter is illustrated with plans and precedent images to accompany the following sub-sections:

- A) Land Use (inc. Demonstrator Projects)
- B) Design Framework & Guidance
- C) Landscape Strategy
- D) Sustainability Appraisal
- E) Movement Framework

### A) Land Use

7.2. The masterplan proposes a range of uses within the Widnes Waterfront site (see Figure 7.1). The uses and their respective Planning Use Classes, as laid out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Amendment (England) Order 2005, include the following:

- Smaller industry (retain, consolidate and enhance) (B2 and B8)
- Quality office (B1)
- Leisure (D2)
- Residential (C3)
- Public open space / soft leisure (Sui Generis / D2)
- Mixed-use development opportunities - potential future land uses

- 7.3. The uses proposed reflect the need to retain an **employment-led focus** for the site, but also the need to **raise the profile** of the Waterfront and its unique assets by introducing a fresh mix of uses, including residential and soft leisure. The combination and proportion of uses has been analysed with regard to appropriateness and deliverability, in terms of the property market, physical constraints, land ownership, sustainability and how it responds to the agreed vision and strategic objectives.
- 7.4. This range of uses has been proposed to create a **destination** rather than just a series of zoned land use elements, as this will contribute positively to place making and integrate well with the wider context. Careful consideration has also been made in terms of **use compatibility**, ensuring that 'bad neighbour' industrial uses which create noise, smells or disturbance are located so they have the least impact upon adjacent, and potentially more sensitive, land uses.

#### Smaller Industry

- 7.5. A large proportion of smaller industry is proposed around the western and north western area of the Waterfront area. Smaller industry is already well established in this location, therefore the masterplan proposes that these viable uses are **retained** where possible, **consolidated** to make more efficient use of currently underused land, and **enhanced** to ensure that existing and new businesses contribute positively to the wider objectives of the site, paying particular attention to the Design Framework and Guidance within this document.

#### Quality office

- 7.6. A range of quality office use is proposed at key locations within the Waterfront site. The location of this type of land use has been carefully selected to ensure that it is well connected to the wider context, e.g. along key frontages / routes and adjacent to other compatible uses. There is great value in ensuring that these uses and the buildings / public realm surrounding them are well designed, particularly in terms of beginning the 'step change' in improving perceptions of the area, as a large proportion of these uses are proposed at 'gateway' sites. By improving the perception of the Waterfront site, and indeed Widnes as a whole, it will be easier to encourage investment and, in turn, the vitality of the area will be enhanced. The office expansion will link into the existing Priority Sites

development that was developed in Phase 1.

#### Hard Leisure

- 7.7. Leisure uses will be focussed around the area adjacent to the town centre, on a prominent site along the A577 frontage. This site already has planning permission for a leisure development called 'The Hive', consisting of a restaurant, an ice rink and a cinema with associated car parking. This site will provide a valuable draw for visitors to and residents of Widnes, creating a key marker along the route from the town centre towards the Waterfront destination. This development will also announce the start of the progressive play and soft leisure proposals, linking the leisure offers together.

#### Residential

- 7.8. The masterplan proposes a new residential quarter to the south east of the Waterfront area. The location of the majority of this residential use will capitalise upon the remarkable waterside setting and will make use of connections to both existing (Trans Pennine Trail) and proposed ('Greenway' to Spike Island) routes. The estuary views also complement those of the new Mersey Gateway Bridge; both providing very attractive and marketable elements of this site.
- 7.9. In sustainability terms, the south-facing aspect of the proposed residential quarter will enable a range of solar gain and solar energy options to be harnessed as these proposals are developed further.
- 7.10. It is envisaged that, subject to appropriate flood risk and contamination constraints, residential development should be at a minimum of 40 dwellings per hectare, in line with current planning policy and best practice for developing housing on brownfield sites. It is anticipated that these dwellings would take the form of townhouses as opposed to apartments given the short and medium term projections in the property market.

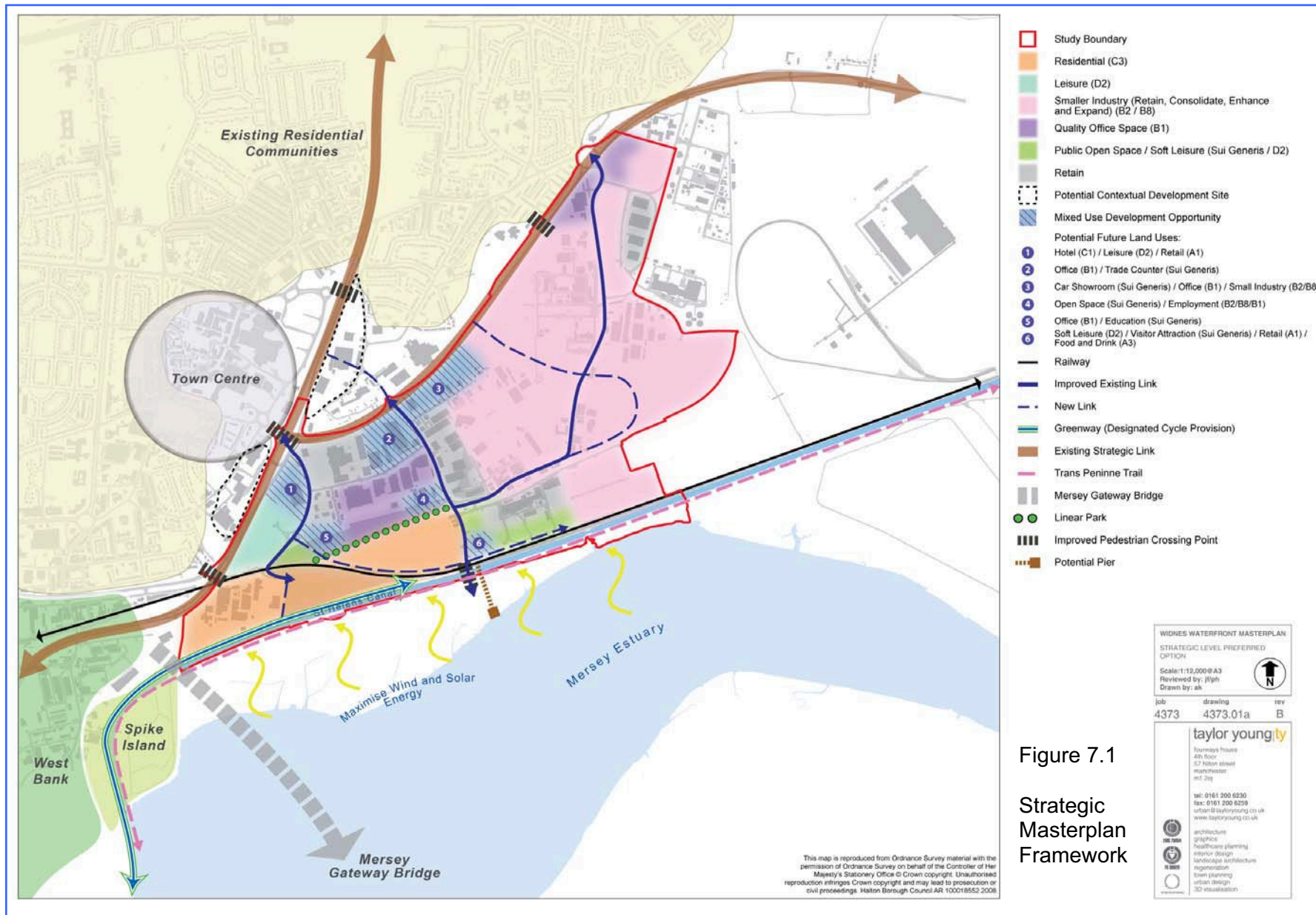


Figure 7.1  
 Strategic Masterplan Framework



- 7.11. There is potential to house approximately 800 units within the waterfront site within a bespoke community. This community would be well integrated with the waterfront destination, and will generate a much needed activity outside office hours. This, in turn, will improve the safety in adjacent areas in terms of overlooking and activity, particularly around the waterfront, linear park and new destination area.

#### Public open space / soft leisure

- 7.12. A range of public open space and soft leisure has been proposed within the Waterfront site as a key component of the vision and delivery strategy. The open spaces would link into existing assets such as the Linear Park and St Helens Canal, developing an exemplar green network.
- 7.13. In terms of public open space, these areas would be linked to residential properties to ensure they meet the needs of frequent users. They would also be seen as 'stop off' points within the overall movement network, and would be shared spaces for those engaging in recreation along the waterfront, or employees wishing to take a break and enjoy the amenities available, such as seating and viewing areas.
- 7.14. The soft leisure element of this category includes commercial/community outdoor recreation. The Landscape Strategy details the various potential end users within this use class, and could include a national BMX centre, 5-a-side football pitches, a golf driving range and a 5km walking/jogging trail. This 'green gym' concept complements the more informal recreational opportunities, such as the Trans Pennine Trail and potential for a new bridleway as highlighted in Figure 7.4 (Movement Framework).

#### Mixed-use development opportunities

- 7.15. The masterplan identifies six mixed-use development opportunity sites which allow flexibility within suggested use class parameters. Exploration of the feasibility of certain uses within these areas has been suggested at Figure 7.1 (Strategic Level Masterplan), and these reflect discussion with potential end users and Halton Borough Council in terms of what would support the overall vision and strategic objectives. A number of these opportunity sites are at gateway locations, therefore to achieve responsive, high quality and

bespoke design will be key in order to announce the Waterfront and encourage people to move through the area. In addition, opportunity site no. 6 is key to the development of the destination area. Uses such as a Wildlife Interpretation Centre, convenience shop and food and drink facilities, all connected to the new moorings along the canal, will provide reasons to stop at and explore the unique assets of the waterfront.

## Demonstrator Project 01 – Creating a Destination

To create a destination is to create a draw to the Waterfront, attracting a variety of different uses and users.

### Objectives

- A destination generates activity, both physical and economic, increasing and diversifying usage
- Higher levels of movement for longer hours improves security through increasing natural surveillance
- Altering visitor perceptions through creation of a high quality leisure destination
- Ensure routes to the destination are treated with high quality public realm interventions
- Creating a high quality destination will make the area more attractive to encourage residential uses on neighbouring sites
- Creation of a high quality destination will increase surrounding land values
- Linking the destination with the town centre and The Hive through high quality green infrastructure would be crucial
- Through the creation of commercial leisure (e.g. 5-a-side football) the public sector capital / revenue burden is removed
- Ensure that sustainable movement linkages are built into the destination blueprint
- Small scale retail could serve residential, employment and leisure users although would require a critical mass

Destination: Providing a mix of uses in a high quality environment



## Demonstrator Project 02 – Creating an Employment Gateway

To advertise a quality employment offer in the Waterfront, attracting investment and usage.

