

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16th July 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Environment

SUBJECT: Widnes Waterfront Phase 2 Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy

WARDS: Riverside, however due to the size and nature of the project it benefits the whole borough

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present for approval and adoption the Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy for the Widnes Waterfront, which has been prepared in partnership with the Council by consultants Taylor Young supported by the BE Group and Faber Maunsell.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy Phase 2 undertaken by Taylor Young for Halton Borough Council be endorsed; and**
- (2) the Strategic Director for Environment, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation and Development, be authorised to develop and deliver the Masterplan Framework in consultation with landowners, business's, developers and grant aid bodies.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The new 'Widnes Waterfront Vision' EDZ in Southern Widnes was identified by Government Office North West as a Strategic Site and received approval to the commitment of £8m of ERDF funding in February 2002.

3.2 The Council approved the original Widnes Waterfront Master Plan and Delivery Strategy at Executive Board on the 22nd May 2003.

3.3 Taylor Young supported by BE group and Faber Maunsell were commissioned by Halton Borough Council in October 2008 to prepare a Phase 2 Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy to take the regeneration of Widnes Waterfront forward to 2013.

3.4 The reasoning behind refreshing the original Master Plan were:-

- Since the start of the original Master Plan process the alignment of the new Mersey Gateway bridge has been agreed which doesn't involve land take within the current Widnes Waterfront area;
 - The end of the Objective 2 European Regional Development Funding (ERDF);
 - The subsequent enlargement of the Waterfront area to include the area at the top of Gorse Lane, in particular the former Bayer Site and the Council owned Johnson Lane site;
 - The change in the economic climate.
- 3.5 The Phase 2 Masterplan and Delivery Strategy for the Widnes Waterfront area has been developed to set out a clear vision and regeneration framework for the future of this area. The strategy has been prepared with the active involvement of the Widnes Waterfront Council officer's Steering Group and also from the business community represented at the Widnes Waterfront Business Improvement Area Steering Group. The agreed vision developed for the future of the Waterfront 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'.
- 3.6 The Masterplan Framework sets out a number of key opportunities and demonstrator projects which build on the successes to date to create a Widnes Waterfront destination. Careful consideration has 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 uses.
- 3.7 The Masterplan proposes a range of mixed use development opportunities within the Widnes Waterfront site including the following: smaller scale industry, quality office, leisure, residential, public open space and soft leisure.
- 3.8 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 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.
- 3.9 The plan Figure 1.1 (Page 7 of the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2) shows the Masterplan Framework for Widnes Waterfront. The main elements are outlined below:-
- It is proposed to retain and consolidate smaller industry around the western and north western area of the Waterfront area.

- A range of quality office use is proposed at key locations carefully selected to ensure that it is well connected to the wider context such as along key frontages. There is value in ensuring that these uses and the public realm surrounding them are well designed particularly in terms of beginning the 'step change' in improving perceptions of the area.
- Leisure uses will be focussed around the town centre, on a prominent site along the A577 frontage. This site already has planning permission for a leisure development. There are also proposals for some soft and commercial leisure proposals.
- There is a new residential quarter proposed to the south east of the Waterfront area. It is envisaged that, subject to appropriate flood risk and contamination constraints, residential should be at a minimum of 40 hectares per hectare. There is potential to house approximately 800 units.
- There are also six mixed-use development opportunities which allow flexibility within suggested use class parameters.

3.10 The Masterplan Framework can be used as the basis for discussions with funding partners such as Northwest Development Agency and the Homes and Community Agency.

3.11 This Delivery Strategy provides a guide for the implementation Masterplan Framework. It outlines how the Council can build on the successful delivery of projects to date. The key to deliverability in the current economic climate is flexibility and phasing of the development. In terms of immediate next steps, quick wins should be progressed including public realm and land assembly considered to enable and attract developer interest once the property market recovers.

3.12 A copy of the Phase 2 Masterplan Framework and the Delivery Strategy has been sent (separately) to all Executive Board Members.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Masterplan Framework and Delivery Strategy align with the guiding principles of Halton's Corporate Plan 2006-11 and Halton's Community Strategy 2006/11. It will bring large areas of derelict, brownfield land back into use, and provide employment and training opportunities.

4.2 Once the master plan has been consulted upon and refined further, the Strategic Director for Environment will prepare a Supplementary Planning Document to replace the previous document and to support the Core Strategy.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The individual demonstrator projects will be designed and implemented separately as funding can be secured and within the parameters of resources available.

5.2 Funding will also be sought from the following:

- Northwest Development Agency
- Homes and Communities Agency
- European Funding
- Mersey Gateway Bridge
- Local Transport Plan
- Section 106 monies
- Specific initiatives such as the “Mersey Waterfront Regional Park” and Mid Mersey Growth Point
- Local Businesses
- Developers
- NHS
- Any other available funding

5.3 The local authority ability to fund initiatives is likely to be limited in the future and the Council will look to other agencies for financial support.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None known.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Overall the Widnes Waterfront programme will assist in providing job opportunities for local people and will go some way in addressing the level of unemployment in Halton.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The overall Widnes Waterfront programme provides new walking and cycling routes as well as a bus service which offer safe and affordable means of accessing key services and thereby can overcome many of the transport barriers often faced by people who do not own or have access to cars.

6.3 A Safer Halton

The Widnes Waterfront programme will provide much-needed environmental improvements to the area.

6.4 Halton’s Urban Renewal

The Widnes Waterfront programme is acting as a catalyst to attract developers and new businesses to the Widnes Waterfront area by creating an attractive, well-accessed and serviced area which provides a safe and attractive environment for employees and visitors.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The Widnes Waterfront risk analysis is included on the Council's Risk Register.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The recommendations within this report will not have any identifiable equality and diversity implications.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

This is necessary to bring forward further development at the Widnes Waterfront.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The alternative is not to progress the Widnes Waterfront. This has been rejected as it would not contribute to the Urban Renewal objectives.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Immediate

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2 and the Widnes Waterfront Delivery Strategy are available in the Members Rooms in both Widnes and Runcorn

