

# **The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy**

Halton Borough Council

May 2008

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# 1. MERSEY GATEWAY: 'MORE THAN A BRIDGE'

## Halton – Delivering Ambition

- 1.1 Halton is a highly distinctive borough of great physical, economic and commercial diversity. For all of its economic successes, and there are many, it is however one that demonstrates some significant economic and social problems, akin to many inner-city metropolitan areas.
- 1.2 In addressing these challenges, a sustained programme of capital and revenue investment has been in place since the 1970s. Over this time a sustained programme of restoration, reclamation and redevelopment, designed to revitalise the physical, social, economic and environmental fabric has been delivered.
- Over 400 hectares of contaminated or derelict land has been brought back into productive use since 1974, at a cost of some £40million.
  - The latest phase of regeneration – Halton's Urban Renewal Programme – has seen the delivery of a major investment programme; over £524 million spent on a diverse range of physical regeneration projects, including town centre renewal, public realm, reclamation works and the delivery of several regionally significant development sites
  - Since 2001, the Local Strategic Partnership has also delivered more than £30million in direct revenue funding to help improve services, prospects, and quality of life for local people, principally through the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. As individual organisations, the Partnership body as a whole has invested some £450million annually through respective mainstream funding in addressing the targets of the Community Strategy.
- 1.3 The **Mersey Gateway represents the next phase of regeneration activity for Halton**. The context is as described above – combining the requirements for a major infrastructure project with the physical and socio-economic regeneration of those areas directly affected. This is a complex challenge but one that will be addressed with the ambition and the proven commitment to delivering vision that has marked past regeneration programmes in the borough.
- 1.4 The Mersey Gateway is a £390 million project that would provide a new Bridge over the River Mersey between the towns of Runcorn and Widnes. It is principally required to bring about

much needed traffic relief for the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge, but it is more than this. It will provide a transport solution to better provide for local and regional needs and by unlocking economic regeneration locally, further enhancing the contribution of Widnes and Runcorn to the ongoing economic renaissance of Merseyside and the economic growth of the Liverpool City Region and North West region.

1.5 The adopted vision for the Mersey Gateway is that it will be ***'more than just a bridge'*** and that by unlocking economic regeneration it will provide the catalyst for change locally – an opportunity to comprehensively address the multi-faceted challenges that exist in those areas directly impacted by the new infrastructure and allowing these *'places'* to contribute fully to the continued renaissance of the borough.

1.6 Arising from this, the principal objectives of the Mersey Gateway are:

- to relieve the congested Silver Jubilee Bridge, thereby removing the constraint on local and regional development and better provide for local traffic needs;
- to apply minimum toll charges to both Mersey Gateway and the Silver Jubilee Bridge consistent with the amount required to satisfy affordability constraints and to manage road travel demand to ensure the delivery of transport and environmental benefits by maintaining free flow traffic conditions on the MG and SJB;
- to improve accessibility in order to maximise local development and regional economic growth opportunities;
- to improve local air quality and enhance the general urban environment; and
- to improve public transport links across the river and to encourage the increased use of cycling and walking; and
- to restore effective network resilience for transport across the River Mersey.

1.7 Appendix A provides further details of the Mersey Gateway project in terms of the route it will take, its design and its operation.

### The Regeneration Strategy – A Transformational Vision

1.8 The Regeneration Strategy is an important element of the Mersey Gateway project. Based on the adopted vision of *'more than just a bridge'*, it is concerned with how the bridge can deliver

a new context for place-shaping and set the agenda for a sustained economic, social, physical and environmental regeneration programme over the next 20 to 30 years.