- Landmark gateway buildings and art installations would improve perceptions and provide positive first impressions
- Gateways and artwork can aid orientation and branding
- Lighting can be effectively used to enliven space and accentuate high quality design
- High quality land uses around gateways (e.g. office and car show rooms) will alter perceptions of the Waterfront
- To cluster high quality uses, generating critical masses, will attract tenants to these buildings
- Providing well-defined gateway buildings on corner plots will promote good quality urban design across the Waterfront
- Some of the gateway sites can feasibly be delivered pre-2013

Gateways: Defined through colour, design and lighting

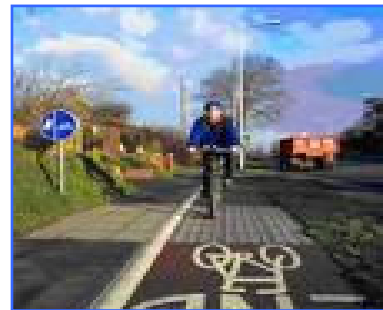


## Demonstrator Project 03 – Environmental Interventions

Widnes Waterfront could become a regionally recognised ecologically diverse area.

- In order to draw visitors / users from the town centre, a high quality green link to the destination would have to be provided
- To build upon, and learn lessons from, the Phase 1 environmental improvements
- Further investment in tree-lined boulevards would help to soften industrial edges and provide wildlife corridors
- The creation of a wildlife reserve in the Waterfront would add to the destination draw, which could be affiliated with an organisation such as the Groundwork Trust or the RSPB
- Greened sites can be short term wins and ultimately sacrificial land uses when considering longer-term phasing of development
- Green end uses are often the most viable for the most heavily contaminated sites
- Environmental improvements together with other proposals could increase usage of the Waterfront as people will feel safer and more at ease
- The proposed 5km health trail could be achieved through thoughtful environmental intervention

Environmental improvements: high quality, robust interventions will ensure usage and long-term sustainability



## **B) Design Framework and Guidance**

- 7.16. This design framework (Figure 7.2) and guidance has been developed to support the strategic vision for Widnes Waterfront. It is intended that it will guide development in line with agreed design principles and the overarching strategic objectives. The overarching aim of this framework is to promote high quality sustainable design in key gateway locations. This will contribute to creating a more defined character along important routes, leading to a waterfront destination based around leisure and recreational use within the context of a new residential community.

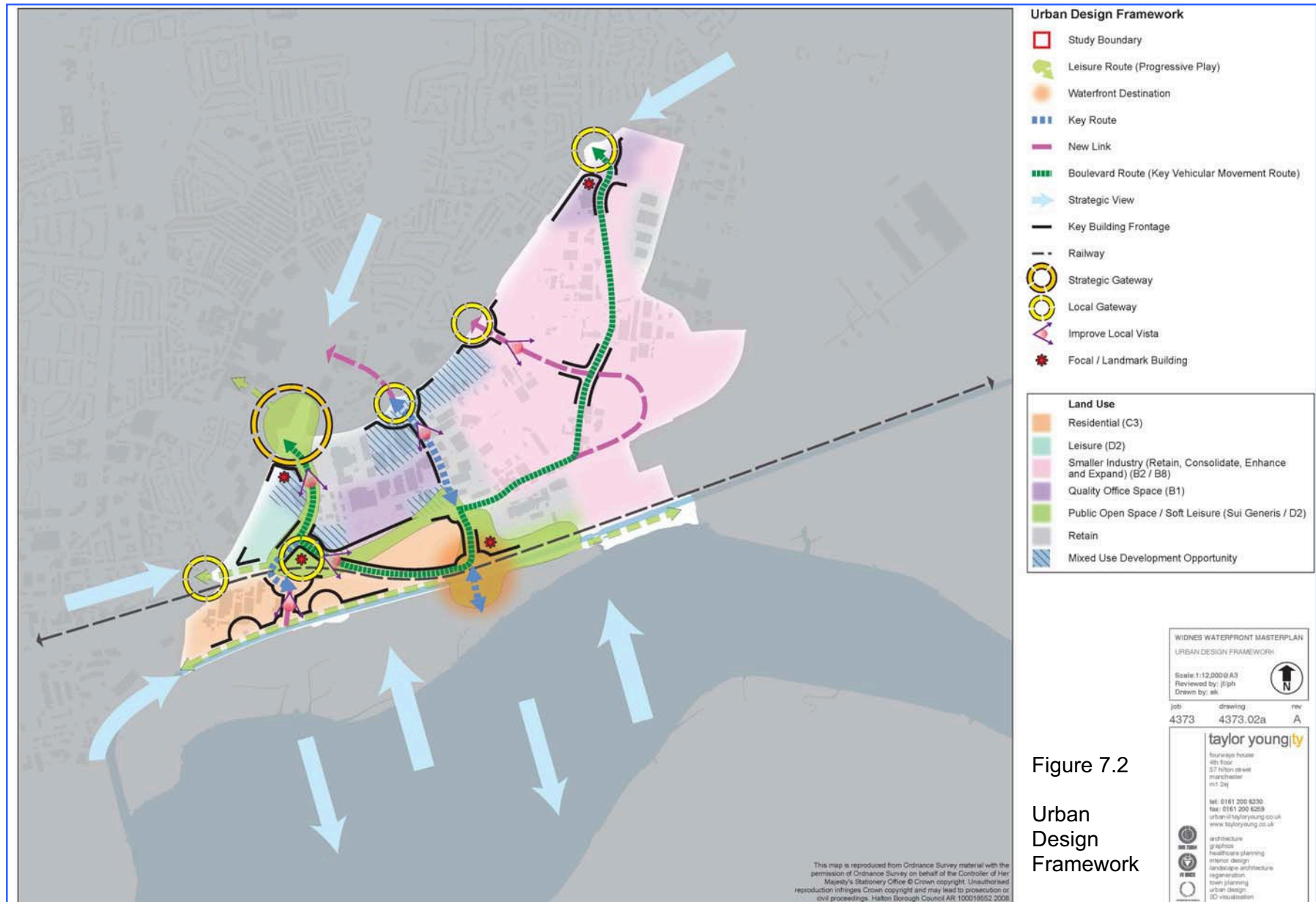


Figure 7.2

Urban Design Framework

### Best Practice in Design

7.17. The foundation of this framework is based upon current best practice and planning policy guidance, in particular that which is integral to the Government's Sustainable Communities agenda:

'Good design ensures attractive, useable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning' (PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development, ODPM 2005).

7.18. Whilst it is recognised that the primary purpose of Widnes Waterfront is to provide a range of employment, the majority of which will be of an industrial nature (B2 and B8), this does not mean that high quality and responsive design cannot be achieved. Given the right setting and precedent, Widnes Waterfront can be recognised regionally as a destination of choice as the masterplan phases are delivered. It already has excellent links to the rest of the Borough and the region, therefore by ensuring high quality design in the right locations, it can capitalise upon a range of investment on a broad scale, including residential and soft leisure uses which will generate community interest and in turn, raise the profile of Widnes.

7.19. During the Baseline stage, the physical environment was analysed in urban design terms, and character areas were defined to develop a clearer *understanding* of the site's current identity. In accordance with the opportunities identified within the Baseline and Options Report and the Widnes Waterfront Supplementary Planning document, the following design principles have been identified and refined and are listed below. Underneath these key principles is broad guidance which will aid delivery of the masterplan:

- Transform key gateways with landmark buildings to generate sense of arrival
- Ensure routes and spaces are animated with active built frontages
- Activate waterfront and linear park with bespoke sustainable housing
- Create a network of progressive play and soft leisure uses with strong connections between the Town Centre and Waterfront
- Create a legible hierarchy of key routes with connections to the wider context



- Ensure different uses are located to maximize compatibility
- Enhance safety and security through principles of Secured by Design

7.20. In light of the strategic objectives and the design principles outlined, the following design framework and guidance has been produced to support the high quality, well-connected and energy efficient development of the masterplan particularly through its application to future development proposals. It does not offer prescriptive guidance but gives a strong steer for the design of key elements which will ensure that Widnes Waterfront becomes a 'place' / destination rather than a piecemeal site isolated from its surrounding context. It has been arranged as follows:

#### **Movement Hierarchy**

- Boulevard route
- Greenway
- Linear Park

#### **Townscape**

- Gateways (strategic / local)
- Key built frontages
- Spaces and enclosure (waterfront destination / residential amenity space)
- Views
- Art

#### **Energy Efficiency**

## Movement Hierarchy

- 7.21. The movement hierarchy is highlighted in Figure 7.4. This section provides an overview of the key urban design principles within this hierarchy, and should be read in conjunction with the detailed movement framework section of this report.
- 7.22. Key to the Widnes Waterfront masterplan is **connectivity**. This does not just relate to connectivity within the site, but strategic linkages to the wider context, particularly within Widnes's overall regeneration. Physically, this means creating safer and better connections to key areas of interest or routes such as the town centre, the Pennine Trail and Upper Mersey Valley Forest Park. It also means ensuring that future connections to areas undergoing regeneration, such as Spike Island and West Bank, are factored into the development phases of the masterplan so that the Waterfront site has a valuable contribution to make within its wider context.
- 7.23. The Urban Design Framework plan (see Figure 7.2) adds further detail to the movement framework in terms of route typology, and specifies the following along key new and existing routes:
- 7.24. **Boulevard route** – As shown in Figure 7.2 this route begins at the 'strategic gateway' site adjacent to the entrance to the town centre (Earle Road), and connects quality office and leisure use with new



residential uses along the edge of the railway. It then connects with the waterfront destination, 'greenway' and entrance to the linear park, terminating at the north-eastern periphery of the site where it joins Fiddlers Ferry Road.

- 7.25. As stated in the Landscape Strategy section, this will be lined with tree planting to emphasise its primacy as a linking route within the movement hierarchy. The diagram is indicative of how this boulevard could be designed in terms of tree planting and footpath/cycle provision, with crossing points at key areas, particularly around the proposed leisure hub/BMX facility and linear park, and at the 'destination' area adjacent to the residential and leisure uses and the canal crossing point.
- 7.26. **Greenway** – the Greenway will run along the western edge of the waterfront and will have designated cycle provision (as shown on Figure 7.1). The aspiration is that this route will also cater for vehicular traffic in the future providing a link to the West Bank.
- 7.27. The Greenway should be constructed using high quality materials and will be designed to give pedestrians and cyclists the priority, similar to the 'homezone' concept. It will also require appropriate lighting (use of solar lighting should be explored).



7.28. **Linear Park** – the linear park is a key non-vehicular route. It also has an important role in terms of incorporating the progressive play concept as detailed within the landscape strategy. The park offers great potential in being able to link adjacent uses (residential, leisure and quality office) into the ‘green’ movement framework, and as such, should not be seen in isolation. The creation of openings at certain points along its linear structure which allow ‘break out’ into larger areas of public open space will aid integration between the park and different uses (particularly in relation to amenity for residential properties). It will also enhance the potential for increased activity which, in turn, will improve the safety of this location.

### Townscape

#### Gateways

7.29. A series of strategic and local gateways have been identified within the urban design framework plan. They have been explained as follows:

#### Strategic gateway

7.30. The junction the Fiddlers Ferry Road, A557 and Earle Road is considered to be a strategic gateway owing to its prominence as an entrance into Widnes Waterfront from major routes to the north, south and east. It is also of key importance owing its location at the south eastern opening to Widnes Town Centre and residential communities beyond.



