

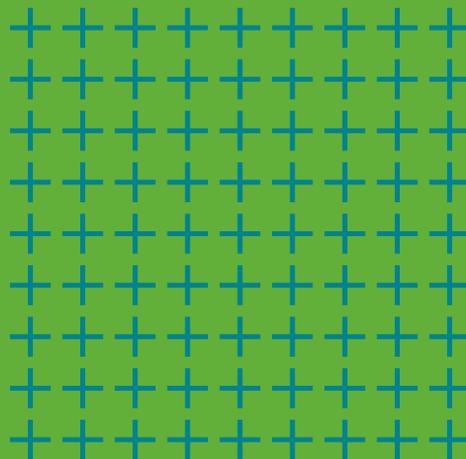


'Land' at  
Birkenhead  
town centre

August  
2020

# Continuity of Trade and Construction Management

Barton Willmore.  
Prepared on  
behalf of Wirral  
Growth Company.



A joint venture between



## Birkenhead Town Centre Regeneration

### Keeping Birkenhead Trading

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Background

- 1.1 This Statement accompanies a planning application by Wirral Growth Company (WGC) for a major regeneration scheme in Birkenhead town centre. The site covers a substantial part of Birkenhead's designated town centre, it has a total area of approximately 11.09 hectares and extends from the Pyramid Shopping Centre / Borough Pavement to the south, to the junction of 'Europa Boulevard' and Price Street to the north. It contains commercial and retail units, including Birkenhead Market, a Grade II Listed Public House ('the Crown'), a Vue Cinema, the Europa Centre, and there is also vacant land to the north of Conway Park Station.
- 1.2 The proposed development will revitalise the Birkenhead town centre to the north of the Pyramids Shopping Centre. It will reduce the number of vacant units whilst making improvements to the office, leisure, food and drink and retail offer of the town centre, enhancing its vitality into the evening. The detailed element of the planning application will provide a new 'grade A' 'commercial district' that will be anchored by Wirral Council and a development that local residents can be proud of, whilst the outline element will introduce new homes to create a sustainable residential neighbourhood in the heart of Birkenhead as well as an exemplary new home for Birkenhead Market and modern vibrant commercial, leisure and office space.
- 1.3 The proposals will also enhance Birkenhead town centre by delivering a new and improved public realm which will include flexible outdoor space for activities and events. Pedestrian and cycle connections will be improved to aid accessibility into and around the town centre in addition to improvements to the bus infrastructure.
- 1.4 The development will come forward in a phased manner over the next 15 years, with the first phase being the 'commercial district' in Plot A.
- 1.5 Constructing a development of this nature, in a location of this nature, will not be possible without some disturbance and inconvenience to existing users of the centre, traders and residents.
- 1.6 WGC appreciate the sensitive location of the site with it being within a town centre environment and close to residential property and the need to both protect amenity and the operation of the town centre during the construction period.

- 1.7 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) sets out the anticipated construction methodology and phasing of the Development. Moving forward, the detailed planning of the construction programme and the phasing of the development will be completed when a contractor has been appointed and they have had the opportunity of reviewing (in detail) the stages of construction and all the factors that need to be taken into account in programming.
- 1.8 However, WGC's development team recognise the importance of this aspect of the development and (in accordance EIA Chapter) have set out in this document some guiding principles that the development team and the appointed contractor will be required to address.

### **Controlling the Principles of Methodology and Phasing**

- 1.9 We expect that any planning permission for a scheme of this nature will be conditioned such that details of a development programme, including phasing and details of the temporary measures including access, servicing and routes through the centre will have to be prepared, submitted to and agreed with the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.10 An overarching principle will be to ensure that the works are undertaken in a timely manner to minimise disruption to town centre activity, parking provision, pedestrian and vehicular linkages.
- 1.11 Accordingly, this statement provides a platform upon which more details will be built; and those details will be subject to involvement of stakeholders and formal consideration by the Local Planning Authority.

