Outreach Consultation Report
Stage 2

On behalf of Wirral Growth Company
January 2020

Your Town, Your Say

WIRRAL GROWTH COMPANY

A joint venture between

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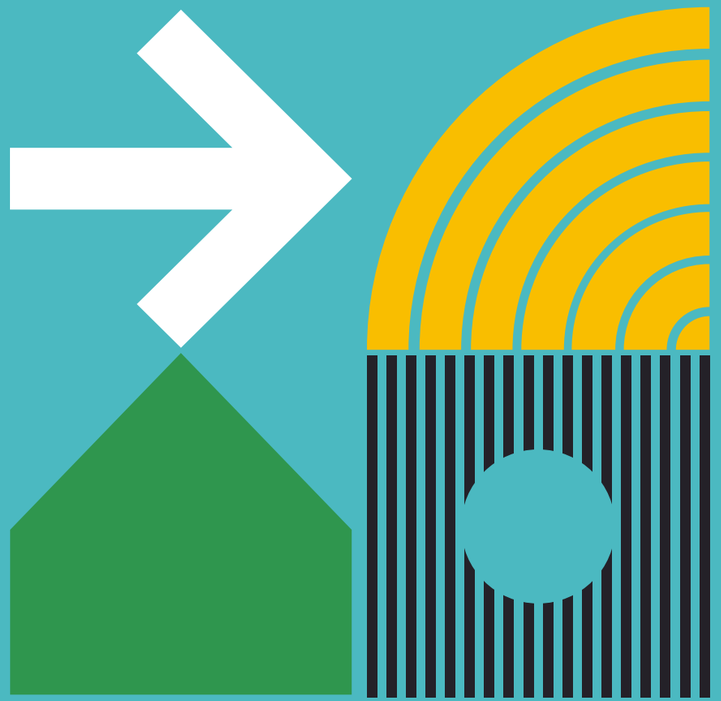
1.0 Introduction



Purpose of this Report

1.1 During late 2019, Wirral Growth Company (WGC) carried out the second stage of its extensive programme of stakeholder and community consultation to continue public discussion about the future of Birkenhead town centre. This second stage of consultation ran from the 7th to the 30th November.

1.2 The purpose of this stage of the consultation process was to build upon the events carried out as part of the stage one activity during Spring/Summer 2019. During stage one, local stakeholders identified what they liked and didn't like about Birkenhead, which enabled the identification of key growth and local development themes for the town centre. The outcomes of the stage one consultation have directly shaped the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead town centre.

1.3 This 'Your Town, Your Say' Outreach Consultation Report sets out the activities undertaken as part of the second stage of the consultation process, providing a summary of the responses received, and the key considerations and priorities that need to be addressed by the masterplan as it evolves and progresses towards a planning application.

Delivering a new Birkenhead

1.4 WGC is committed to delivering a new, revitalised Birkenhead for the local community and the wider region. The emerging draft masterplan has taken on board comments captured from the local community and organisations during the stage one consultation, to present a vision for real change in the heart of the town centre. For example, WGC were told during the stage one consultation that a new market was needed; that more activity in Birkenhead in the evening was needed; that there aren't enough attractive public spaces; that job opportunities are poor and that the residents wanted a town centre that they could enjoy and feel safe in.

1.5 Continuing to engage with and involve the local community is critical to the progress of WGC's vision and ambitions for Birkenhead town centre. By listening to the views of stakeholders and the community, WGC can create a masterplan for Birkenhead town centre, that benefits local businesses, provides improved opportunities for residents and delivers a new town centre, which everyone will enjoy and be proud of.

The emerging masterplan for Birkenhead town centre

1.6 The starting point for the Birkenhead masterplan has been to use land under option to WGG along with other key sites and opportunity areas.

1.7 Applying this approach, the masterplan area is within the town centre, and extends to approximately 8.6 hectares. The site spans from the Pyramids Shopping Centre / Borough Pavement to the south, to the junction of Europa Boulevard and Price Street in the north.

1.8 The key proposals of the emerging draft masterplan that formed part of the stage two consultation are set out below:

Civic hub
Delivery of flexible and sustainable office floorspace for occupation by Wirral Council

New commercial office development Grade A office floorspace to meet demand for high-quality commercial floorspace in the town centre

A new home for Birkenhead Market
Options for the new market are being considered through this consultation. The first option is to move the market to the old Marks & Spencer unit, which will ensure continuity of trade for stall holders and maintain its position at the heart of the town centre. A second option is for the market to be housed in a new building on the site of the existing market. The third option is for the market to be located on the existing site of B&M. Whichever option is chosen, a new market must help re-vitalise the town centre and provide a quality attraction generating significant visitors and footfall

A new leisure centre
A modern and more energy-efficient leisure centre close to Conway Park station

New housing
A range of much-needed homes, including affordable housing on a sustainable and brownfield site around Conway Park Station

New public space
The removal of the current market hall allows for the creation of new open space and public realm within the town centre to act as a connecting space between the retail, commercial and leisure elements of the proposed masterplan. Such integration will improve pedestrian and cycle links. It will also create an attractive environment, encouraging opportunities for events and participation in town centre-based activities

Improved highway and transport infrastructure
Investment in the local road network will improve the circulation of traffic and allow for improved connectivity for both pedestrians and cyclists. This includes works to further improve Birkenhead's bus station.

To make sure the full potential of Birkenhead can be realised, it is proposed that the masterplan will be brought forward in phases.
The emerging phasing plans can be accessed on the WGC website.

Statement structure

1.9 This statement is structured as follows:

Section 2 summarises the methods used to advertise the consultation as well as the methods used to engage with people from across the Wirral

Section 3 provides a breakdown the comments received during the consultation period, and

Section 4 summarises the key considerations and priorities that need to be addressed when refining the masterplan.

2.0 Approach to Communication & Engagement

2.1

The objective of the first stage of consultation was to introduce WGC and its ambitions for Birkenhead town centre, but more importantly it was also designed to build an understanding of what people currently like and don't like about Birkenhead town centre. Through this first stage of consultation it was possible to determine which issues are most important to local residents and stakeholders to aid the process of designing an emerging draft masterplan which seeks to address the issues raised.

2.2 Stage one helped to identify new development opportunities in Birkenhead town centre including:

- new business district with high-quality office space
- new leisure space, new residential neighbourhood
- improved market, and
- extensive improvements to the public realm with the goal of revitalising the town centre.

2.3 The full details and summary of the first stage of consultation are presented in the Outreach Consultation Report published in September 2019 and available to view on the WGC website wirralgrowthcompany.co.uk/have-your-say/birkenhead.

2.4 This autumn the second stage of consultation provided residents, businesses and visitors with the opportunity to share their views and opinions on WGC's vision for Birkenhead town centre. It also meant that public opinion about the specifics of the emerging draft masterplan could be garnered.

2.5 As with the first stage of consultation a wide range of events were held, and multiple ways of responding were provided. The methods of consultation undertaken by WGC during the second stage included:

- Drop-in event with elected members of Wirral Council
- Media launch
- Website
- Pop-up events in Birkenhead town centre.
- Dedicated event for Birkenhead market traders
- Workshop with the Wirral Multicultural Organisation
- Workshops with students attending Wirral Metropolitan College
- Workshop with The Hive Wirral Youth Zone, and
- Presentation to Birkenhead Business Improvement District (BID) and Wirral Chamber of Commerce.

2.6 Further information on each of the approaches is set out below.

‘Drop-in’ event with elected members of Wirral Council

2.7 Members of Wirral Council have been engaged with the process of formulating the WGC since its inception in 2017. Notwithstanding this, there was a local election in May 2019 which resulted in several new members being elected and changes to Wirral’s administration. In addition, as representatives of the local community, it was important that members were briefed on the proposed consultation strategy for the Birkenhead town centre project so they were fully informed prior to any public consultation events taking place.

2.8 On 17th October 2019, WGC project team gave a presentation to members of Wirral Council. The purpose of the event was to confirm WGC’s proposed area of focus in Birkenhead town centre, to share the emerging masterplan and early thoughts on phasing. The outreach activities programmed to take place during November 2019 were also shared for awareness.

2.9 At the ‘drop-in’ event, members were also offered the opportunity to ask the project team any questions they may have about the emerging draft masterplan. A summary of the Q&A is enclosed at section 3 of this report.

Press activity

2.10 The emerging draft masterplan was the subject of press activity during November. An early article feature in the Liverpool Echo on 4th November titled ‘Big move for bold plans to transform Birkenhead town centre’.