7.31. It is recognised that B&Q is a fix however the northern portion of the 'Venture Fields' site presents an exciting opportunity to make an important contribution to this gateway. In order properly to announce Widnes Waterfront, a landmark/iconic building(s) at this junction should be proposed. This gateway building(s) will be appropriate in terms of the following:

- **Position** – the building(s) should be located so that the edges of this key junction are properly animated (see 'key building frontages' on Figure 7.2). Car parking and servicing areas should be located to the rear in order to maximise the site's visual impact and quality within the overall streetscape.
- **Scale** – the site would benefit from a building of appropriate scale and massing in order to properly announce the main entrance to the Waterfront. A building of substantial scale (particularly in terms of its height) would also help to orientate people both with regard to the Waterfront and the Town Centre, which is lacking a sense of arrival at this point along the A557.
- **Design** – a building(s) at this gateway location has to be of a high quality and reflective of the essence of the Waterfront in terms of sustainable design. The elevations should be designed to engage with the street at ground level in particular, with main entrances clearly accessed from the street edge. Defensible space around the key frontages of the building should be generated through high quality public realm treatment and should complement, not dominate, the presence of the building or its architectural quality. Lighting should be used imaginatively further to activate the building and the public realm, including lighting on/within the building to animate the key elevations. In addition, the building(s) could be used to strengthen the identity of the Waterfront by incorporating imaginatively placed branding (see precedent imagery below).

### Local gateway

- 7.32. There is a series of local gateways as depicted on Figure 7.2. These gateways have a significant role to play in ensuring that changes in character and secondary entrances into the Waterfront site are clearly announced, so as to improve legibility for the user and to add interest particularly along key routes. The position of building frontages has been marked on Figure 7.2 and these indicate the need to ensure that the edges to these entrance points are properly animated. High quality landscape treatments or appropriate public art features (which fit into a meaningful overall arts strategy) could also support the function of these spaces as local gateway sites.

### Key built frontages

- 7.33. In order to ensure a defined structure to routes and gateway locations, the position of building frontages is crucial. Figure 7.2 highlights locations within the Waterfront site where particular attention must be paid to ensuring the street is activated with building frontages (not car parking, storage space or servicing). The building line established by these key frontages should be respected by remaining development but not necessarily followed stringently, particularly within the more industrial areas of the Waterfront. The key frontages highlighted should guide the remaining building lines where appropriate, but setting back some buildings along less important frontages, perhaps for open space or public realm detailing, will serve to emphasise further these key frontages. This variety will also add interest within the street scene and aid legibility to the user in terms of the hierarchy of spaces and routes.

### Spaces and Enclosure

- 7.34. Within the masterplan there is scope to create some lively and functional spaces which add interest to the movement framework and provide amenity for those visiting, working or living in the area. It is not the aim of this plan to create large swaths of public open space, but look at key locations in which people may wish to gather, rest or play, to make the most of the spectacular waterfront setting and unique leisure offer. These spaces will be designed to a high quality with thought given to how they could be used at different times of

day, particularly the area around the canal moorings at the heart of the Waterfront.

### Waterfront destination

- 7.35. This space should be designed with all users in mind, and should provide facilities for seating, viewing and engaging in waterfront activities (in addition to a temporary viewing platform linked to the construction of the Mersey Gateway bridge), and outdoor events perhaps linked to educational wildlife studies, leisure events/competitions or celebratory events linked to the area's industrial and railway heritage. The blend between more informal and formal activities should be dealt with sensitively, given the proximity to habitats along the Warth and canal banks.
- 7.36. The height and massing of buildings adjacent to these spaces will be designed to provide a comfortable level of enclosure and appropriate level of natural surveillance. Areas of shelter and spaces which will capture sunlight will be important, particularly around the 'destination' area. In addition, cycle stands should be included within this space for cyclists 'stopping off' at the waterfront to utilise amenities.
- 7.37. The imagery shows some precedents in terms of activity and treatment of this space.



## Residential amenity space

7.38. Areas of hard and soft public open space connected with residential properties should be well overlooked and of sizes suitable for both play and amenity purposes. They should be viewed as an extension to garden space, as the requirement for higher densities will have implications on the size of private amenity space within properties.



7.39. Crescent shaped 'greens' may be suitable along the waterfront area, providing a visual link between this more formal environment and the more informal structure of the Warth. Crescent shaped spaces along the edge of the Greenway will also reflect the 'rippling' serpentine nature of the estuary, so that meaning can be drawn from function as well as form, generating interest in response to the waterfront's unique character. This arrangement

would also maximise the opportunity for more properties to have views of the estuary rather than just a hard linear built edge along the Greenway, and will also allow for space for on-street parking along 'homezone' type routes away from the Greenway, keeping this route free from cars. Positioning buildings hard up against the Greenway and canal edge will not be appropriate.

7.40. Homezoned streets could also be incorporated to access properties off the 'Greenway'/Earle Road linkage and the new linkage running along the railway line, which will add to the level of amenity space within residential areas and mark a change in route hierarchy giving pedestrians priority over the car.



- 7.41. The imagery on the previous page shows some precedents in terms of treatment of these spaces and association with the shape and form of the water to contribute to the meaning and identity of these spaces.

### **Views**

- 7.42. Figure 7.2 highlights both strategic views and local vistas to be enhanced.

#### **Strategic views**

- 7.43. In terms of the strategic views, these take account of key sight lines of/into/out from the site. By ensuring that consideration is taken of these views, the site can contribute greatly to its surroundings and can also be enhanced by its context, particularly its waterfront setting. The site is visible from Runcorn and will be even more prominent once the Mersey Gateway Bridge has been implemented, giving the site a unique and strong position in terms of 'passive marketing'. Views of the site from these vantage points must be considered in order to contribute to and capitalise on passing trade in addition to reinforcing one of its key advantages as a well located site in terms of its accessibility to the surrounding Borough.

#### **Local vistas**

- 7.44. A number of local vistas within the site have been identified and these correspond to key routes. By ensuring that these views are terminated by appropriate buildings of public realm/landscaping, 'markers' can be formed improving legibility for the user.

## Art

- 7.45. In addition to providing quality buildings, public realm and landscaping, Widnes Waterfront has already begun to identify its unique points through art installations. The waterfront wildlife trail engages the user in an educational way by way of artistic information boards. These can be linked to proposals for a wildlife interpretation centre within the 'destination' area. There is also great opportunity to generate interest from the site's industrial, railway and canal heritage, and the idea of providing '*glimpses*' into the 'raw mechanics' of these elements which give the site a large portion of its current identity should be explored. Instead of hiding some of these areas, they should be celebrated and interest should be generated along an experiential trail within interesting 'glimpse points' to show the workings of such areas.



## Energy Efficiency

7.46. As stated earlier, connectivity is a key design principle for the development of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan. Physically connecting with the surrounding environment is crucial in order to generate development which is compatible with and supportive of the sensitive habitats of this waterfront destination.

7.47. The identity of Widnes Waterfront should be driven by energy efficient design, and buildings and spaces should be designed to maximise all available sources of sustainable energy. This includes sourcing local materials, generating energy on-site (solar, wind etc), ensuring that the orientation of buildings and spaces maximise heat and light from the sun, contributing to the local eco-system by use of green roofs, tree planting and greenspace creation, and ensuring that there is easy and safe access to pedestrian, cycle and bus links. Development of residential properties should aim to comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes standards, and non-residential uses should aim to be as energy efficient as possible using **BREEAM** guidance.



- 7.48. Some of these precedent images show examples of low carbon homes. Their design reflects new technology in different and interesting ways, and this should be explored as part of creating a waterfront identity based around low carbon, contemporary and engaging design.

### C) Landscape Strategy

- 7.49. The Landscape Strategy (see Figure 7.3) has been developed to support the vision for Widnes Waterfront. Its main objective is to illustrate how the appropriate use of landscape treatment can form enclosure to open spaces and contribute to the overall character of the newly formed places. A series of landscaped open spaces are evident within the masterplan and these are linked to create a permeable and coherent network of spaces of both hard and soft characteristics. Positive use of signage and way-marking will benefit the overall legibility of the neighbouring character areas.
- 7.50. The existing landscape structure and features such as the St Helens Canal and the estuaries edge will be enhanced to provide recreational opportunities and strengthen the biodiversity of the flora and fauna. This structure and landscape treatment will be incorporated into the creation of the new development sites and soft leisure opportunities.
- 7.51. The aims of the strategy are set out to ensure that ensuing development and activity are set within a landscape of distinction and high quality. The strategy focuses on four main headings that co-relate to the aims of the masterplan. These headings are 'Waterfront destination'; 'soft leisure and recreation'; 'emerging development sites'; and 'relationship to adjacent initiatives'. It is anticipated that future development will adhere to the guidance set out in this strategy, ensuring an appropriate response that results in the production of a distinctive landscape setting.