- 1.9 The Regeneration Strategy will inform the Council's priorities for physical investment and urban and neighbourhood renewal going forward. This builds upon the progress that the Council has made in delivering major regeneration schemes and attracting private sector investment throughout Runcorn and Widnes.
- 1.10 The Regeneration Strategy covers an area in excess of 20 square kilometres (Figure 1.1). It includes an area of Widnes to the south of the town centre, to the east of the Mersey Multimodal Gateway (3MG) and to the west of the Widnes Waterfront Economic Development Zone. The Regeneration Strategy also incorporates a larger expanse of Runcorn, including the Old Town, Halton Lea Town Centre, Astmoor Industrial Estate and Rocksavage and Clifton.
- 1.11 Five distinct areas have been defined as the Mersey Gateway *Impact Areas* (figure 1.2) that form the basis of the Regeneration Strategy, these are: West Bank (Southern Widnes); Runcorn Old Town; Astmoor; Halton Lea; and Rocksavage. These areas were selected on the basis of direct impact relationships with the Bridge (West Bank, Old Town and Astmoor) and indirect relationships attributable to re-defined patterns of movement raising the prominence of certain areas of the borough (in this case Halton Lea and Rocksavage).
- 1.12 The area was agreed with the Council to provide a statutory planning basis for policy development through the Local Development Framework.
- 1.13 Important opportunities for physical investment have been identified, based upon the key strengths and assets of the area predicted on an understanding of the physical opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will deliver. Stakeholders have been engaged and as part of developing this framework, several consultation events were held in Widnes and Runcorn to help capture the perspective of local residents with an interest in the future of their neighbourhoods and towns.