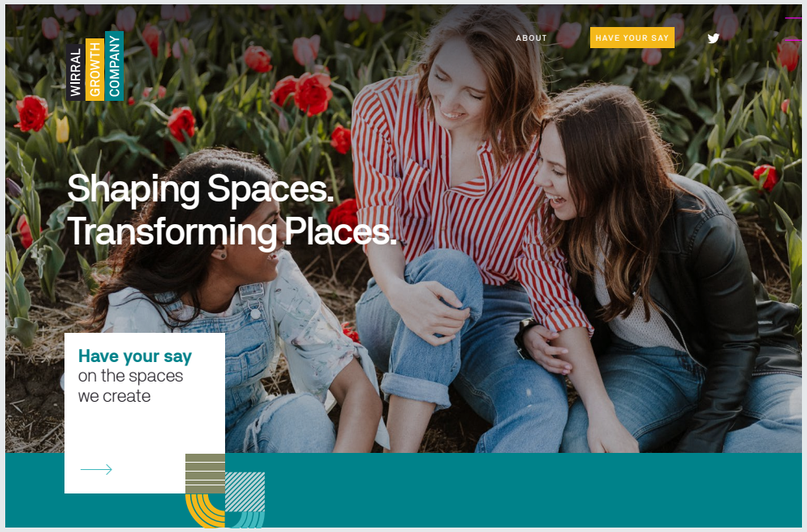
2.11 Separate press releases were shared by Place North West, Wirral Globe, the Liverpool Echo, the BusinessDesk and Insider Media. Copies of the press articles are included at **appendix A** for reference.

Website

2.12 Prior to the stage one of consultation, a dedicated consultation website was created at wirralgrowthcompany.co.uk. The purpose of the website was to provide all interested parties with the opportunity to view information about WGC and to raise awareness of the opportunity to be involved in the consultation process.

2.13 The website is still live, and it enables the public to download the Outreach Consultation Report for the first stage of consultation, as well as providing the opportunity to view images of the emerging draft masterplan and details of its potential phasing and key components.

Figure 1
Screenshot of WGC Homepage when the stage two consultation was live



2.14 Throughout the stage two consultation process, the WGC website was updated with the consultation material displayed at the pop-up events. It also provided an interactive questionnaire so people could submit their comments online, rather than using the paper copies available at the pop-up events.

2.15 Details of the web address were provided on all the consultation material and an interactive screen was made available at the pop-up events. It was also advertised through a range of platforms including the press release, comments forms and posters.

2.16 It is intended that the website will act as a live information portal for all WGC projects - from these early outreach stages to the submission of a formal planning application and through the delivery of development on site. It will be updated and used to maintain communication with key stakeholders and local people. Any future updates will be advertised and tweeted by WGC. A screenshot of the consultation homepage is included in figure 1.

Pop-up events in Birkenhead town centre

2.17 To again reach as wide an audience as possible, pop-up consultation events were held in The Pyramids Shopping Centre which were publicised via a variety of communications channels including:

Media Coverage

- **The Liverpool Echo**
  A digital and print media outlet with an average daily circulation of 35,038 across Merseyside
- **Wirral View**
  A digital media outlet with 13,290 subscribers (as of 1 September 2019) to Wirral View weekly email and posted to residents of the Wirral. Averaging 12,679 users per month in 2019; February saw a peak of 27,000 users. 30% of users visit the site directly, 28% visit via email (Wirral View weekly), 20% visit via social media
- **BBC Merseyside**
  A regional digital media outlet
- **Wirral Globe**
- **Place North West**
- **Insider Media**
- **BusinessDesk**

Social media

- **Tweeted by WGC** (@WirralGrowthCo) throughout November 2019 on 4th, 7th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 18th, 20th, 24th, 25th and 30th of November to 210 followers
- **WGC Instagram** (/wirralgrowthcompany) also posted a series of 7 photos on 8th, 19th and 26th of November to 81 followers

Posters in the Pyramids Shopping Centre

Advertising the location, times and dates of the pop-up events

Advertisement in the pop-up unit

Advertising the times and dates of the pop-up events

WGC website

Advertising the location, times and dates of the pop-up events as well as providing information in relation to WGC, the purpose of the consultation and how people can get involved

Leaflets distributed

Distributed by Birkenhead BID team to their members, and by the WGC team to stores in the Pyramids Shopping Centre and to market traders.

2.18 Photographs of the various advertising methods are show in figure 2.

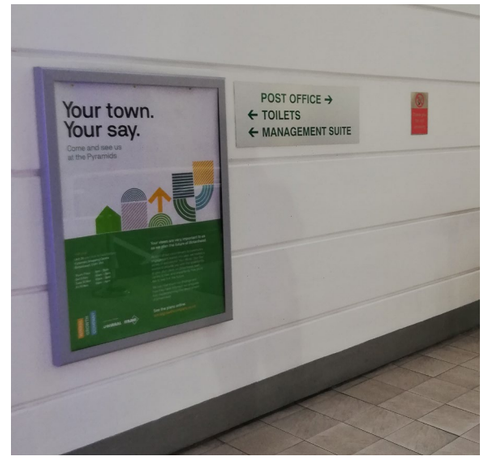
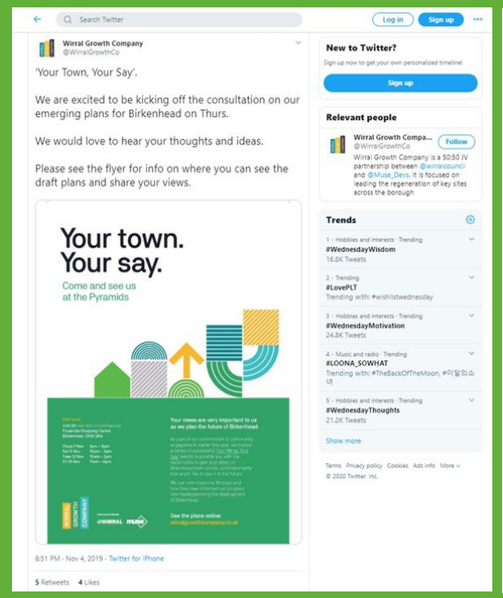
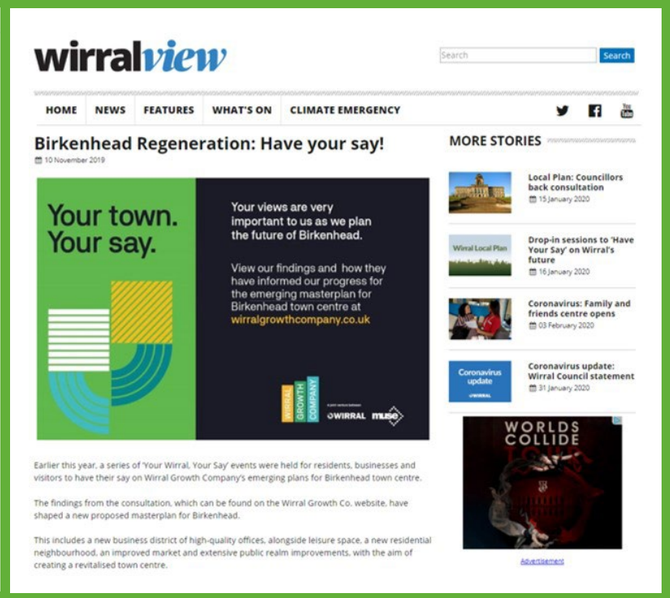


Figure 2
Advertising





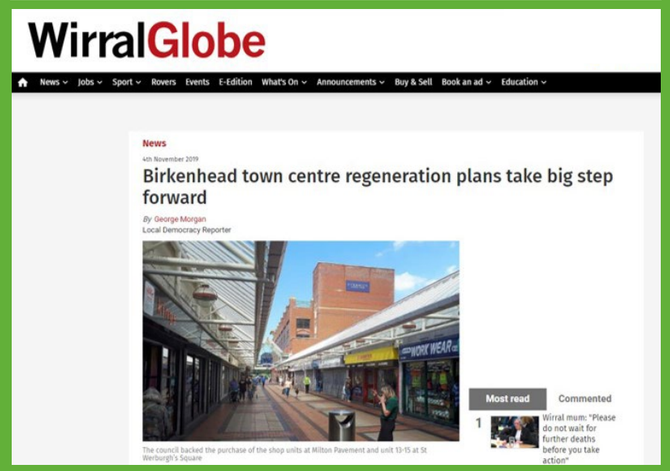


Figure 2
Advertising
Continued

2.19 Pop-up consultation events ran from 7th to 15th November 2019 at various times throughout the week to allow for people to attend at a time convenient for them. The pop-up events were held in Unit SU26 (next to Card Factory) in the Pyramids Shopping Centre. This location was chosen due to its central location within Birkenhead town centre. The dates and times of the events were as follows:

Thursday 7th November 2019
from 1pm to 6pm

Saturday 9th November 2019
from 10am to 3pm

Tuesday 12th November 2019
from 10am to 3pm

Friday 15th November 2019
from 11am to 4pm.