## 2.0 DETAILED PLANNING ON CONSTRUCTION

- 2.1 Crucial to the success of the project will be the phasing, planning and programming of the site operations. This will be achieved by detailed and short-term planning of the works through liaison and co-ordination with contractors, utility providers and WGC's development team.
- 2.2 This process of co-ordination and planning will include liaison and consultation with local businesses and other stakeholders as well as Wirral Council.
- 2.3 Individual method statements will be produced for each development area (or Plot), giving consideration to safety of contractors, visitors and members of the public. The anticipated phasing of construction works can be seen within the 5 Chapter of the Environmental Statement. There it is clearly expressed in what order the masterplan area will be developed.
- 2.4 Consideration and close liaison will take place with all adjoining properties and local businesses and account taken of their related restrictions whilst undertaking planning and construction works. Such consultation has already commenced for the first phase of development – specifically with the Council colleagues who will be relocated to the new 'commercial district' and with the market traders as their move to the temporary market will closely follow.
- 2.5 One of the main aims of the construction process will be to minimise, wherever possible, the disruption to existing shop units and businesses throughout the construction process. It is the aim of WGC to ensure continuity of trade wherever feasible and possible.
- 2.6 The appointed main contractor will be required to be a member of the Considerate Contractor's scheme. This means that they will have to continue the consultation already commenced and regularly communicate with the community and businesses on forthcoming activities to ensure that everyone is fully briefed about the on-going phasing of the construction works.

### **3.0 PROVIDING FOR PARKING AND SERVICING PROVISION DURING CONSTRUCTION**

#### **Parking provision**

- 3.1 A fundamental aspect of the construction process will be to maintain an adequate level of accessible car parking throughout the construction process. This is particularly the case because the removal of car parking behind the B&M unit will be one of the first phases of development together with the introduction of new offices. It is for this reason that a full survey of the existing car parks and their capacity has been undertaken to inform the proposed development and its phasing.
- 3.2 The work undertaken, examining the capacity and usage of existing car parks, teamed with analysis of the proposed development is contained within Chapter 9 of the Environmental Statement. This shows how the introduction of two new multi-storey car parks are likely to be required, however, this will be dependent upon the final phasing strategy.
- 3.3 The Phasing Plan appended to this Statement shows how a new car park can be provided on Plot B to serve the new 'commercial district' and subsequently a further car park can be provided on Plot G to serve Plot E should it be developed for office and leisure uses. There is further explanation of the configuration of car parking with Chapter 9 of the ES and the about how it will be possible to maintain parking numbers to the north of Conway Park Station during the first phase of construction on Plot I. Only during one, relatively short, period are numbers below the current level of provision (whilst Plot J is constructed and before G is complete). For the majority of the construction period, the level of parking available to users of the centre will be maintained. However, alongside this improvement works to the public transport infrastructure will be made. Improvements to the existing Bus Station are programmed for Phase 1B so will be delivered early in the development programme to facilitate trips by sustainable modes of transport and lessen the need for parking.

#### **Servicing**

- 3.4 Wherever possible, construction deliveries requiring particularly large vehicles will be scheduled to arrive outside rush hour traffic to assist with controlling traffic congestion.

- 3.5 Service routes for existing businesses, including provision of alternative service routes where existing routes are disrupted or altered, will be maintained throughout construction.
- 3.6 A construction methodology will be completed for each phase of the proposed development. This will show how service routes will be maintained.