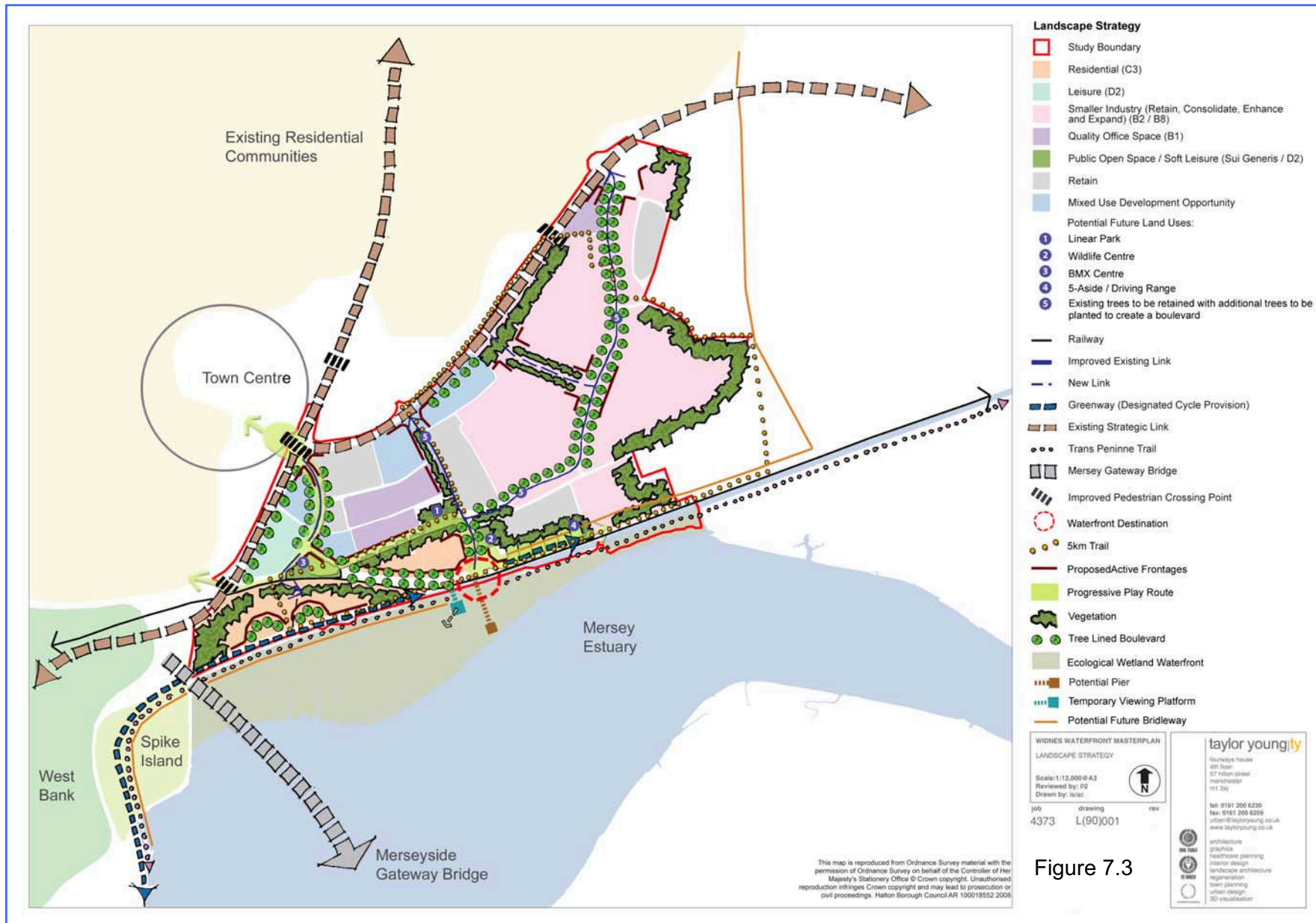


Figure 7.3

### Relationship to adjacent initiatives

- 7.52. The Masterplan Framework has been developed to relate strongly to known initiatives developing within the waterfront area, complementing them rather than competing. The following is a summary of how it responds to the particular schemes:
- 7.53. **Trans Pennine Trail** – The trail currently runs alongside the estuary’s edge and St Helens Canal. The masterplan offers clear access and circulation routes throughout the waterfront and provides an extended trail through the linear park to Widnes Town Centre.
- 7.54. **Upper Mersey Valley Forest Park** – This project is part of the Mersey Forest Plan and incorporates part of the Estuary’s edge. It runs from Warrington to the Runcorn Bridge and extends westerly to the Pickerings Pasture Local Nature Reserve at Halebank. It is a very important area for birdwatchers and the estuary and conjoined nature reserves are home to a wide range of waders, wildfowl, and migratory birds. The Widnes Waterfront Masterplan acknowledges the aspirational plan recently issued by the Mersey Forest which draws on the quality of wildlife in the area including Wigg Island Community Park and Victoria Promenade. As well as looking to promote and enhance the wildlife offer it will increase the accessibility to these areas through improved linkages via the Trans Pennine Trail and green links from Widnes Town Centre.
- 7.55. **Merseyside Gateway Bridge** – This is an exciting project that could be realised within the next 5 – 10 years. The newly installed pier at the waters edge would provide an ideal viewing platform to allow spectators to watch the construction of the bridge. However, if the timing of the pier does not correspond with the bridge programme, it is suggested that a temporary viewing platform could be installed for observation of this significant engineering exercise.
- 7.56. **Spike Island** - The masterplan for Spike Island is currently being developed by TEP and is located to the southwest of the masterplan area. A pedestrian / cycleway linkage alongside St Helens Canal is provided to ensure that a strong connection is made between the waterfront and Spike Island, providing an extended recreational experience from the waterfront.

- 7.57. **Towards a 'Mersey Parklands'** – The NWDA are to commission a study to help form an independent and objective view of a Liverpool to Manchester Green Infrastructure / Regional Park intervention. The study requires being of sufficient detail so as to integrate an economic assessment and landscape / masterplanning approach, to determine the potential for this corridor. It will aim to integrate a series of green infrastructure and regional park approaches alongside the economic potential of Manchester and Liverpool within the scope of the potential economic development that is being developed in the Peel project, 'Ocean Gateway'. Other initiatives within the region such as the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan will also undoubtedly be viewed as a significant factor to the findings of the report.

#### Waterfront Destination

- 7.58. One of the main objectives of the vision for the masterplan is to attract more users to the waterfront. This is a significant asset to the Widnes area and offers a multitude of opportunities for recreation and general leisure. It is envisaged that a 'destination' can be introduced to the waterfront at the southern end of Tanhouse Lane. This could comprise a clubhouse for a new 5-a-side facility and an adjacent Wildlife Centre. The latter could offer interpretation and information on the natural habitats within the area and can be supported by a garden trail that demonstrates the variety at close quarters. A small café and outside seating could also be incorporated into this facility. It is considered that this facility could be operated by an organisation such as Groundwork Trust or the RSPB.
- 7.59. This is an ideal location to install a 'pier' or viewing deck as an extension of Tan House Lane into the Mersey Estuary as proposed in the phase one masterplan. This would provide immediate access into the river's edge natural habitat as well as offering fantastic views along the river. It would readily connect to the existing river's edge footway and cycle track and could supplement the interpretation already in place.
- 7.60. The planting within this vicinity should be native and naturalistic to reflect the strong rivers edge, and retain the gradation from the 'naturalistic' landscape of the canal and water's edge to the anticipated formal landscape treatment of the developments fronting Fiddlers Ferry Road and the new Boulevard linkage.

## Soft leisure and recreation

- 7.61. Opportunities to introduce elements of 'soft leisure' into the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan have arisen to complement the overarching strategic vision that identify areas for potential residential, employment, retail and 'hard' leisure developments. The term 'soft leisure' refers to those activities that fall outside of sports undertaken in leisure centres and sports halls such as swimming, badminton, or squash. The soft leisure proposal will complement the adjacent Cinema and Ice Rink in the Hive development.
- 7.62. It is highly feasible that a number of routes and sites within the Waterfront Study area can initially be developed using 'soft Leisure' as a catalyst to increase community activity in the heart of the site, especially along the waters edge. It is anticipated that introducing a number of attractions into the masterplan will assist in drawing people into the areas from the town centre and further a field. As well as breathing fresh and new life into the waterfront this human intervention will increase the natural surveillance and therefore provide a safer environment for all.
- 7.63. A series of spaces has been identified in each option where 'Soft Leisure' and recreation activities can be introduced:

- **Progressive Play and public art** – Progressive Play is a concept based on the premise that people of all age groups can be encouraged from the town centre to the waterfront by providing items and points of interest along the journey. This can be as simple as spaces with seating complemented with art work or sculpture or maybe simple objects for toddlers to play with. As the waterfront is reached, beams and blocks for balancing on can be introduced in the manner of an informal fitness trail. This can complement the newly formed green linear path, and elements can form part of the 5km trail. There is plenty





of opportunity to introduce a public art strategy. Art can influence the gateways and announcements to the various developments and activities, and can be literal and abstract in nature. For instance, public art can express the waterfront's strong historic reference to the railway and former sidings.

- **National BMX Centre** – British Cycling is seeking a site for an International / National track in the Northwest, and the Leisure Services Team at Halton Borough Council have been approached to explore options. The table below sets out the physical requirements for all levels, and as the international space requirement is less than one hectare it is feasible to locate an event space in the demarcated area shown on the Landscape Strategy Plan.

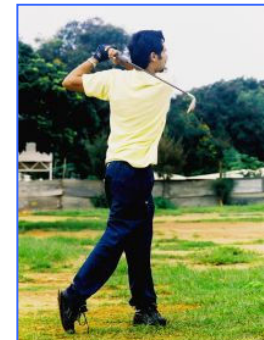


Play Tracks	
Option 1	Area 30m x 14m, 350 - 400 tonnes sub soil, 15 tonnes crushed rock sand, Clean stone / flexi coil for drainage. 2 weeks estimated build time.
Option 2	Area 40m x 19m, 600 - 1000 tonnes sub soil, 20 tonnes crushed rock sand, Clean stone / flexi coil for drainage. 3 weeks estimated build time.
Option 3	Area 60m x 40m, 1000 - 1500 tonnes sub soil, 25 tonnes crushed rock sand, Clean stone / flexi coil for drainage. Other features include manual start gate, tarmac hill, concrete pad. 5 weeks estimated build time.
Regional	
Regional Track	Area 80m x 40m, 1500 - 2000 tonnes sub soil, 40 tonnes crushed rock sand, Clean stone / flexi coil for drainage. Other features include start gate, remote control start unit, tarmac hill, concrete pad & railings for start hill. 6 weeks estimated build time. Additional requirements are car parking facilities for club and race events.
National	
National / International	Area 100m x 80m, 2500 - 3500 tonnes sub soil, 40 tonnes crushed rock sand, Clean stone / flexi coil for drainage. Other features:- Storage container, start gate, remote control start unit, tarmac hill, concrete pad, railings, spectator fencing, etc... Estimated 8 weeks build time. Additional requirements:- Car parking & temporary camping facilities for club and race events.

- **Commercial 5-A-side Football**– Leisure and Community Services at Halton Borough Council have stated that 5-a-side football is under-subscribed in the Widnes area and suggests that this can be explored as an introduced activity. This will be installed by a commercial company who would require gifted land or an agreed lease. The company covers the build cost for the all-weather pitches, fencing, car park and clubhouse etc. The space requirement for five medium size pitches and a clubhouse is in the region of two hectares and would fit in the designated area shown on the landscape strategy plan.



- **Golf Driving Range** - An alternative to the 5-a-side option would be to provide a golf driving range. However, there is a grant application currently submitted for DEFRA funding to remediate St Michael's Golf course in Widnes. It has been abandoned since 2004 due to this former municipal Course having been built on infill waste land, with the underlying rubbish and liquids currently resurfacing resulting in contamination. It is about a mile away from the site and if successful it will include a driving range.
- **5km trail** – The transport and movement plans have been develop to incorporate the opportunity to introduce a fitness trail into the waterside area. This will provide a safe, well-lit route with a good running surface. Occasional items of exercise equipment, such as monkey bars and beams, can be located along the way to add to the experience.



- **Youth Activity Park** – A similar model of regeneration of vacant land has been developed in Runcorn. Here, a landscape setting on the lines of a Country Park has been created containing a range of formal and informal recreation such as skateparks, multiuse games areas (MUGA), aerial zip-wires, climbing structures and more traditional play equipment. Although this is aimed at the younger population, it appears to have been successful in attracting all generations. The size of this can be tailored to the land available.



### Emerging Development Sites

- 7.64. The Phase 2 Masterplan Framework and Landscape Strategy have been developed with a view to integrating soft leisure and long term recreational use to complement the developments, as and when they start to emerge in response to market trends.
- 7.65. It will be beneficial to the overall Masterplan Framework if long-term structure planting and landform can be introduced to the identifiable sites to provide a mature landscape setting for future invested developments. It is appreciated that there are land ownership complexities associated with this, however, there are some grants available to land owners and, in particular, the Mersey Forest Programme could provide financial assistance for the planting of Community Woodlands.
- 7.66. Appropriate landscape structure will not only provide a high aesthetic quality to the waterfront area, but also will assist the anticipated new employment and residential sites in overcoming some of the inevitable conflicts of interest. Strong and sculpted landform combined with trees and woodland edge planting will provide a significant buffer to the railway line that runs between the residential development sites. This principle can also be applied to help contain the recreational activities of the football and BMX track.



- 7.67. Boulevard tree planting can be introduced to emphasise way-marking of key routes throughout the area. Low-level ornamental shrubs have been introduced to the boundaries and entrances of some of the existing employment sites, and this style can be replicated with new employment sites.