2.20 The pop-up events provided key stakeholders and local people with the opportunity to see how the first phase of consultation influenced the emerging draft masterplan. Information on display boards at the events provided a platform for discussion about Birkenhead town centre and the emerging draft masterplan before consultees provided feedback on the proposals. A copy of the display boards is included at **appendix B** for reference.

2.21 The consultation events were led by key members of the WGC project team. Team members were available throughout the events to talk to the public about the emerging draft masterplan, and to discuss any queries and assist with questions.

2.22 Feedback questionnaires were available at the pop-up events and workshops, which could be completed and returned either in person or via a freepost address. The questionnaires could also be completed online via the WGC website. The questionnaire sought people's thoughts and views on the emerging draft masterplan and questions posed on the form were:

- Age?
- Area of residence?
- How do you feel about the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead town centre on a scale of 1-10? 1 being negative and 10 being positive?
- What do you think of the new development opportunities? (like / dislike / neutral)
  - Civic hub
  - Commercial offices
  - New home for market
  - New leisure centre
  - New public spaces
  - New residential neighbourhoods
  - Local highway network and bus station
- Are there any areas where the emerging draft masterplan can be improved?
- Are there any specific issues that need to be considered as part of the planning process?
- Do you have any further comments on the emerging draft masterplan?

2.23 Those who attended the event were encouraged to complete and return the form at the events or return it afterwards via freepost by 30th November 2019. It was also made clear that views could be provided online using the available interactive screen or at home. A copy of the comment form is included at **appendix C** for reference.

2.24 During the pop-up events members of the WGC project team distributed comments cards to shops and stalls within the Pyramids Shopping Centre.

2.25 The event was attended by people from across the Borough as well as key stakeholders including local councillors, Wirral Chamber of Commerce (COC) and BID team. Photographs of the event are included at figure 3.

Figure 3
Photographs from the pop-up event Event for Birkenhead's market traders

Event for Birkenhead's market traders

2.26 During stage one of the consultation, a successful event was held with traders of Birkenhead Market. WGC were able to engage with local traders and shoppers within the market. The views collected at that point were key to shaping the emerging draft masterplan, therefore, it was considered essential to visit during stage two and ascertain their views and preferences about the future location of the new market and the proposals for the wider town centre.

2.27 To that end, a dedicated consultation event was held in unit E61 of the market on Thursday 11th November 2019 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. This location was chosen so traders could visit at a time convenient for them that was close to their place of work.

Figure 5
To right
Consultation photographs of the market traders' event

2.28 At the event itself, the same display boards (**appendix B**) used at the pop-up event were utilised as well as a CGI image of the emerging draft masterplan with the potential locations for the new market being highlighted. A copy of the image prepared for the event is shown at figure 4.

2.29 The comment forms (appendix C) were again made available to people who attended the event giving the opportunity for them to express their thoughts on the emerging draft options for the market and plans for the wider town centre.

2.30 During the event members of the WGC project team were on hand to speak with visitors and traders, but it was also recognised that not everyone would be able to leave their stall to visit the unit. To make sure that all traders could see and comment on the proposals (if they wished) members of the WGC team went to individual market stalls to hand out comment forms and to engage in discussion about the future of the market. A copy of the consultation leaflet and photographs of the event are included in figure 5.

Figure 4
Visual showing options for new market building.

Workshop with the Wirral Multicultural Organisation

2.31 A workshop was held (with interpreters present) to explain the emerging draft masterplan to members of the Wirral Multicultural Organisation. The workshop was held on 13th November 2019 from 10:00am to 11:30am at the Multicultural Organisation on Conway Street. The event was well attended with approximately 35 people present. The workshop was followed by a Q&A session after which attendees were invited to complete a hard-copy feedback form or were directed to the WGC website to complete the questionnaire online.

Workshop with The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone

2.32 The Hive is a purpose-built facility that provides a safe environment where young people from across the borough can go and enjoy themselves. Members have access to a wide range of facilities including a fitness centre, dance studio, indoor rock climbing, arts and crafts, media studio, music room as well as support to develop enterprise skills.

2.33 To actively engage with the future residents and workforce of Birkenhead, a focused stage two workshop was held on 25th November 2019 at The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone with young people aged 10-19.

2.34 At the workshop members of the WGC project team talked through the emerging draft masterplan and the timescales for delivery. The views of the young people attending were then sought and to make the event less formal, responses to the questions and ideas were written on large sheets of paper rather than on feedback forms.

Figure 6
Above Right
Photographs from the workshop at The Metropolitan College

Figure 7
Above Left
Photographs from the workshop at The Hive Wirral Youth Zone

Workshops with students attending Wirral Metropolitan College

2.35 Members of the WGC team visited Wirral Metropolitan College, providing students and staff with the opportunity to attend three consultation sessions over the course of a morning on the 27th of November 2019. The students were all studying subjects in the construction industry such as; carpentry and joinery, plumbing and gas studies and electrical installation studies.

2.36 The emerging draft masterplan was presented to students and their lecturers within a multi-media suite at the Wirral Waters Campus by the WGC team. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the proposals with the WGC team before completing feedback forms online. Consultation leaflets were also made available to take away or complete during the session if they did not want to use the online platform.

Workshop with The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone

Birkenhead BID and Wirral Chamber of Commerce

2.37 A presentation was held on the evening of 11th November 2019 at 5:45pm.

2.38 The WGC team took banners from the pop-up unit and presented the scheme to members, outlining what feedback had been received from the phase 1 consultation and what was being proposed by the draft emerging masterplan. Following the presentation questions were invited for the team to answer. The meeting discussed a breadth of topics to be considered as part of the scheme, including tackling the challenge of antisocial behaviour in Birkenhead town centre, provision of parking, and CCTC monitoring.

Figure 6
Photographs from the Wirral Multicultural Organisation workshop

Summary

2.39
Building upon stage 1 activity, the second stage of the engagement process has utilised a range of activities to promote WGC's proposals for Birkenhead and ensure that as many people as possible are made aware of the emerging draft masterplan. As well as again raising awareness, stage 2 of the engagement process was designed to encourage as much comment and feedback as possible on the draft emerging masterplan and to understand how it might be improved.

2.40
WGC is committed to making sure that the local people of Wirral are kept informed as the masterplan is refined and progressed. As with the information from the stage 1 consultation process, the emerging draft masterplan will continue to be available to view online and updates will be provided regularly.

3.0 Summary of Feedback

3.1

This section summarises the feedback and comments received in response to the consultation.

3.2 In total, there were 274 public responses gathered from the second stage of consultation. 192 responses (70%) were made online and 82 responses (30%) were paper copies.

3.3 The feedback collated is intended to be used in the preparation of the emerging masterplan for Birkenhead town centre. Feedback to the consultation was provided through the following means:

17 elected members of Wirral Council attended the briefing

220 Over 220 residents and stakeholders attended the pop-up events during November 2019

192 comments forms received online via the WGC website

82 comments forms returned at the consultation events or received via the freepost address

15 Approximately 15 traders attended the market traders' event and a further 10 were engaged in discussions at their stalls in November 2019

40 40+ young people attended the event at The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone in November 2019

35 people attended the workshop presentation at the Wirral Multicultural Organisation

34 students attended the sessions held at Wirral Metropolitan College.

Members briefing
(October 2019)

3.4 A summary of the discussions and comments received from the various events is set out below.

3.5 Members of the WGC project team met with and presented to elected members of Wirral Council on 17th October 2019.

3.6 As detailed in section 2, the purpose of the presentation was to primarily brief members on the WGC and the proposed consultation strategy for the Birkenhead town centre project, prior to any public consultation events taking place. At the end of the presentation there was an opportunity for members to express their views and ask any questions they may have on the proposals.

3.7 **Table 1** opposite summarises the feedback received in response to the presentation.

Table 1:
Summary of Comments from the Members Briefing

Theme	Summary of Comments
Outreach consultation	The update on the key themes and evidence from the stage one consultation was positively received and confirmation of the Stage 2 activity was welcomed. The proposed consultation at Wirral Met College, Wirral Multicultural Organisation and The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone was encouraged and it was acknowledged that there remained an ongoing need to identify local employment opportunities and apprenticeships, particularly for young people from deprived neighbourhoods.
Local context	Questions were raised in relation to the design of the emerging masterplan, its ability to reflecting local context and to make the scheme 'unique to Birkenhead'. Members discussed the importance to retain and expand on the existing business opportunities in Birkenhead.
Climate Change / Emergency	Members reiterated that the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre must be sustainable and must respond to issues relating to climate change following recent Declaration of a Climate Emergency.
Birkenhead Market	Members reiterated that Birkenhead is a market town and that is remains a 'unique' and important asset. It was acknowledged that the market was in decline and suffered from high levels of vacancy. Further clarity on the options for Birkenhead town centre was requested as part of the outreach / consultation process.
Other Comments	Queries were raised in relation to the flexibility of the masterplan and the timescales for the delivery of each phase.