Figure 1.1 Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy

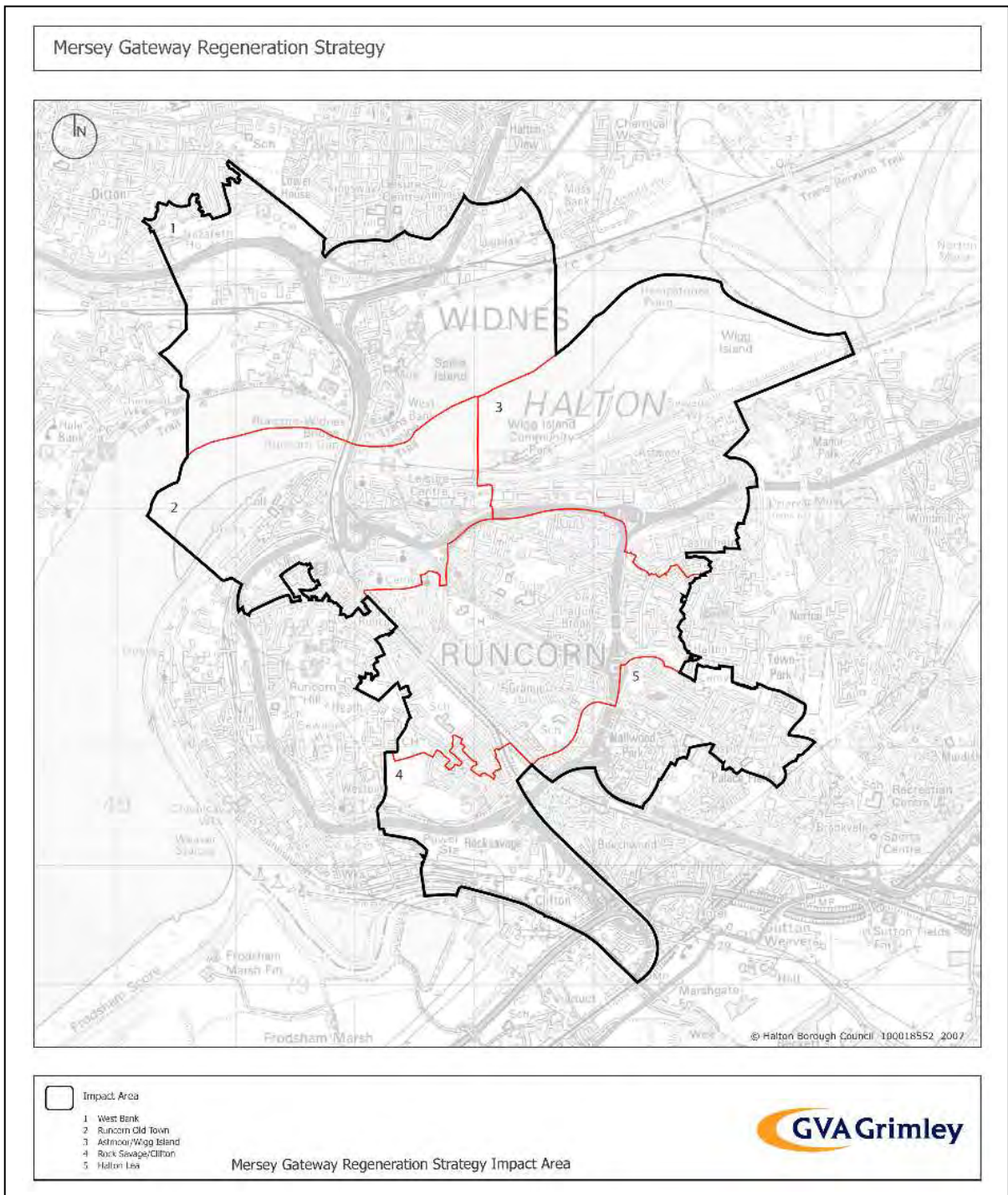
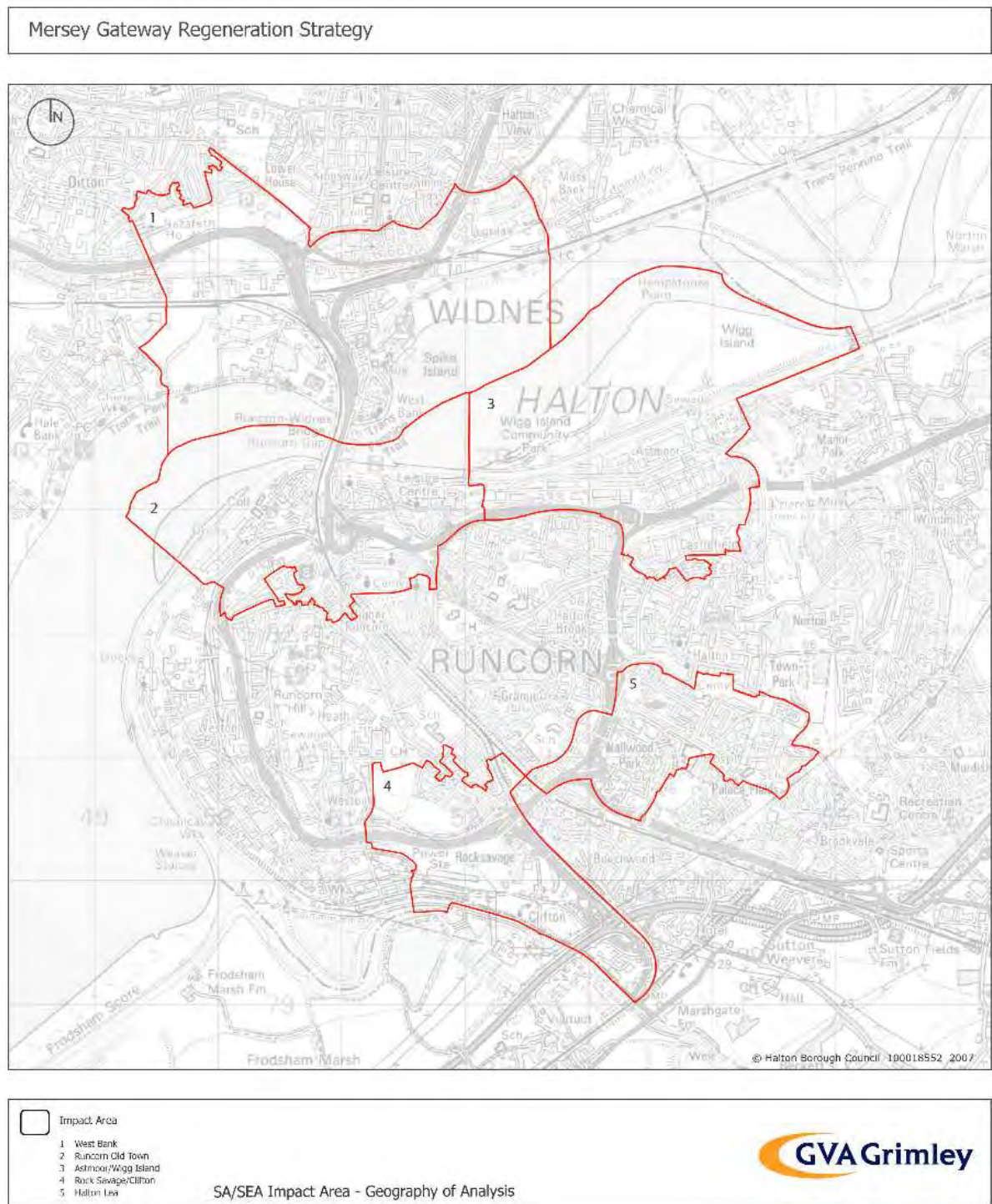