#### Landscape Strategy Summary

- 7.68. The Landscape Strategy sets out to promote the highest quality for the overall existing and proposed character of the area, and overcome the variety of ‘detractors’ that affect the quality of the landscape. It suggests an approach for design principles combined with landscape treatments for planting, hard materials, signage, lighting, public art and furniture.
- 7.69. This would result in the overall landscape and public realm achieving the aim of creating a strong identity and sense of place, optimising canal and estuarine locations, and creating good first impressions and a sustainable and healthy environment for Widnes Waterfront.
- 7.70. Updating and building upon the existing Waterfront Landscape Design Guide would be of great benefit for a coordinated response to achieving the long-term landscape aspirations.

#### D) Sustainability Appraisal

- 7.71. At the Options Stage the three options were reviewed against Halton Borough Council’s Sustainability Appraisal Objectives, developed for Halton’s Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal. The findings of the sustainability review were discussed in a design workshop, during which the preferred option for the masterplan was developed and refined.
- 7.72. To ensure the sustainability recommendations that emerged from the sustainability review at options stage have been taken on board,

the preferred option has been assessed against the Halton Borough Council's Sustainability Appraisal Objectives in the table below. The preferred option is scored according to its compatibility with the SA objectives.

7.73. Scoring:

√	Achieves the objective
○	Not applicable
✗	Contradicts objective
?	Potential to achieve objective but not articulated

	SA Objectives	Preferred Option
Economic	1. To continue reducing the unemployment rate in Halton and increase the economic activity rate	√ This option includes a significant increase in employment related uses at Widnes Waterfront, including the retention of existing employment uses.
	2. To improve educational attainment and opportunities for life long learning and employment	√ This option includes enterprise uses that will provide educational opportunities as well as the potential for apprenticeships and other training from new and existing employment opportunities.
	3. To encourage sustainable economic growth and business development	√ This option promotes a range of employment opportunities as well as educational, retail, leisure, residential and open space land uses, based on a sound appraisal of market opportunities. By providing this framework, this will promote sustainable growth through diversity that provides options for growth, as opposed to limited options that could stagnate growth. The masterplan also retains existing businesses and proposes to strengthen them through improved infrastructure and extended premises, again promoting sustainable growth.

	4. To improve the competitiveness and productivity of business	√ This option provides a mix of business, which through co-existence should promote productivity through resource and information sharing. The new physical environment for business at Widnes Waterfront should improve working environment and make businesses here more competitive.
	5. To enhance the vitality and viability of the three town centres (Runcorn Old Town, Halton Lea and Widnes)	√ Proximity of the Waterfront area provides significant opportunities for it to enhance and contribute to Widnes Town Centre. Land-use proposals in the west of the Waterfront area, closest to the town centre, complement rather than compete with existing town centre uses, strengthening and extending the centre. The proposed uses in the rest of the Waterfront area will provide a significant population on the doorstep of Widnes Town Centre, generating potential custom for town centre businesses. This is promoted through proposed improved pedestrian and cycling links from the Waterfront to the town centre, and will be further enhanced through the utilisation of sound urban design principles when developing the detailed design for development along the western edge of the site, ensuring a strong physical relationship.
	6. To improve and promote the overall image of the Borough in order to attract investment.	√ The Waterfront area is at a prominent location, on a key route to the town centre and at the gateway for the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge. Development at this location thus has the opportunity to enhance the image of Halton. The proposals will regenerate a currently partially derelict site, thus improving the appearance of the area and generating activity. Furthermore the proposals aim to enhance the frontage to the Mersey and key routes, and include significant green space and landscaping that will further enhance the image of the site. All these factors will contribute to attracting investment to the site, the town centre and potentially beyond. It is important that the delivery of development and public realm at the site is of high quality to reinforce these benefits that are embedded in the masterplan.
Social	7. To improve health and reduce health inequalities	√ The masterplan incorporates significant opportunities to promote cycling and walking. These include road layout and access points that allow walking and cycling between the site and neighbouring uses, such as existing residential areas, Widnes Town Centre, West Bank and Spike Island, and green routes that create an attractive cycle and pedestrian environment. The masterplan also includes space for soft leisure uses, promoting physical activity.

8. To improve safety and reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime	√ By providing a mix of uses at the site, there will be a mixture of users who will use the site at different times of the day and week. This level of activity will generate community ownership of the site and natural surveillance that will reduce that opportunity for crime. An important design principle of the plan is to create routes that are overlooked and accessible to all transport modes, again promoting activity and natural surveillance. It is important that detailed designs carry the principles of Secured By Design forward by ensuring good lighting and active frontages.
9. To provide good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing	?/√ The design of the housing has not been developed. However, the masterplan has located residential development with a significant south-facing aspect that should be utilised to maximise solar gain and day lighting, while paying due regard to summer overheating. Detailed design of housing layouts and houses should ensure they are of good quality and meet efficiency and affordability standards set by the Borough / region or nationally.
10. To improve access to basic goods, services and amenities	√ The masterplan includes a range of services that will serve residents and workers in the area including open space and leisure facilities. Furthermore, the development has good connections to Widnes Town Centre and the goods, services and amenities it provides. Some consideration should be given to the provision of small-scale convenience retail to serve the residential population proposed for this area.
11. To ensure access to high quality public open space and natural greenspace	√ The masterplan includes a number of green spaces and green routes and will improve access and quality of the canal tow path and view of the open space across the Mersey Estuary.
12. To reduce social exclusion, deprivation and social inequalities	√ Development of the site will provide open space and leisure opportunities for the existing residential community surrounding the Waterfront area to benefit from. The range of employment uses will provide good employment opportunities. The masterplan provides stronger physical links between the Waterfront area and the existing communities. It is important that employment and training opportunities are communicated locally so they have local benefit.

Environmental	13. To minimise the risk of flooding in relation to both new & existing development whilst, protecting, improving and where necessary, restoring the quality of inland, estuarine and coastal waters	√/? The masterplan will see an increase in the area of the Waterfront that is covered in impervious surfaces, increasing surface run off. This will partially be managed through the inclusion of green infrastructure at the site in the form of green space and landscaping. Further rainwater attenuation measures may be required to maintain surface run off levels to current volumes, but this should be considered at the detailed design stage.
	14. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity	√ The site includes a number of green spaces and routes that will provide habitat for biodiversity. Green infrastructure should be designed to promote biodiversity. There is potential for further habitat to be created in the buildings, designed in the form of green roofs and bat boxes.
	15. To minimise the production of waste and increase reuse, recycling and recovery rates.	√ Development of a brownfield site represents reuse of a previously used resource. Furthermore, the masterplan retains many existing buildings, minimising the amount of waste generated due to demolition. A number of measures can be taken at detailed design stage to minimise waste, such as ensuring adequate provision for the storage and collection of recyclables. At construction stage significant measures can be taken to reduce construction waste and recycle construction waste.
	16. To improve air quality by reducing the need to travel and improving choice and use of sustainable transport modes and reducing air pollution from other sources	√ The masterplan incorporates significant opportunities to promote sustainable transport, including cycling and walking, such as road layout and access points that allow walking and cycling between the site and neighbouring uses such as existing residential areas, Widnes Town Centre, West Bank and Spike Island, and green routes that create an attractive cycle and pedestrian environment.  The main routes through the site have been developed to ensure simple bus routes through the site adequately serve all areas as well as providing good access to bus stops on routes on the periphery of the study area. Further measures can be taken at detailed design stage such as provision of well lit routes, good quality bus waiting facilities and cycle storage, as well as travel plans. Enhancement of a bus service that passes through the waterfront area should also be considered.



	<p>17. To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the cultural and built environment and archaeological assets, whilst maintaining and strengthening a local distinctiveness through the enhancement of the character and appearance of the local landscape, townscape and coast</p>	<p>√ The masterplan significantly enhance the relationship between the waterfront area, the Mersey Estuary and the St Helens Canal.</p>
	<p>18. To use land, energy, and water resources prudently and efficiently, and increase energy generated from renewable sources</p>	<p>√/? The masterplan proposes that wind energy should be harnessed along the Mersey Estuary, and solar energy, utilising the south facing aspect.</p> <p>A number of other opportunities should be explored at the macro scale with regard to renewable energy and energy efficiency including biomass, CHP and ground source heating. It is often far more efficient to deliver such schemes at the macro scale rather than at individual building scale. With this in mind, micro level renewable should also be considered at detailed design stage.</p> <p>Additionally, at more detailed design stage, building orientation and layout, green roofs and materials should be utilised to promote natural cooling and sound insulation that will reduce the energy demand of the building.</p> <p>Material sourcing and lifespan should also be carefully considered to ensure all-life costs are considered in selecting sustainable materials.</p>

Overview

7.74. As far as possible at this stage, the masterplan is broadly in conformity with the sustainability objectives set by Halton Borough Council, across economic, environmental and social themes. It achieves this by:

**Economic:**

- Retaining and enhancing existing business, building on existing resources.
- Provision of a range of new employment and training opportunities.
- Creation of business premises and clusters that will attract investment.
- Improvement of a key gateway to Widnes, improving the prospects of the town centre and the Borough.

**Social:**

- Promoting healthy lifestyle through provision of pedestrian and cycle routes and open space.
- Creating a safe environment through a mix of land uses.
- Provides new housing and better access to services in the town centre.

**Environmental:**

- Enhancement of sustainable transport modes such as cycling, walking and public transport.
- Promoting the use of wind and solar energy.
- Development of brownfield land and reuse of existing buildings.
- Provision of green space and green routes, promoting biodiversity, rainwater attenuation and urban cooling.

7.75. There are areas that the masterplan should build on, during later design stages, in order to ensure sustainable delivery of the masterplan. This includes:

**Economic:**

- Ensure design of development to the west looks outward, enhancing linkages with surrounding areas, particularly the town centre, maximising wider economic benefits.
- Ensure employment and training opportunities are advertised locally so they have local benefit.
- Ensure design quality of buildings and public realm.

**Social:**

- Provision of convenience retail for the resident community in the waterfront area.
- Ensure secured by design principles are delivered in the detailed design.
- Ensure housing is designed to meet design quality and efficiency standards and meets affordable housing needs.
- Ensure design of employment development looks outward, enhancing linkages with surrounding areas, particularly existing communities, maximising wider employment and training benefits to surrounding communities.

**Environmental:**

- Investigation of bus services that pass through the waterfront area.
- Investigation of macro and micro level renewable and energy efficiency systems.
- Ensure detailed design incorporates good practice in orientation, layout and materials to promote energy and water efficiency.
- Green infrastructure should be designed to be multifunctional to ensure it promotes biodiversity, rain water attenuation and urban cooling, as well as for recreational use.
- Development of a waste management strategy through the design of the development and through construction management plans.

### Next steps

- 7.76. The findings of this sustainability review should be used alongside Halton's sustainability objectives to inform the development detailed designs and development briefs for the masterplan area, ensuring a continued robust approach to sustainability in developing the waterfront area.