Pop-up events in Birkenhead town centre (November 2019)

3.8 Consistent with stage one, four pop-up consultation events were held in Birkenhead Town Centre in November 2019. The primary purpose of the events was to obtain feedback from the key stakeholders and local people on what they think about the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead town centre.

3.9 To raise awareness the events were advertised widely in the press. In addition, adverts were posted around the town and a series of social media posts were actioned to drive interest and attendance at the consultation event. In total, more than 220 people attended the four events. It should, however, be noted that this is an approximate figure and the audience is based on information from the returned comment forms and it is inevitable that other people will have attended the event but not made themselves known to the team.

3.10 Those who attended the events and spoke to the WGC team were asked to mark their location on a map of the Liverpool City Region. This evidence demonstrates that most people who attended the events lived locally. However, some people travelled into Birkenhead from elsewhere in the Borough including Wallasey, New Brighton, West Kirby, Moreton and Bebington. There were also some people who travelled from elsewhere in the Liverpool City Region including Liverpool, Knowsley and Garston.

3.11 There were also several key stakeholders who attended the pop-up events. This included elected members, Wirral Chamber of Commerce, and Birkenhead Business Improvement District (BID).

3.12 A summary of the comment forms and verbal feedback received in response to the pop-up events is set out below.

Market traders consultation event (November 2019)

3.13 The market traders event took place in an empty unit in Birkenhead Market Hall on 11th November 2019 between 1pm and 3pm.

3.14 The event was attended by approximately 30 people and included a mix of traders as well as shoppers. Those who attended the event were asked to complete a comment form. A summary of the feedback received following this event and the pop-up events is set out in further detail below.

3.15 Comments were specifically sought about which of the three options presented was preferable for the location of the new market – On the site of the current market, on the site of the current B&M Unit or within the former M&S Unit. Several of the traders also offered additional comments and views verbally to the WGC project team at the event. **These can be summarised as follows:**

"The market will be much better if it is integrated into the rest of the town centre, it will be much better if it is within the old M&S Unit."

"Having a new market is a great idea, especially reusing existing vacant shops."

"The idea of a new market is all well and good but I don't know if my stall will survive long enough to move into it."

"Any move will have to be carefully managed, stall holders cannot afford to lose out on trade if it has to shut while the changeover happens."

"How will it be decided how big the stalls are? There needs to be a range of sizes and they should look and feel like stalls, not small shops."

Comment form analysis

3.16 As set out above, comment forms were made available at each pop-up event, at the market traders' event and they were also distributed to shops within the Pyramids and the Grange shopping centres. An interactive version of the comments form was also made available on the WGC website, which could be viewed and completed at the pop-up events.

3.17 A total of 274 comments forms were returned at the event, by post and online. 192 of the forms were received online via the WGC website and 82 returned at the consultation event or received via the freepost address. Attendees were given until the 30th November 2019 to return their comments by email and post.

3.18 It should be noted that some respondents did not provide answers for every question, therefore, totals will not necessarily add up to 100%.

3.19 Analysis of the responses received in relation to each of the questions set out on the comments form is set out below.

3.20 **Question 1: Age**

Of those who responded:

- 3% were aged 0-17
- 15% were aged 18-24
- 18% were aged 25-34
- 17% were aged 35-44
- 19% were aged 45-54
- 17% were aged 55-64
- 11% were aged 65+

3.21 Most of the people who responded to the stage 2 consultation event (47%) were aged 45 and over. This is a significant decrease from stage 1 when 75% of respondents were aged 45+. However, a greater proportion of people aged 25 and under responded than for stage 1 - 18% compared to only 4% for stage 1.

3.22 Moreover, the above age results do not take into account the comments which emerged from the workshop at The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone. At The Hive event, feedback from approximately 40 young people was provided on shared comment boards rather than individual comment forms.

3.23 Notwithstanding the above, the number of young participants who completed the feedback forms is still far below the proportion of respondents over the age of 45. This emphasises how difficult it is to engage with young people and the importance of WGC holding specialised events at The Hive and the Metropolitan College to engage with this sector of the community.

3.24 **Question 1: Area**

Of those who responded:

- 12% were from Wirral West
- 53% were from Birkenhead
- 13% were from Wallasey
- 9% were from Wirral South
- 8% were from Other areas

3.25 The results demonstrate that over half of the respondents who took part in the consultation lived in Birkenhead.

3.26 There was, however, some representation from the wider city region and several respondents from Liverpool. The views of people living farther afield are important if Birkenhead is to become a regional designation in line with its status as the largest settlement on the Wirral.

3.27 **Question 3: How do you feel about the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead town centre?**
(1 being negative and 10 being positive)

In responding to this question:

8% of respondents stated that overall they had a **negative view** of the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead town centre (scoring 1-3)

76% of respondents gave a **positive response** scoring it between 7-10 out of 10

35% of respondents were **very positive rating** the emerging draft masterplan as 10 out of 10

3.28 The results demonstrate that the majority of respondents felt positively towards the plans to revitalise Birkenhead town centre. Opinions towards specific features of the emerging draft masterplan were set out in the following questions.

3.29 **Question 4: Tell us what you think of the new development opportunities**

Table 2 opposite summarises the responses received as a result of the consultation with local people and key stakeholders and identifies whether people liked, disliked, or felt neutral about the 7 key elements of the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead.

Table 2:
Response Summary Table to Question 4

Theme	Summary of Responses
Civic hub	62% Like 9% Dislike 25% Neutral
Commercial offices	54% Like 13% Dislike 29% Neutral
New home for market	75% Like 7% Dislike 13% Neutral
New leisure centre	76% Like 7% Dislike 14% Neutral
New public spaces	83% Like 5% Dislike 9% Neutral
New residential neighbourhoods	69% Like 11% Dislike 17% Neutral
Local highway network and bus station	78% Like 6% Dislike 13% Neutral

3.30

To summarise, providing new public spaces (which provide opportunities for local events and activities) was identified as the most popular feature of the emerging draft masterplan. A new home for the market, new leisure centre and local highway network and buses also received very positive feedback, with over three quarters of respondents liking these features of the plan for Birkenhead.

3.31 Well over half of consultees liked proposals for a new civic hub and commercial offices and 29% felt neutral about the idea.

3.32 Overall, within questions 1-4 the respondents expressed positive feedback towards all the features of the masterplan.

3.33 Questions, 5-7 explored in more detail the public's views on specific features of the emerging draft masterplan. Questions 5, 6 and 7 were open-ended to give stakeholders and local people the opportunity to express their own comments and opinions towards the draft masterplan.

Question 5: Are there any areas where we could improve the masterplan?

3.34 The open-ended nature of question 5 means it is not possible to group answers in the same way as questions 1-4 or to refer to every written response. Therefore, instead responses have been grouped together into key themes which emerged to enable easier interpretation of the overall feedback.

3.35 Prominent themes which emerged from question 5 included the provision of better sports, leisure and cultural facilities (particularly for young people and families), to bring a more diverse shopping experience to Birkenhead, improve the design of the proposed new buildings and enhance green space and connectivity throughout the town centre.

3.36 Although respondents were asked how the emerging draft masterplan could be improved, many did not provide any additional comments and several people expressed positive feedback towards the plan by articulating features they liked. These key themes are presented in Table 3 below

Table 3:
Response Summary Table to Question 5

Feature	Summary of Responses
Positive responses	Many of the feedback forms received did not provide any comments on how the masterplan could be improved. Where positive scores were received, this suggests that a large portion of respondents were happy with the features proposed in the emerging draft masterplan for Birkenhead. **"I cannot think of any areas of improvement, the "masterplan" offers many residential, commercial and work opportunities while at the same time turning Birkenhead into a desirable location."** Overall, the option to relocate the existing market into the old Marks and Spencer (M&S) store was positively received by the local community. However, a small number of respondents either felt that the market should stay where it was or was no longer needed at all. **"Marks and Spencer's site is a great idea for market. I am a self-employed single parent for 17 years and feel there is lots to offer in doing this move."** Another respondent similarly expressed: **"I think it's an excellent idea to move the market into the old Marks and Spencer unit. It's warm, easily accessible from different sides of the pyramids and will hopefully encourage new stall holders."**