## **4.0 MAINTAINING HIGH QUALITY PEDESTRIAN ROUTES**

- 4.1 WGC recognise the importance of maintaining high quality pedestrian routes through the town centre and this has been one of the guiding principles shaping the indicative masterplan. It is also one of the guiding principles of the construction phase.
- 4.2 The development of the site on a plot-by-plot basis means that pedestrian linkages can be maintained for the duration of the development period. At no time will there be multiple pedestrian routes blocked by construction works and WGC will ensure that where footways are blocked clear alternatives are provided with any necessary diversions marked. For example, during demolition works at Plots A, B and C there will need to be the temporary closure of footpaths but alternatives can be provided on the opposite side of the street or by utilising part of the carriageway if it is fit and safe to do so.
- 4.3 Following the completion of the construction works the pedestrian routes through Birkenhead town centre will be greatly improved. The addition of a new clear east-west pedestrian route through Plot C will be a great benefit to wayfinding because at present the existing market hall is a significant barrier to movement. Furthermore, the inclusion of a super crossing on Conway Street will ease movements between the commercial core of the town centre and the new residential neighbourhoods and Hamilton Square in the north.
- 4.4 Improved public realm will also improve the amenity of the area for pedestrians and will make walking around the town centre a much more appealing prospect than at present.

## **5.0 PROVIDING SIGNAGE AROUND THE CENTRE**

5.1 A signage package will be agreed between the WGC and the Local Planning and Highway Authorities.

5.2 The signage package will encompass separate signing for:

- Directing the public and pedestrians around the centre;
- Directing car users to car parks;
- Directing service vehicles to service areas;
- Directing contractors to development sites; and
- Development life cycle story board – pictorial on hoarding boards?

## **6.0 PROTECTING THE PUBLIC**

6.1 Careful consideration will be given to Traffic Management, Protection of the Public and Emergency Routes in all detailed site planning.

6.2 One key area will be how development sites will be hoarded off.

### **Hoarding of Building Sites**

6.3 Individual development parcels will be hoarded off from public access. Where sites require to be hoarded off for long parts of the construction period the following measures will be taken to ensure they remain as attractive as possible:

- Hoardings facing public areas will be painted and maintained.
- Opportunities for involvement of local schools and/or community groups will be explored in the painting of hoardings.
- Where safe to do so, viewing areas will be incorporated into hoardings.

## 7.0 'CONSIDERATE CONTRACTOR' WORKING

### The 'Considerate Constructors' Scheme

- 7.1 The 'Considerate Constructors' Scheme is the national initiative, set up by the construction industry, to provide clear guiding principles for contractors.
- 7.2 Sites and companies that register with the Scheme sign up and are monitored against a Code of Considerate Practice, designed to encourage best practice beyond statutory requirements. Posters are displayed around the construction site setting out the Code to which the sites and companies are committed. If passers-by wish to comment, the name and telephone number of the site manager or company contact are clearly displayed, alongside the free phone telephone number of the Scheme administration office.
- 7.3 The Scheme is concerned about any area of construction activity that may have a direct or indirect impact on the image of the industry as a whole. The main areas of concern fall into three main categories: the environment, the workforce and the general public.
- 7.4 The site and Company Codes of Considerate Practice commit those contractors and construction companies in the Scheme to be considerate and good neighbours, as well as clean, respectful, safe, environmentally conscious, responsible and accountable.

## **8.0 MINIMISING NOISE, DUST AND VIBRATION**

- 8.1 The impact on all aspects of the environmental is to be considered as part of the planning process with particular reference to noise and dust generated by site activities and taking due consideration for the adjacent residential and commercial properties.
- 8.2 Conditions will be attached to any grant of planning permission to ensure that emissions are controlled and amenity protected. This is a normal part of the planning process. It is also normal for conditions to be imposed for the control of noise, dust and vibration during construction. Such a condition will require details of the measures to be employed to control noise, dust and vibration during construction to be submitted to and agreed by the Council's Environmental Health officer.
- 8.3 Day to day implementation of the measures agreed with the Environmental Health Officer to control noise, dust and vibration will be by both the site management team and the sub-contractor involved.

## 9.0 HELPING CONTINUITY OF TRADE

- 9.1 It is a fundamental principle of the development that Birkenhead can continue to function as a town centre, providing for the local needs of residents during the construction process.
- 9.2 A key part of ensuring the delivery of services to the public by the development team will be to ensure that there is provision for continued operation of the occupiers displaced from Milton Pavements and the traders from Birkenhead Market, as well as those traders who are remaining unaffected by the end development.
- 9.3 Where possible WGC will work with and assist businesses who are being displaced, helping them to continue to trade during construction.