### E) Movement Framework

- 7.77. The transport framework drawing produced by Faber Maunsell to accompany the Widnes Waterfront masterplan, contains proposals for a number of new infrastructure elements. These are listed below:

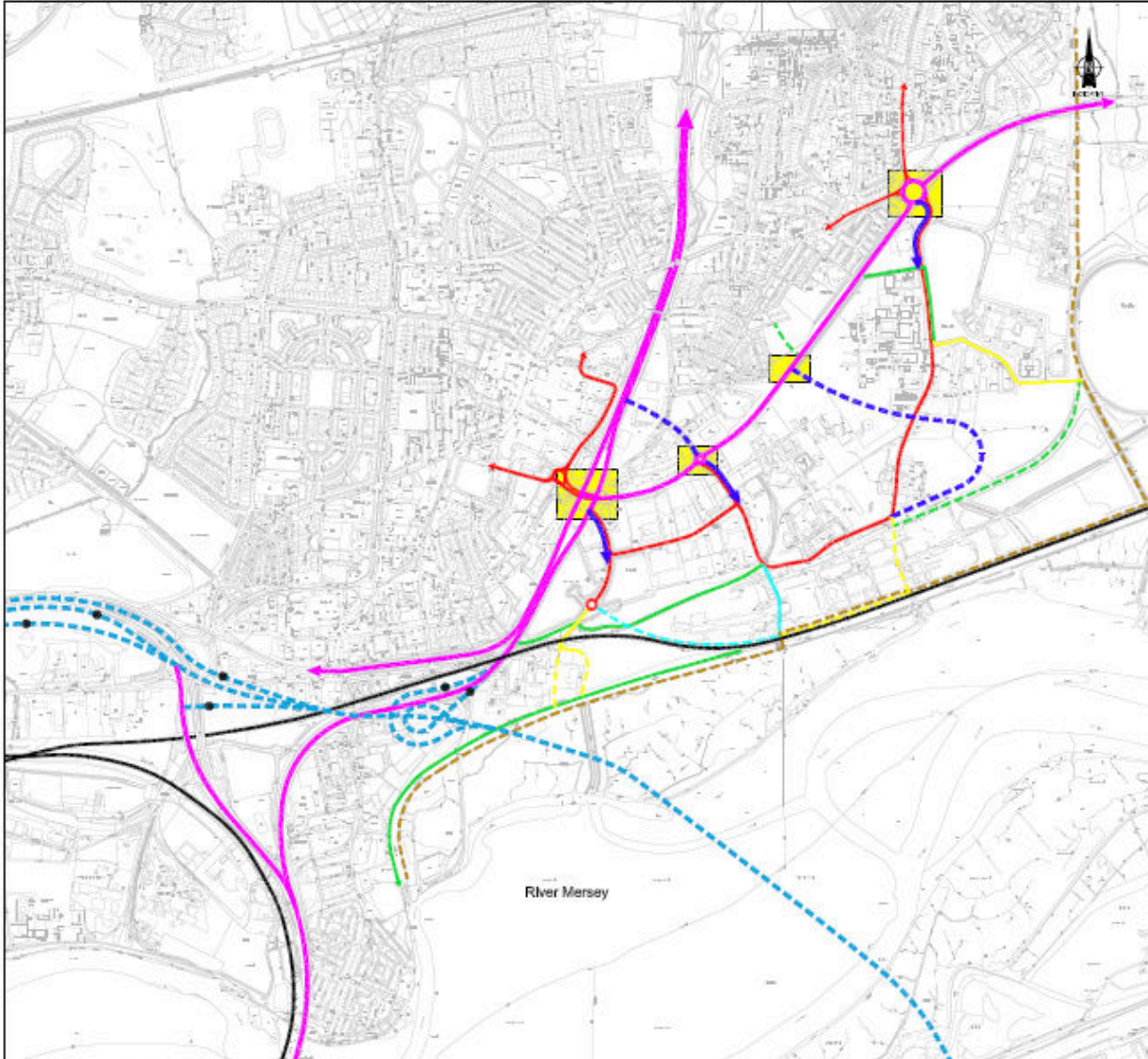
7.78. Key Infrastructure Elements

- Mersey Gateway Bridge and Tolling Areas;
- New link from Fiddlers Ferry Road to Gorsey Lane;
- Gorsey Lane highway loop east;
- Extension of Earle Road south to Sankey Canal;
- Easterly link from Earle Road to southern termination of Tan House Lane and beyond;
- Pedestrian link to Naylor Road.

### Infrastructure Elements Benefits Summary

- 7.79. The proposed infrastructure improvements suggested to accompany the emerging masterplan would have the primary aim of increasing the permeability of the area, for vehicles, public transport, pedestrians and cyclists alike. This is a vital aim for future infrastructure provision, given the area's restricted accessibility at present, despite its close proximity to Widnes town centre and the strategic highway network.
- 7.80. It is recognised that the Waterfront area currently reflects the traditional layout of historic industrial areas, being dominated by large sites that are often unconnected to each other. However, opportunities for increasing overall accessibility to the location around, and by the adoption of a transport framework for the area, incremental improvements will be able to be implemented in conjunction with new development opportunities. In particular the area has an excellent network of potential walking and cycling routes that are waiting to be exploited and the masterplan for the area aims to provide the catalyst for such improvements.
- 7.81. In summary, proposals to create new vehicular and greenway links will help to consolidate transport networks within and through the area, and will help to tie in the urban fabric of the Waterfront zone with surrounding districts. Generating a significant increase in public transport, walking and cycling, should be a key aim of future regeneration activity. This will help open up the development site to new visitors and users and will be required to overcome the area's current industrial layout constraints.
- 7.82. The benefits of the above infrastructure elements, as shown on the accompanying Transport Framework drawing (see Figure 7.4, can be summarised as:

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- Key**
- Strategic Road Links / HGV Primary Routes
  - Primary Traffic Access Route with Bus Provision
  - Primary Bus Link Highway Improvements with provision for pedestrians / cyclists
  - Pedestrian / Cycle Greenway
  - Secondary Vehicular Link with pedestrian / cycle provision
  - Secondary Vehicular Link with pedestrian / cycle / bus provision
  - Key Site Gateway with pedestrian crossing facilities
  - Potential Future Bridleway
  - Mersey Gateway Bridge and Tolling Areas
- Dashed lines represent proposed future links

Figure 7.4  
Movement Framework

SCALE	1:10	DATE	Feb 2008
DESIGNER	FM/PM		

Transport Framework  
Wldnes Waterfront

FABER MAUNSELL AECOM

- **Mersey Gateway Bridge** – This is a major regional transport scheme passing to the south of the Widnes Waterfront area and represents Halton’s key transport scheme for the Local Transport Plan period 2006-2011. It would create a new much needed strategic crossing of the River Mersey, improving the reliability of travel times in the area and providing extra traffic capacity in both north and south directions.

This scheme will provide a major opportunity to increase the profile and accessibility of the Waterfront area. However it should also be noted that the new bridge may increase overall traffic, and that the traffic pressures currently experienced within the vicinity may change due to the impact of nearby tolling areas on the A568 Ashley Way.

- **New link from Fiddlers Ferry Road to Gorsey Lane** – This major element of infrastructure would open up a new primary access route from Fiddlers Ferry Road to the Widnes Waterfront area, increasing access to the strategic road network from the site, increasing site permeability, and creating new options for site development. It should be noted however that construction of this link would need careful consideration of future optimal junction arrangement, given the roundabouts at adjacent junctions on Fiddlers Ferry Road and its existing 60mph speed limit. In addition, pedestrian movements along Fiddlers Ferry Road and to nearby residential areas would also need to be catered for. However this route could also serve as a new bus link into the site and could be planned as such, with new stops provided within easy walking distance of the frontages of new developments. The permeability benefits of this link would be significant.
- **Gorsey Lane highway loop east** – This extension of the new link from Fiddlers Ferry Road to Gorsey Lane would continue to loop round and rejoin further south on Gorsey Lane, opening up developable land to the east. It could also tie in with new bus routing arrangements associated with the new link from Fiddlers Ferry Road, creating a new circular route for buses at the heart of the Widnes Waterfront area. This would also link south to St Helens Canal and the waterfront.
- **Extension of Earle Road south to Sankey Canal** - This infrastructure element would be a secondary vehicle link that would serve

the redevelopment of the adjacent sites. Constrained by a rail over road bridge, this link is valuable nonetheless and its use could be maximised if residential development to the south of the rail line is forthcoming.

- **Easterly link from Earle Road to southern termination of Tan House Lane and beyond** – Similar to the extension of Earle Road this link would provide a secondary vehicular link to serve the redevelopment of adjacent sites. However, this would represent a new link that would open up accessibility to the southern sites within the Waterfront area from its primary access to the A568 Watkinson Way. As such it has high potential for being an attractively designed link that ties in with the high standard of public realm on Earle Road, transforming the image of this presently run down area, and encouraging a high standard of new development.
- **Pedestrian link to Naylor Road** – This would create a new pedestrian (or possible cycle) link from nearby residential areas to Fiddlers Ferry Road, allowing a new pedestrian route to be created from housing areas into the heart of the Widnes Waterfront area. A key benefit of this scheme is that it would increase permeability from residential areas into the Widnes Waterfront zone, thereby encouraging walking and cycling trips.

7.83. It should be noted however that whilst the above transport improvement schemes would undoubtedly benefit the operation, image and connectivity of the Widnes Waterfront area, with the exception of construction of the Mersey Gateway Bridge, none of the above have any agreed funding mechanism at present.



## 8. Delivery Strategy

- 8.1. The aim of the Delivery strategy is to provide a framework for the implementation of the masterplan over the next five years to 2013.
- 8.2. It is recognised that in the current economic climate, delivery of commercial development at Widnes Waterfront is likely to be difficult, particularly given the high level of infrastructure required, ground remediation, and the rents and land values that can realistically be achieved in the current market. Therefore, the phasing of development and key projects is an important element to the Delivery Strategy, with existing planned developments and projects (currently considered to be viable or which can be funded) forming the first phase.
- 8.3. The Delivery Strategy addresses a number of key factors that will affect implementation of the masterplan.
- Delivery Framework
  - Funding
  - Phasing
  - Cost and values
  - Land assembly issues and constraints
  - Planning framework
  - Future actions.

### Delivery Strategy

- 8.4. To date Halton Borough Council has made considerable progress in the delivery of a number of key projects at Widnes Waterfront, led by the Major Projects Team. With Phase 1, around 27 ha of land has been reclaimed, re-used or developed out.

- 8.5. No single body has delivered these projects. Whilst a delivery vehicle was set up by Halton, through a joint venture with St Modwen (Widnes Regeneration Limited), development and infrastructure projects have been delivered by a series of public and private organisations.
- 8.6. A number of projects remain in the pipeline. Although development activity is currently at a standstill, in time as the economic situation improves, some of these projects should be delivered.
- 8.7. The delivery framework needs to address the strategic objectives of the masterplan where there is not an immediate or short-term proposal to develop. This may be through a single delivery vehicle or, alternatively, a continuation of a mix of public and private sector initiatives.
- 8.8. Halton Borough Council's ongoing role in the delivery of projects is seen as vital to drive and co-ordinate projects, and the overall programme of delivery.