Table 3:
Continued

Feature	Summary of Responses
Car parking	A number of comments emerged about the need for sufficient parking in Birkenhead town centre, preferably free of charge. Many respondents felt that there needs to be adequate space for car parking in the town centre to encourage people to travel in and use the local shops and services. Some comments suggested that people can be deterred from visiting the town centre if parking is too far out. One respondent suggested the masterplan needs more car parking: **"Car parking and more disabled bays... many disabled people and young families need good access."** Another respondent had similar thoughts on parking providing, stating: **"On the masterplan drawings, there does not seem to have a plan for the need parking for all of the new residential, commercial and leisure buildings that would be built."**
Leisure facilities	There was a recurring emphasis towards the provision of leisure facilities expressed among respondents. This emerged as a key theme to attract young people and families into Birkenhead town centre by providing facilities such as bowling, cinema, library, and an arts / creative centre. **"Bring more entertainment and family leisure back. The heart has gone."** In addition to this, several respondents suggested that the plans for the new leisure centre were too far away from the town centre, isolated from the bus station and some believed that a new leisure centre was unnecessary as the existing centre is nearby. **"I don't see why the current leisure centre cannot be kept as its only 20 years old."**
Green space	It was felt by multiple participants that the masterplan could do with more green spaces. Feedback included extending Europa Boulevard all the way to the shopping centre to create a green pedestrian route, incorporating green roofs into building designs and providing a community garden space. **"Bring more green space into the centre, make it a destination for family, events, cafés, bars food and activities for young."**

Feature	Summary of Responses
Cultural facilities	Respondents expressed a desire to have an improved cultural offer in Birkenhead such as museums, library, arts and crafts and community spaces for people to meet and host activities. **"Spaces for arts and culture provision in the public realm."** Another respondent suggested: **"I think there needs to be a stronger civic space for street events."**
Sports facilities	Some respondents wanted to see more sports facilities in Birkenhead such as football pitches and astro pitches. **"On the masterplan drawings there does not seem to be a plan for astro turf or football."**
Connectivity	Another key theme was creating an interconnected town centre. Respondents commented on joining the masterplan for Birkenhead town centre with existing sites. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of Hamilton Square serving as a hub connecting the town centre to the rest of Birkenhead. Connectivity to the ferry terminal and waterfront was also expressed several times. **"Hamilton Square is an ideal point for sending people to different parts of the town on foot – it all needs joining up."** Numerous comments were also received in relation to improving bus services and relocating the bus station. The location of the current bus station received criticism due to its small turning circle resulting in a build-up of traffic. One respondent suggested relocating the bus station to be closer to Conway Park station, and another suggested moving it near the waterfront. Several comments also considered the opportunity for a modern tram system in Birkenhead to enhance connectivity.
Economy / shopping	A prominent theme that emerged from the feedback was that a masterplan will need to bring more tenants for shops to the town centre to tackle the issue of vacant units as well as offering more diversity. The local community also encouraged more restaurants, bars and cafés to stimulate the evening economy and to encourage the provision of more independent eateries. **"More shops in Birkenhead, it is turning into a ghost town"** Another respondent stated: "**For a lively hub you need good restaurants at affordable prices, cafés at least one decent pub, that will get the economy going"**

Question 6: Are there any specific issues that need to be considered as part of the planning process?

3.37 Question 6 sought to understand from stakeholders and the local community if there were any specific issues that should be considered in the planning process for the development.

3.38 Many of the responses for question 6 related to the same features identified in question 5, and comments made in relation to these features have been referred to in our summary of responses above. Any additional themes that have arisen in relation to question 6 are set out in table 4 opposite.

Table 4:
Response Summary Table to Question 6

Feature	Summary of Responses
Disruption from building works	There were several comments from respondents in relation to town centre disruptions during the construction periods of the masterplan. Respondents felt disruptions from building works could affect local shops and businesses and transport disruptions should also be considered. **"How will the works affect people visiting the town centre?"** Another respondent said: **"Obviously there is the impact on traffic around the area whilst the project takes place. We don't want there to be a detriment to the existing stores in Birkenhead whilst the works take place if customers don't feel they can get there easily"**
Accessibility	The feedback from this stage of public consultation also indicated that accessibility into the town centre needs to be considered, particularly for disabled and elderly members of the community. Some people suggested that Birkenhead is currently inaccessible and consideration should be given to improving accessibility and mobility. **"Some stores outside of the pyramids have a stepped entrance that cannot be negotiated by wheelchairs."**

Table 4:
Continued

Feature	Summary of Responses
Cycle routes	Pedestrian and cycle routes were another key theme expressed by local people and stakeholders. The inclusion of safe cycle routes and storage for cycles within the masterplan was expressed as well as creating a car-free pedestrian and cycle route along Europa Boulevard. **"More bike access and cycle lanes"**
Design	One of the most prominent themes which emerged from the feedback was the design of the proposed buildings. Multiple respondents expressed that the design of the buildings was **"uniformed blocks"** and that Birkenhead would strongly benefit from having more exciting and creative architecture. People largely felt that the buildings were of similar shape and height and that creating a flagship development would help to attract people to the town centre. Several people similarly wished to see some of Birkenhead's heritage reflected in the masterplan to celebrate the character of the area such as its shipbuilding heritage. **"I think the design needs to be more distinctive and individual to make it stand out... the buildings look uninspiring"** Another respondent suggested: **"Integrate our heritage sites into these plans and build on our wonderful history and people will come."**

Feature	Summary of Responses
Safeguarding the environment	Protecting the environment and giving consideration to climate change issues was expressed by several respondents. Feedback comments including giving careful thought to travel behaviour and making sure the development is sustainable. **"I think the environment is important to all of us so I would say planning with this in mind. Make the town healthier, environmentally friendlier and a prettier place to be."**
Homelessness	The final theme which emerged from question 6 was to consider homelessness and anti-social behaviour, including drug and alcohol users in the town centre. Several respondents indicated that tackling these issues as part of the planning process is an important step in revitalising the town centre and attracting more people. **"Solutions to remedy the amount of homeless people and substance users who use the area will need to be addressed somehow"**

Question 7: Do you have any further comments on the emerging draft masterplan?

3.39 The final question on the feedback form invited respondents to make any additional comments relating to other aspects of the emerging draft masterplan that had not already been discussed.

3.40 As well as a number of comments reiterating the points highlighted above such as consideration towards the sustainability of the development, improving the design and attracting more occupiers to shops, several respondents expressed uncertainty and scepticism as to whether the scheme will be delivered, as one person stated, **"doubtful it will happen"**. We know from discussions with residents at the pop-up events that these comments stem from historic plans which have been put forward in the past but have never been delivered.

3.41 A large number of people acknowledged that Birkenhead town centre was in urgent need of development and expressed that they wanted to see the plans progress quickly.

3.42

To summarise, there was a strong conclusion that Birkenhead was in need of development and all of the proposed features in the masterplan received positive feedback. Most people wanted to see changes quickly and the key features raised by local people and key stakeholders are highlighted in tables 3 and 4.

Workshop with The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone (November 2019)

3.43 To make sure that the future residents and workforce of Birkenhead are engaged in the plans for the town centre, a focused workshop was held on Monday 25th November at The Hive, Wirral Youth Zone with young people aged 10-19 from across the Wirral.

3.44 The workshop was attended by approximately 40 people and as shown on figure 8 below it was attended by young people from across the Wirral, not just Birkenhead.

3.45 Feedback forms were not completed by the young people, however 4 questions were presented on boards for them to answer. Feedback forms were handed out to staff to be completed, some of which were returned on the night, but most were taken away to complete at their leisure.