Figure 1.2: Regeneration Strategy Areas of Impact



Source: GVA Grimley

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## Bold; Challenging; and Changing Perceptions

- 1.14 The Regeneration Strategy seeks to build upon the recent success of the borough in attracting inward investment and regeneration resources and sets out a new scale of ambition for Halton's future.
- 1.15 The Regeneration Strategy is **Bold**; it is **Challenging** and it will **Change Perceptions**:
- **Bold** – A visionary and ambitious holistic framework for investment in Halton within a detailed phased 20-year delivery horizon, setting the agenda for new capital and revenue investment based upon the opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will create;
  - **Challenging** – A plan for dealing with some of the most contaminated and constrained land in the country, as part of an ambitious place-shaping regeneration programme, based upon the opportunities that the Mersey Gateway will create;
  - **Changing Perceptions** – Setting a new agenda for investment in delivering a place that people can be proud of and that people aspire to live and work in, invest and spend time.

## Sustainability at the Heart of the Strategy

- 1.16 Sustainability has been a key consideration in preparing the Regeneration Strategy and will be going forwards. A Sustainability Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment have been undertaken at key stages in the preparation of the Strategy itself, which has informed the way Issues have been identified and the way Options have been formulated and agreed. The Strategy has been '*proofed*' in sustainability terms such that subsequent projects that will emerge in delivering the overall vision – which themselves will be subject to further appraisal – will proceed on a solid set of important principles.

## Paying Dividends

- 1.17 In a nutshell, the Regeneration Strategy will deliver a range of outputs and outcomes that will contribute to the Regional Economic Strategy, the City Region Development Programme and a number of local priorities. It will:
- Create in excess of 611,000 square metres (m<sup>2</sup>) of new local employment floorspace for a range of local SME firms and for new incoming businesses, which will strengthen the



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local business base in terms of new formation, survival and growth of enterprise – a key RES action.

- Sustainable transport provision will be improved through integration with the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy<sup>1</sup>. Improvements to sustainable movement and the highway network will enhance the flow of labour and materials that will enable the growth of important economic sectors of the local economy – financial and business services, IT, telecommunications and communications, manufacturing, transport and wholesale sectors.
- Working within the framework of initiatives contained within the Merseyside Action Plan, in particular those revenue projects designed to enhance skills, raise local enterprise and address health deficiencies, and unlock the latent potential of Halton's employment base by enabling people from current states of worklessness into new employment. By providing local employment opportunities, an added value effect of the Mersey Gateway will be enhance access and opportunities for greater vocational training, education and life-long skills development.
- Expand the market catchment and opportunity for Halton's residents to access employment, leisure and recreational opportunities outside of the Borough, throughout the City Region and even beyond.
- Enhancing the vitality and viability of the borough's three town centres, that when coupled with ongoing Council programmes, will lead to a step-change in the perception and appeal of Runcorn Old Town (in particular) but also Widnes Town Centre and Halton Lea.
- Develop new leisure destinations and recreational activities that will encourage more active communities leading to wider social benefits including preventative health measures and social inclusion objectives.
- Contribute to enhanced health and quality of life outcomes, through a much relieved transport and movement network, based on a new network of corridors, hubs and destinations, accessed through greater walking, cycling and public transport priorities developed in conjunction with the proposals of the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy.
- Developing new uses for previously developed land, including some of the most contaminated land in the country (114,022 m<sup>2</sup>), for new greenspace, public realm (18,714 m<sup>2</sup>), employment and residential neighbourhoods (489 housing units).
- Creating new, and investing in existing, residential environments providing a diverse range of products, type, tenure and value – including new affordable housing – that will

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<sup>1</sup> Gifford (May 2008) Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy, May 2008

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attract and retain a more prosperous population. Investment in the existing stock and any new developments will be of a high standard of design and environmental quality.

- Develop environments that positively contribute to the vision and visitor objectives, business development and exploit the opportunities of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park.
- Deliver a step change in quality public realm, greenspace and environmental and biodiversity quality and fundamentally change perceptions of the place, as a place to live, work, invest and visit.

1.18 It is through the Mersey Gateway that such changes could be facilitated and in this sense, the Mersey Gateway provides a real catalyst for change in helping to shape a new future for many of the places directly influenced by the bridge. This is detailed in the concluding section to this report.