### **Retention of trade for Birkenhead Market**

- 9.4 Due to the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, the retention of trade at Birkenhead Market has not been a straight forward issue to deal with. The Market has operated at reduced capacity since lockdown was announced in March 2020. This has meant that wholesale consultation with stall holders has been difficult. However, the Prime Minister announced (on 25 May 2020) that from 1 June 2020 outdoor markets could resume trading - as soon as they are able to meet COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect shoppers and workers. It was also announced that from 15 June 2020 non-essential retail could reopen, provided the Governments' five tests for recovery were being met.
- 9.5 Birkenhead Market has therefore implemented measures to allow for wider opening of the outdoor and indoor sections from Monday 15 June. Risk Assessments have been completed to address all areas of the market including PPE, cleaning, social distancing, market layout, and security. Changes have also been made to staffing arrangements and tasks have been considered to support Government Guidelines and trader operations.
- 9.6 Implementing measures to allow the Market to open more widely for trade is the first step towards creating a new and improved offer and environment. The measures mean that traders can re-open their businesses and protect their livelihood, which in turn means that stalls will be able to transition to the new market once it has been built.

9.7 In terms of the transition of traders from the existing market to the new market, 1:1 sessions took place with traders during February 2020. During the sessions they were asked about their requirements for elements such as refrigeration, display counters etc. and their general views on the potential move. For the traders that showed an interest in relocating to the temporary and replacement market a fair selection process will be used and personalised support will be provided throughout the process.

9.8 The selection process that has been established splits traders into 6 categories:

- fresh produce;
- food & drink;
- services;
- beauty;
- traditional; and
- miscellaneous.

9.9 It is important to establish how many of the traders interested in relocating will be able to successfully relocate and thrive within the new market. Therefore, a fair scoring process will be used throughout that takes into consideration the supporting business cases of each trader.

## **10.0 ASSISTANCE FOR TRADERS**

- 10.1 Financial arrangements are in place currently to support traders that have experienced difficulty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and extended financial support has been implemented till September 2020.
- 10.2 To help with understanding the process during transition a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been developed. There will be a series of notices that have to be served on traders to facilitate the move to the temporary market and ultimately the new market, the FAQs have been developed to reduce uncertainty and support traders both in terms of the process and the timescales involved with the process.
- 10.3 For traders who do not wish to transition to the temporary and replacement market compensation payments are being assessed and quantified against trading timescales (length of trading). There are also ongoing 1:1 trader engagement sessions taking place to understand preferences and issues surrounding the extent of the temporary market – location, type, rental levels, and timescales. These sessions will carry on throughout the lifecycle of the programme.

## 11.0 KEEPING TRADERS AND THE PUBLIC INFORMED

- 11.1 WGC have committed significant resources to the project thus far and undergone an extensive two-stage consultation programme with the local community and key stakeholders. Further information on the consultation activity can be found on the WGC website (<https://wirralgrowthcompany.co.uk/birkenhead/>) and a summary of the activity undertaken to date is set out below.
- 11.2 The Stage 1 consultation invited comments from interest groups, stakeholders and the public about Birkenhead town centre. All comments received were considered and shared on the WGC website. The feedback received was then incorporated into an emerging draft Masterplan.
- 11.3 Stage 2 sought views on the emerging draft masterplan, what people liked and didn't like, and any changes that they might want to make. All of the consultation material was published online for both stages and the events were also widely publicised to ensure people could view the proposals and have their say. The results of the stage 2 consultation was again published on the WGC website and the Statement of Community Involvement which has been submitted in support of this hybrid planning application shows how the proposed development has been influenced by the comments received.
- 11.4 That commitment to transparency will continue into the construction phase of the development through:
- Individual letters to market traders and local businesses giving details of phasing and construction activity;
  - Individual letters to local residents giving details of phasing and construction activity that could affect them;
  - A dedicated e-mail address for people to contact WGC with questions or concerns.
  - Regular updates on the WGC website; and
  - Press releases at regular intervals in the Wirral Globe and Wirral View.