Figure 8
Location of Attendees at The Hive pop-up event

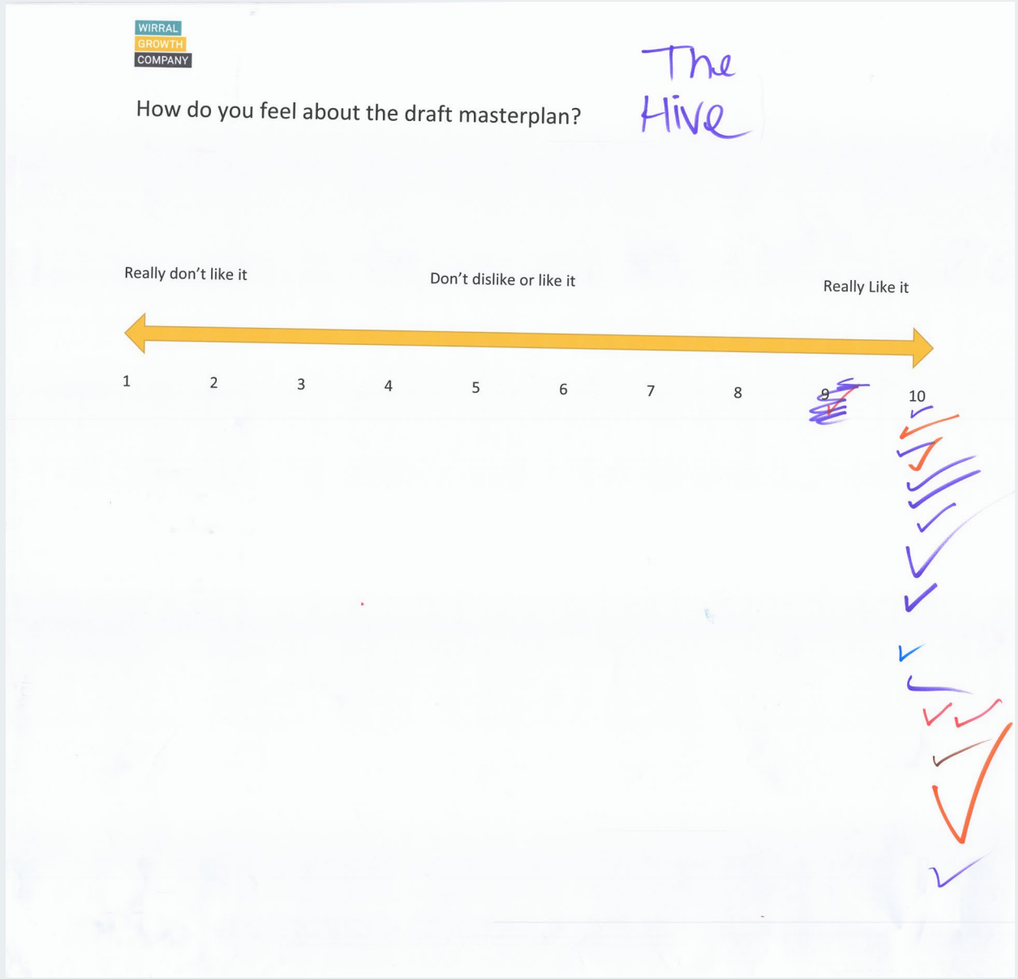
3.46 Following explanations about the proposals within the emerging draft masterplan by the WGC project team, those who attended were asked to put their thoughts and ideas down on paper under the heading of:

- **How do you feel about the emerging draft masterplan?**
- **What issues do you think are most important?**
- **Tell us what you think of the draft masterplan.**
- **How could we improve the draft masterplan?**

3.47 This method of consultation was chosen because it is interactive and considered to be more engaging for young people. Copies of the completed comments sheets are included at Figure 9 below.

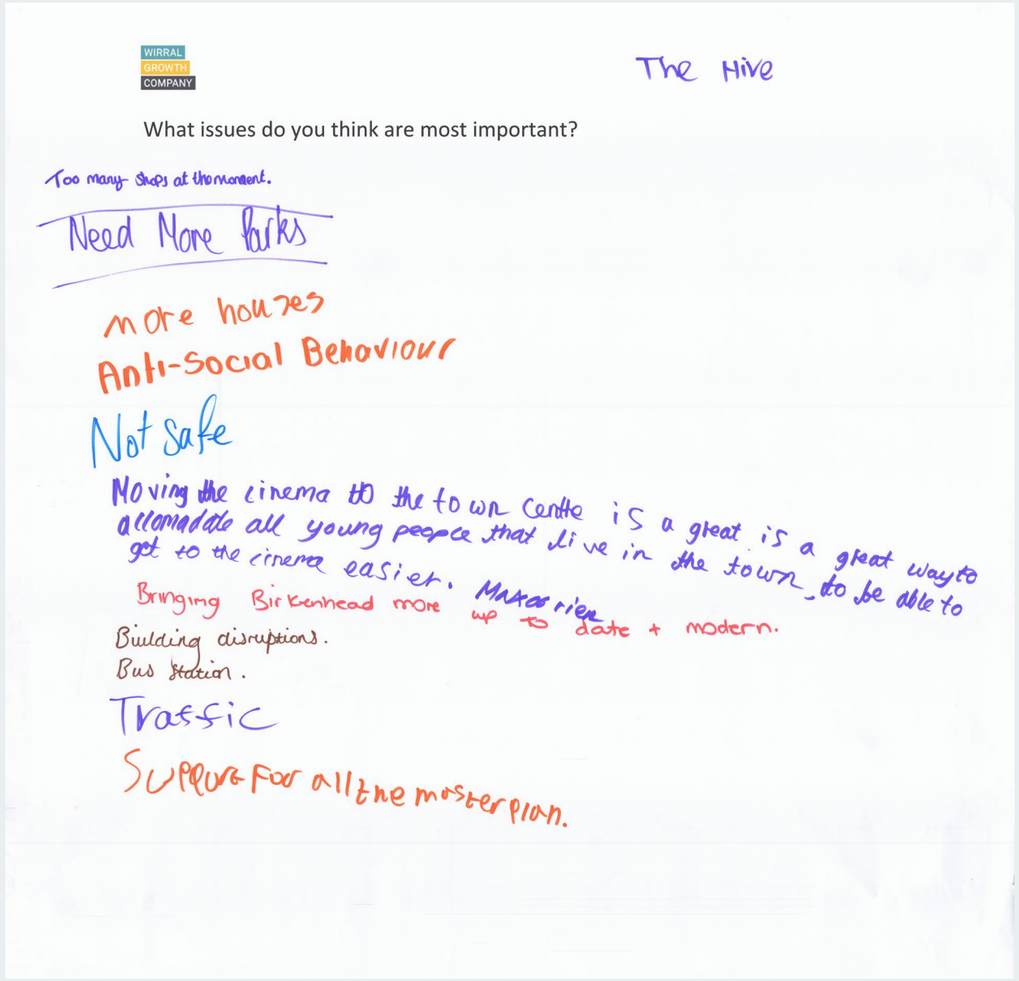
How do you feel about the masterplan?