### Funding

- 8.9. The Strategy will review the current and emerging funding streams available from the public sector, and consider the role of the private sector in funding projects.
- 8.10. A number of the programmes which previously funded Phase 1 projects have now ended. The Baseline Report reviewed the funding position in November 2008, reporting on:
- Neighbourhood Renewal Funds (replacing the Single Regeneration Budget)
  - NWDA Single Programme
  - ERDF

- Mid-Mersey Growth Point Bid.

- 8.11. Where monies are available, the Delivery Strategy will identify where projects can be facilitated, and where funding gaps will mean that without further finance streams, projects are unlikely to be delivered.
- 8.12. The Strategy will aim to identify early-win projects which can be funded and do not face major obstacles to implementation. This may include private sector involvement.

### Phasing

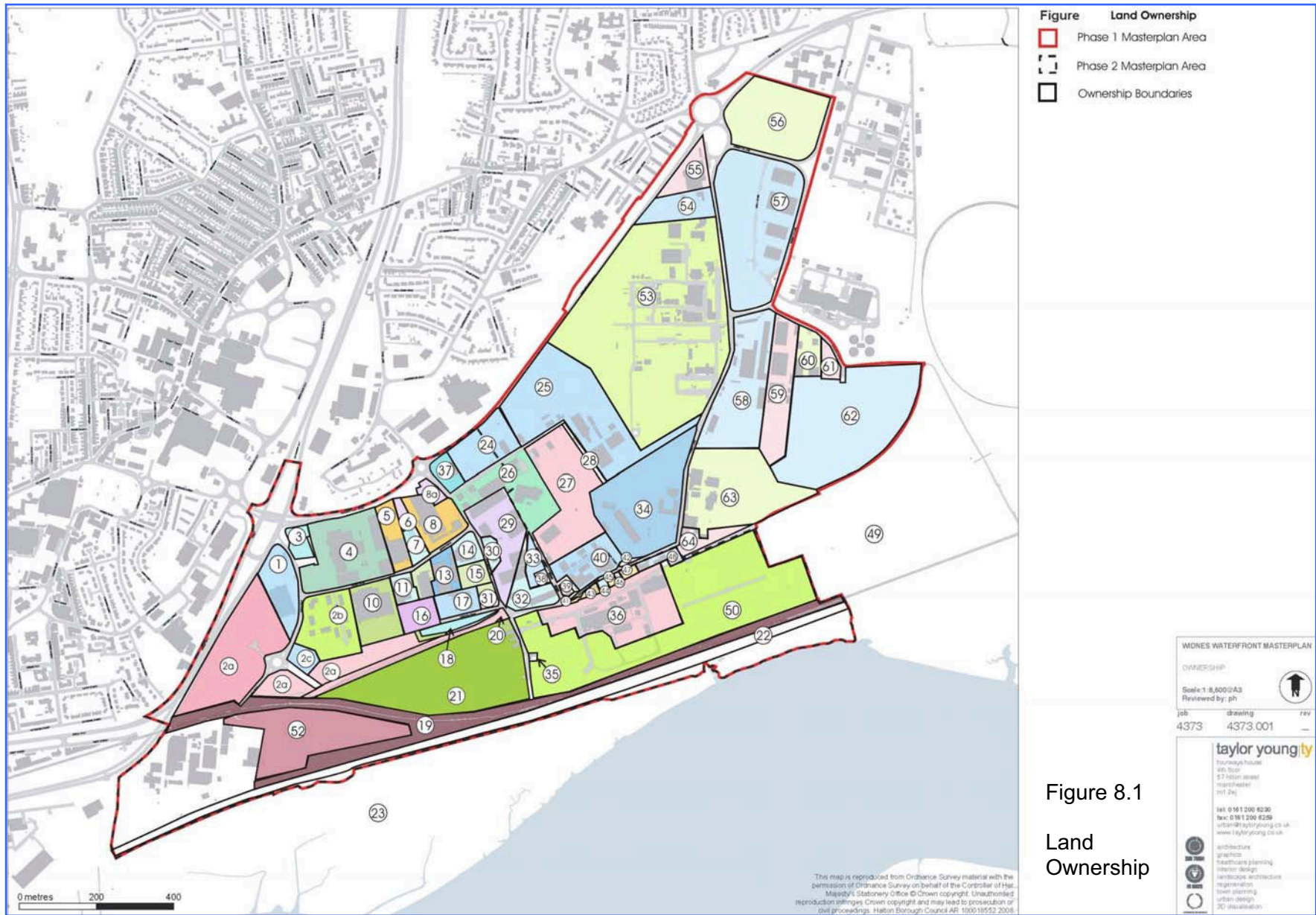
- 8.13. The Strategic Objectives involve the development and delivery of a range of projects to 2013. Some projects appear certain and fixed, such as The Hive leisure development, and Phase 2 of Easter Park. Others will depend on a range of factors which can aid or constrain development. The masterplan is deliberately not fixed and needs to be flexible to adapt to the aspirations of the stakeholders and the changing economic conditions.
- 8.14. However, whilst flexibility is key, it is important to establish a programme for the phasing of development that will prioritise actions and activities. The programme can only be indicative but will seek to categorise as follows:
- Projects currently viable or deliverable
  - Projects which can be funded from existing funding streams and which do not face major constraints
  - Projects which cannot be funded at present, but where funding streams can be identified
  - Projects which are highly speculative but which could become viable with an improving market
  - Projects that are unlikely to be delivered and which are highly constrained.
- 8.15. Figure 8.1 shows how the masterplan can be phased, with **Phase One** being those projects and sites falling into the first three aforementioned categories and which could be delivered between 2009-2013.

Phase 1 sites include:

- The Hive
- Tanhouse Lane North
- Tanhouse Lane South
- Easter
- Aston Land
- Johnson's Lane
- Bayer
- Improved crossing points

8.16. **Phase Two** are the remaining categories, which are sites that are either highly constrained or highly speculative, and in the current economic climate are unlikely to see any activity in the next five years.

8.17. Phase Two include Thermphos, which is still a working manufacturing facility and which will be very costly to relocate and decommission, and the Muspratt site, which has major access issues and is known to be heavily contaminated.



Plot No.	Owner	Plot No.	Owner	Plot No.	Owner
1	UK Land Estates	22	HBC (St Helens Canal)	43	Shepherd Widnes
2a	Halton Borough Council (HBC)	23	Broadthorn	44	F.W Bamber
2b	Priority Sites	24	Gateway Heritage Ltd	45	Shepherd Widnes
2c	Langtree Group	25	Plasmor Limited	46	J.Hollywood & J.McCan
3	Mitchell & Butlers	26	Forward Chemicals	47	Shepherd Widnes
4	Property Alliance	27	Various including Riverside Truck Rental, Cemex, and Goldrigg	48	Shepherd Widnes
5	Karalius Brothers Waste	28	Plasmor Limited	49	Broadthorn
6	Karalius Brothers Waste	29	Widnes Regeneration Limited	50	Broadthorn
7	Karalius Brothers Waste	30	Tanhouse Garages	51	
8	Pension Trustees (leased by VTS Plastech)	31	MA Trading	52	Broadthorn
8a	Pension Trustees (leased by Maltacourt Ltd)	32	Widnes Regeneration Ltd	53	BayerCrop
10	British Gypsum	33	British Gas Plc	54	Lewis Capital
11	Rotrinia Stuffing RPV	34	Project Properties (Suttons)	55	Delavan
13	Monopol Holdings Ltd	35	Saffil Ltd	56	Aston Land
14	American E-Z Storage	36	Saffil Ltd	57	United Utilities
15	Project Properties (Suttons)	37	ATS	58	Lythgoe Estates
16	Clarke Transport	38	British Gas Plc	59	Ecocycle Waste
17	Jones (Alco Waste)	39	Shepherd Widnes	60	NA
18	J S & I Jones	40	Shepherd Widnes	61	HBC
19	Network Rail	41	HBC	62	HBC
20	HBC	41	HBC	63	WRL - Croda
21	Routledge	42	HBC	64	Industrial Chemicals

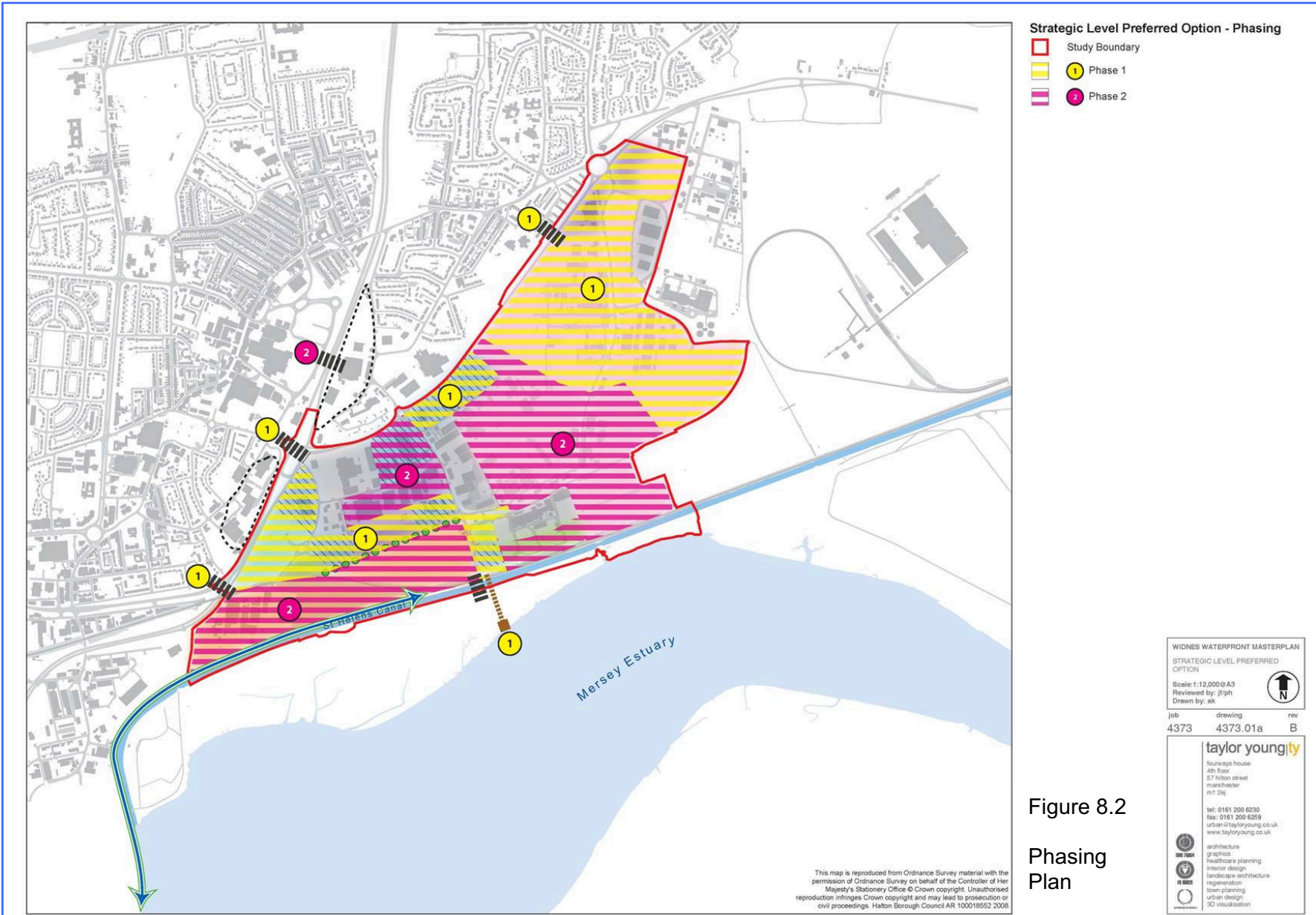


Figure 8.2  
Phasing  
Plan

## Costs and Values

- 8.18. At present only very broad costs and values have been ascertained, and much more detailed design and cost modeling will be required to determine viability and funding requirements.
- 8.19. The Delivery Strategy will summarise the known costs and values, and estimate the level of funding that may be required. This will include:

### Costs

- Acquisition costs
- Infrastructure
- Remediation
- Public realm improvements

### Values

- Estimates of land values for the various uses.