Figure 9
Consultation responses from The Hive Wirral Youth Zone



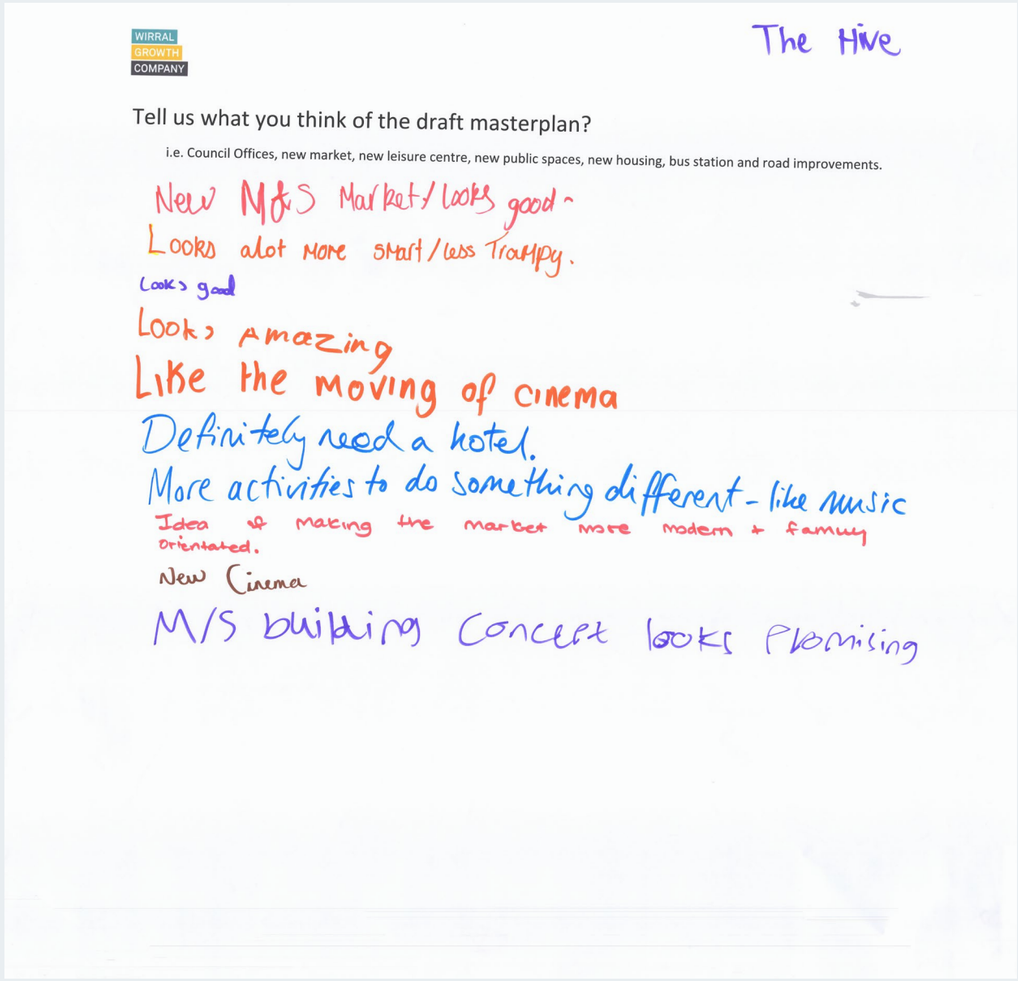
Most Important Issues

Figure 9
Consultation responses from The Hive Wirral Youth Zone
Continued



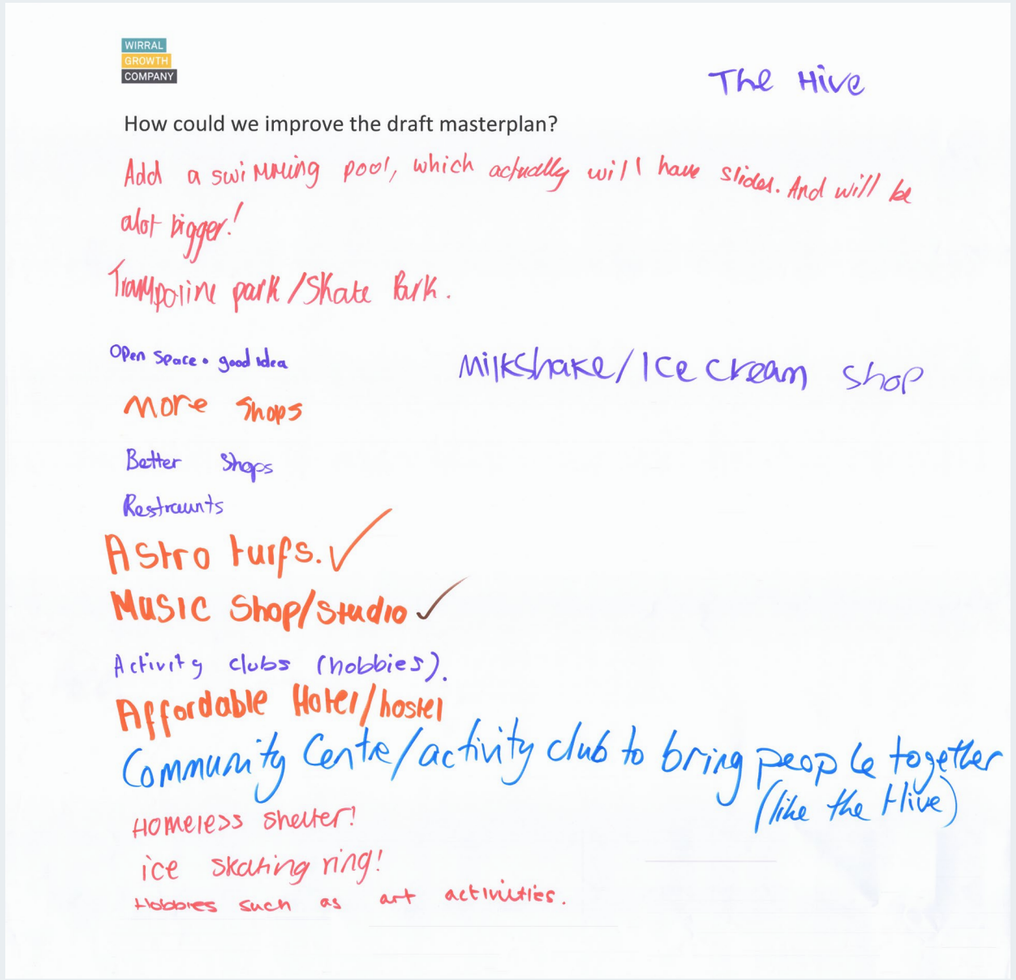
Masterplan Opinions

Figure 9
Consultation responses from The Hive Wirral Youth Zone
Continued



How could we improve the masterplan?

Figure 9
Consultation responses from The Hive Wirral Youth Zone
Continued



Summary

3.48
To summarise, the young people really liked the emerging draft masterplan, with 100% scoring it a 10 out of 10. A range of cultural and leisure facilities including a cinema, shops, parks, sports facilities, community centre and activity hub were all amenities and facilities that the young people wanted to have in Birkenhead town centre.

3.49
It was evident from the responses that young people currently feel unsafe in the town centre and they perceive there to be problems related to crime, anti-social behaviour, drugs and homelessness. The young people expressed a need to tackle these issues as part of the masterplan and they wanted to include affordable homes and deal with homelessness through providing a shelter for rough sleepers.

3.50
The design of the emerging draft masterplan received positive feedback from the workshop and young people liked the modern design, as well as the plans to move the market to the former M&S building.

4.0 Summary of Findings and Action Plan

4.1 In November 2019, WGC undertook a wide-ranging second stage of stakeholder and community consultation to continue its dialogue with local people on the future of Birkenhead town centre.

4.2 The main objective of the consultation was to communicate WGC's vision for the town centre and garner public opinion towards the emerging draft masterplan, identify the features that people liked and disliked and to understand the issues that need to be considered taking forward the masterplan.

4.3 To generate awareness and interest in future regeneration activity, WGC has undertaken a comprehensive programme of communication and engagement with stakeholders. This included a presentation to elected members, four pop-up events in Birkenhead town centre, an event with market traders, a workshop with the Wirral Multicultural Organisation, a workshop with students attending Wirral Metropolitan College, a workshop with The Hive Wirral Youth Zone and finally a presentation to BID and Wirral Chamber of Commerce members.

4.4 To date, over 300 people from across the borough and the wider city region have engaged in the second stage of the consultation process. This has included a wide range of people, a mix of young and old and generally the feedback received from the local community and key stakeholders can be broadly described as very supportive of proposed changes to the town centre. Specific themes were also identified for further consideration in the emerging masterplan.

4.5 To summarise, as a result of the consultation, the following themes presented in Table 5 below have been identified for further consideration before a planning application is prepared. Actions relating to each of the key themes identified for further consideration are set out below.

4.6 The purpose of this stage of the consultation was to listen to the views of both local people and wider stakeholders' views towards the emerging draft masterplan and take onboard the comments to shape the next stage of the design process.

You said	WGC's action
Relocation of Birkenhead Market to the former M&S store	The results from the consultation found that most people liked the idea of moving the existing market to the vacant former M&S unit. This was the most popular location of the three that were presented to consultees. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will continue discussions with the owners of the M&S unit to further explore the feasibility of this option. ● Other options continue to be further developed and additional consultation will take place on this as plans emerge. ● WGC are committed to providing a bustling new market for people to visit the town centre and see this as a key element of the masterplan.
New leisure centre and additional leisure facilities	Many respondents felt replacing Europa Pools was unnecessary, but they wanted to see more family entertainment options in the town centre. They also wanted to see more housing, particularly affordable housing being delivered. **Proposed next step:** ● In response to these comments the proposed new leisure centre will be removed from the masterplan and additional housing will be shown. ● Family leisure options within the town centre will also be considered.
Car parking	Residents were concerned about the lack of free parking and level of car parking provided in the town centre, especially if more people would be living and working in the area. They were also concerned about the pricing structure for existing and future car parking. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will undertake a more detailed review of the existing car parks to ascertain the existing level of parking. They will use the information gathered to inform the detailed design stage of the masterplan so that additional car parking will be considered as necessary.

You said	WGC's action
Protect and enhance green space	Provision of new and improved open space was a very important issue for local residents. They were also concerned that any space provided should be capable of accommodating cultural / leisure events and that it be softer than the current hard landscaping that dominates the town centre environment. **Proposed next step:** ● The comments will be directly reflected in the masterplan proposals. WGC will ensure that there is an increase in public open space as a result of the masterplan. The comments will also feed directly into the detailed design of the proposals at the planning application phase where it can be ensured that increased planting is included.
Cultural facilities	Respondents were very keen to see an increase in the cultural facilities offered in Birkenhead. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will include a key site within the masterplan that has the potential for occupation by leisure uses as demand dictates at the detailed design stage. ● The public realm around the office buildings which make up the 'civic hub' will be designed so that they are capable of being used for cultural facilities and events.
Sports facilities	A small proportion of the feedback received sought provision of more sports facilities. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC to review independent evidence on open space and recreation facilities that has been prepared to inform emerging Wirral Local Plan in January 2020.

You said	WGC's action
Connectivity	Respondents were keen on connections to the rest of Birkenhead being improved, particularly Hamilton Square and Wirral Waters. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will review the existing connections within the town and include measures to improve way-finding and perception of safety for pedestrians and cyclists as the design progresses.
Shops and the economy	Residents and stakeholders were concerned about the amount of vacant floorspace within the town centre at present as well as the stability of some of the existing occupiers. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC has committed to delivering the civic hub as the first phase of development, this will immediately improve footfall in the town centre to the benefit of local businesses. ● WGC will condense the retail floorspace so that the proportion of vacant units is reduced. This will improve the perception of vitality and make the town centre a more vibrant place to shop.
Disruption from building works	Stakeholders and residents are worried that existing businesses will be very sensitive to change and that disruption to the area will cause many to fail if not handled carefully. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will undertake a phased delivery programme, only removing services and buildings after new improved facilities have been provided. This means that whilst disruption will take place it can be kept to a minimum and continuity of trade can be guaranteed whenever possible.

You said	WGC's action
Accessibility	At present there are several barriers to movement around the town centre for the elderly and the mobility impaired. Conway Street is large with small crossing points. Existing shopping streets are cluttered with obstructions such as adhoc signage and the thresholds of many properties are not level, making it difficult for people in wheelchairs and parents with prams to access. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will review and improve the existing accessibility and pedestrian links to facilities and spaces in the town centre. Connectivity will be a key consideration in the emerging masterplan.
Design	Respondents were very keen that the proposals should provide 'landmark' design to put Birkenhead 'on the map'. They were keen for the delivery of attractive and sustainable buildings they could be proud of. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will design energy efficient and sustainable buildings that respond to modern energy consumption and performance requirements. ● The need for high quality design is fully recognised by WGC and attractive buildings and places will be proposed at the detailed design stage.
Homelessness and anti-social behaviour	Homelessness and anti-social behaviour were identified during the consultation process as being a very real issue that has to be addressed. Respondents commented that unless the issue was resolved, or at least improved it could undermine the regeneration process. **Proposed next step:** ● WGC will make sure that the detailed design of spaces and buildings limit areas for anti-social behaviour to take place. Improved lighting design solutions which maximise passive and active surveillance can be included.

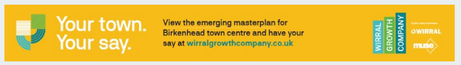
4.7

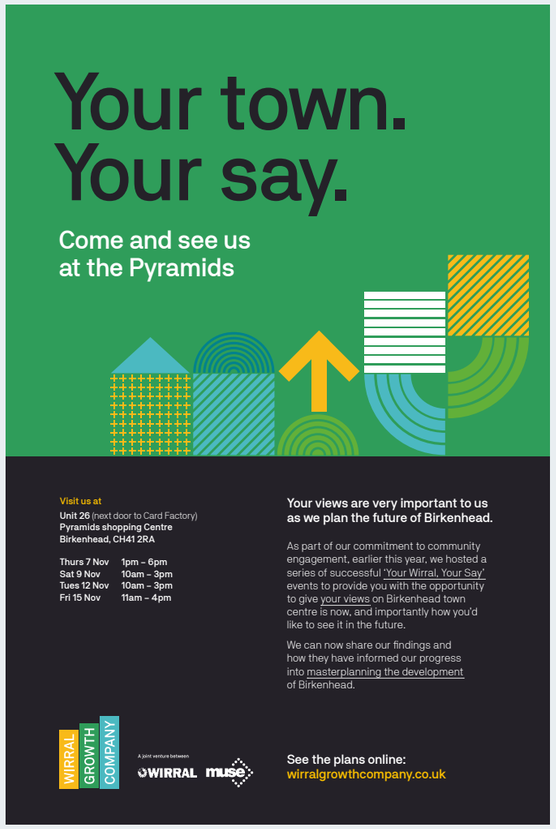
Moving forward, WGC plans to use the information gleaned from this consultation to further shape and improve the masterplan for Birkenhead town centre in advance of a formal planning application.

WGC wishes to make sure that it will benefit local businesses, improve opportunities for residents and in time deliver a rejuvenated and revitalised town centre which everyone will enjoy and be proud of.

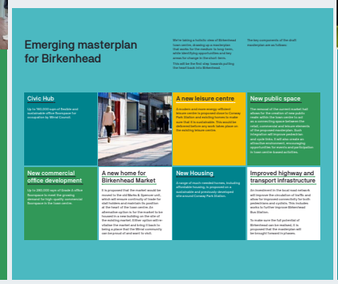
5.0 Appendices

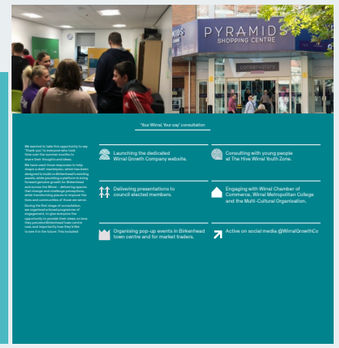
Appendix A
Media launch and Press Releases / Articles

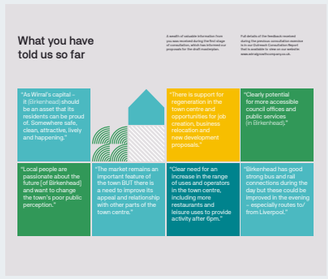




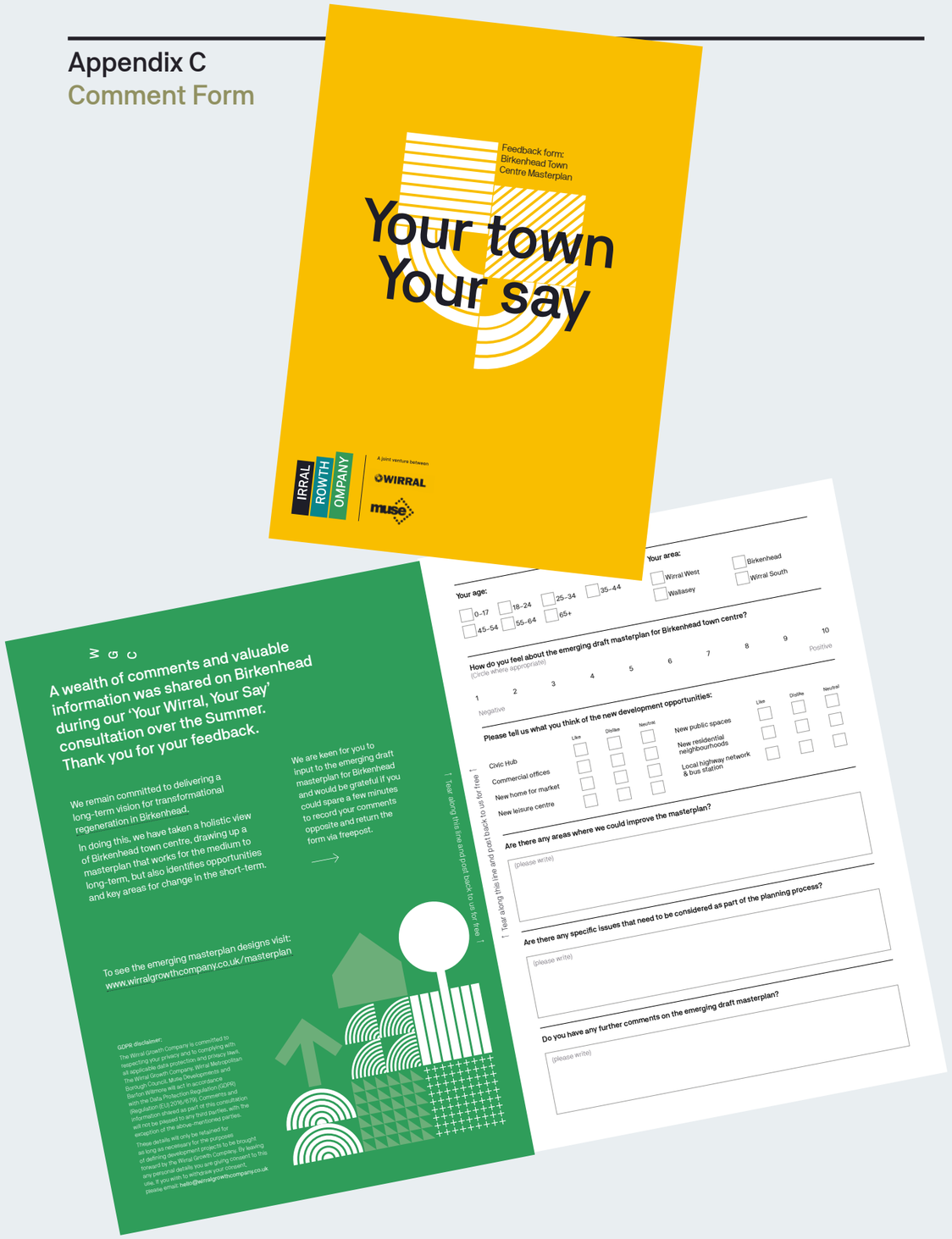
Appendix B
Display Boards







Appendix C
Comment Form



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