## Land Assembly Issues and Constraints

- 8.20. Widnes Waterfront is held in a large number of separate ownerships. These include Halton Borough Council, developers who have acquired land for development; speculators holding land that they are unlikely to develop themselves (but where the aim is to capitalise from future development value), owners or occupiers, and property investors who hold land and property to derive rental income from tenant companies.



- 8.21. This range of ownerships brings with it differing factors and issues that will affect future delivery.
- 8.22. The Strategy will make recommendations with regard to acquisition and will consider the merits of:
- Wholesale compulsory acquisition or acquisition through negotiation by the public sector
  - Selective purchases
  - Facilitating private sector acquisition through partnership
  - Leaving the process to the market.
- 8.23. Wholesale acquisition by the public sector is unlikely, and the Strategy will build on those sites already owned and available for development, whilst prioritising other strategic purchases.
- 8.24. Sites identified for development in some cases are in beneficial uses, and the merit/cost of relocating business needs to be considered.

#### Planning Framework

- 8.25. The current planning framework and emerging LDF will form the basis for development. Where the masterplan diverges from the current framework, Halton Borough Council will need to address necessary steps to support and facilitate uses identified.
- 8.26. This may involve a Supplementary Planning Document and the preparation of specific development briefs for individual sites and projects.

#### Infrastructure Funding Options

- 8.27. Funding for the infrastructure elements of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan could potentially be secured by one of the following methods:

### **NWDA funding**

- 8.28. It may be possible to secure NWDA funding to upgrade infrastructure within the Widnes Waterfront site, in order to increase the attractiveness of the area to potential investors and secure additional job creation.

### **LTP Funding**

- 8.29. The Halton LTP provides the strategy for transport funding expenditure between the years 2006-2011 with the strategy extending beyond this period. LTP funding streams are varied and can be aligned with core themes of the LTP such as sustainable transport policy and access to employment. However it should be noted that with the Halton LTP being geared towards provision of the Mersey Gateway Bridge at present, funding for other initiatives may currently be limited. The Halton LTP already provides the basis for much of the supported bus service provision in place across the Waterfront area, but extension of the bus network within the area should be considered carefully, balancing aspirations for public transport penetration into the site in line with available resources.

### **Halton Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

- 8.30. This is a potential source of funding that could be relevant to delivering some of the infrastructure elements of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan. Every highway authority in England is required to produce these plans, which focus not only on improving rights of way but are also intended to deliver an integrated network of routes in between town and country. The advantage of the ROWIP is that it identifies what rights of way improvements are needed and it is also subject to public consultation. Grants and other non-statutory sources of funding will be used to translate the finished plans into action. i.e. this is a non LTP source. Faber Maunsell would advise it is ensured that the infrastructure delivery elements of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan are compatible with the Halton ROWIP.

### **Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy**

- 8.31. The proposed new Mersey Gateway is a Major Scheme considered within the North West Regional Funding Allocation, and as such it is not directly funded from within the Halton LTP. However, it is necessary that the major scheme bid is closely aligned to the priorities of the LTP, and indeed the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy proposes to dramatically improve walking, cycling and public transport networks in this area of Halton from 2014 onwards. Clearly due to the proximity of the Widnes Waterfront site to the proposed Mersey Gateway there are opportunities to align the required infrastructure in the Widnes Waterfront area with that intended to be delivered as part of the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport strategy, and possibilities for funding some elements of infrastructure provision via this source could also result.

### **Existing Capital Expenditure Budget**

- 8.32. This funding stream is derived from the LTP process but will have already been agreed for Halton. Designed to fund a range of transport improvement measures, this may be able to provide funding for small scale improvements to infrastructure across the site i.e. pedestrian crossing and cycle provision improvements

### **S106 contributions**

- 8.33. A s.106 contribution strategy needs to be evolved. Contributions from developers to infrastructure have often been on an ad hoc basis in the Widnes Waterfront area that reflected where appropriate junction improvements had already taken place and where proposed development was in line with masterplan aspirations. Should an overarching strategy for contributions not be agreed, it is likely that the exact S106 contribution amount would be made for each development on the basis of need and in order to secure appropriate access to employment.

## Community Infrastructure Levy

- 8.34. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new levy which local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to charge on most types of new development in their area. CIL charges will be based on simple formulae which relate the size of the charge to the size and character of the development paying it. The proceeds of the levy will be spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure to support the development of the area.

### Recommendations

- 8.35. Faber Maunsell would advise the following in order to further inform the improvement of transport infrastructure across the Widnes Waterfront site:
- A detailed transport framework for the study area should be developed. This would identify potential areas for transport improvement, examining these in greater detail, and provide an overall vision with which to inform transport policy within the area for years to come.
  - Consideration should be given to how best to fund highway improvements in light of a general lack of policy guidance and agreed contribution strategy.
  - Detailed design and costing for the various infrastructure projects noted for the Widnes Waterfront area should be undertaken so that conclusions may be drawn regarding the feasibility, impact, and overall cost-benefit ratio for each.
  - Consultations should be undertaken with NWDA and other key regional and local funding sources, to discuss the potential for development within the Widnes Waterfront area and possible funding avenues that may support this.

### Future Actions

- 8.36. The Delivery Strategy, to be prepared by BE Group, will identify other actions that will be required to implement the masterplan during the lifetime of Phase 2.

## 9. Conclusion and Next Steps

- 9.1. The Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy Phase 2, supported by a committed steering group, has developed considerable momentum over the course of this study since September 2008. This momentum needs to be maintained by Halton Borough Council and their partners to ensure that work commences on delivering the aspirations of this Masterplan Framework, in spite of the current economic climate.
- 9.2. The Framework outlines the phasing of the redevelopment, looking initially at what can be achieved in advance of 2013, but also considering the longer term future of this area in a stronger property market. A series of quick wins should be developed to raise developer confidence and begin to alter the offer, perceptions and use-patterns of the Waterfront (see Chapter 8). These may be broadly based on environmental improvements and the progressive play ideas, drawing visitors to a new 'destination' at the end of Tan House Lane.
- 9.3. Diversifying the variety of land uses, and introducing activity outside of normal working hours through the addition of residential and commercial leisure, will enable the Waterfront to become a safer and more desirable area. It is crucial to continue to provide for the existing small industry that exists in the area though. This masterplan seeks to accommodate both in harmony, utilising landscape buffers and carefully clustering uses to mitigate any 'bad neighbour' issues.
- 9.4. Deliverability through economic recession will not be straightforward; however, there is clearly an opportunity for priority land assembly, public realm improvements and even preparation of development briefs for individual parcels of land. It is envisaged that the first phase of delivery of this masterplan will focus on projects that are currently viable / deliverable, funded from existing finance streams and do not face major constraints. These issues will be drawn out and presented in the Delivery Strategy that accompanies this report.

- 9.5. In order to add the necessary policy weight to the Phase 2 Masterplan, it may be possible to explore ways to incorporate it into the emerging Core Strategy for Halton, or through an update to the existing Widnes Waterfront SPD.
- 9.6. The delivery of the Mersey Gateway Bridge and surrounding regeneration initiatives at Spike Island for example, will provide a major catalyst for the revitalisation of the Waterfront area. Despite the current adverse economic conditions the opportunity to redevelop and redefine this area, maximising the natural assets, still remains great - both over the next five years and into the future.

**Next Steps:**

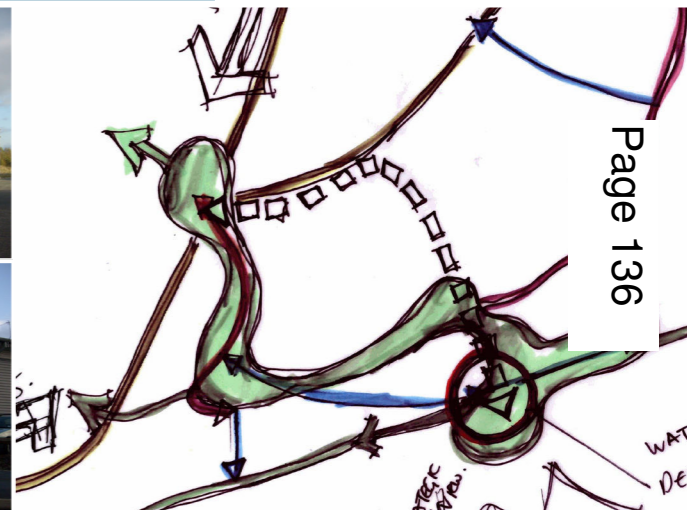
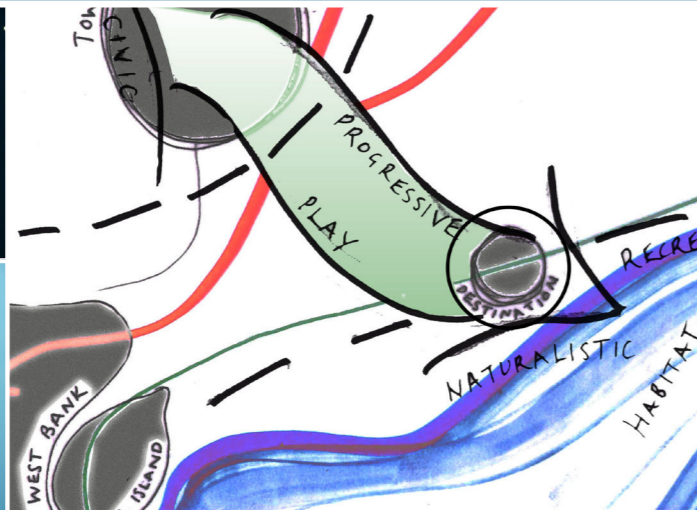
- 9.7. The key specific next steps include:
- BE Group will now complete a detailed Delivery Strategy to accompany and support this Masterplan Framework.
  - The potential to update the existing Widnes Waterfront SPD with the findings of this study.
  - Progress quick win projects – e.g. public realm / landscaping works, key site acquisition and ‘The Hive’ development.
  - Update and revise Phase 1 design guidance.
  - Development Briefs for key public sector sites e.g. Bayer, Johnson’s Lane etc.
  - Approach commercial leisure providers and British Cycling to ascertain interest in the Waterfront.
  - Continue to court potential investors and developers, marketing the Waterfront at every opportunity.







I FLUTTER AND FLY IN FRONT  
OF THE MOON  
...LIKE A SILHOUETTE



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