### A Note on Regeneration Strategy

1.19 The Regeneration Strategy is concerned with the opportunity to create vibrant places, in a holistic regeneration sense, in which the Mersey Gateway can be seen as the principal physical and socio-economic catalyst. In this respect, the Strategy establishes a vision for how the Council, stakeholders and residents, envisage change being delivered in these localities **following the delivery of the new bridge**.

1.20 It is important to distinguish between the effects of the Mersey Gateway itself, as a scheme in its own right, and the opportunities for regeneration (the 'regeneration benefits') that will be created as a result of the delivery of the bridge. This Strategy deals principally with the latter and relates to a scenario in which the Mersey Gateway has been constructed and therefore deals largely with the land use changes that will arise as a result. It is important to note that any regeneration benefits claimed in this Strategy are made based upon a direct relationship with the Mersey Gateway itself.

1.21 It is important therefore to read this document alongside those produced for the Orders and Applications, specifically the Design and Access Statement<sup>2</sup>, and specific chapters within the Environmental Impact Assessment<sup>3</sup>. These reports will be the subject of the Orders and Applications Inquiry and in themselves make the case for the Mersey Gateway in a 'no-scheme world' and a 'scheme world' i.e. the directly attributable effects of the Bridge itself. This does not relate to any implied land use impacts that the Bridge will inevitably create and

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<sup>2</sup> Gifford (2008) Design and Access Statement

<sup>3</sup> Gifford (2008) Environmental Impact Assessment – notably Socio-Economic Assessment and Transport Assessment

will in itself trigger a subsequent phase of regeneration activity. The purpose of the Regeneration Strategy will be to shape these proposals and inform future policy development.

#### *Development of the Strategy*

- 1.22 The Strategy represents the culmination of a nine-month examination of the issues and opportunities facilitated by the Mersey Gateway in a significant part of the borough of Halton.
- 1.23 This report is supported by a detailed evidence base (Appendix A), which informed the consideration of a number of physical Options (Appendix B). Arriving at the preferred Option involved a series of tasks that set out to understand the economic and socio-economic effects of each Option, the respective sustainability impacts as well as consideration of relative affordability (and hence delivery) of each Option. This is contained within Appendix B.
- 1.24 The Issues and Options were also the subject of a series of community engagement events throughout February, March and April 2008. Again the feedback from these events has informed the selection of a preferred Option.
- 1.25 This report is structured accordingly:
- Section 2 establishes the context in which the Mersey Gateway will be delivered;
  - Section 3 outlines the strategic significance of the Mersey Gateway project;
  - Section 4 presents the vision and the objectives for Mersey Gateway regeneration;
  - Section 5 presents the Regeneration Strategy;
  - Section 6 details how the vision for Mersey Gateway is being delivered i.e. 'more than just a bridge';

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## 2. THE MERSEY GATEWAY IN CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Mersey Gateway offers a significant opportunity to establish a new agenda for regeneration, which embraces a wider set of drivers of change.
- 2.2 It is important to establish the context in which Mersey Gateway will be delivered in both a socio-economic sense but also in appreciating the physical and spatial context in which the bridge will be delivered. The purpose of this Section is to provide an overview of this context. A full report is provided at Appendix A (Baseline). An overview of the key indicators as these have been used to prepare the Sustainability Appraisal is also included (Appendix B).
- 2.3 Figure 1.2 illustrates the five Impact Areas that have defined the analysis. Data has been collated at this level wherever possible and practical, notwithstanding that a full understanding of the conditions affecting these areas often means the geography of influence, is actually much wider.

### Population and the Local Economy

- 2.4 Halton's population of 119,500 (2006) has, after a long period of population decline, over the past five years started to experience a reverse in the trend and with a more positive growth projection, the population of the borough is now expected to increase by 1,500 persons over the next 20 years.
- 2.5 The Halton 'economy' by contrast has performed well over a number of years, particularly when benchmarked against sub-regional averages. This is explained to a significant extent by a very high level of employment dedicated to the traded sector, in both business and professional services and manufacturing. The legacy of Halton's industrial sectors, chemicals notably, demanded a very high skill base and net worth, which continues to exact an influence on the economic profile of the borough today.
- 2.6 The growth and vibrancy of several of the borough's higher value activities has helped offset structural changes to the economy through shifting global pressures. Since 1981, Halton has outperformed sub-regional averages in terms of both employment and GVA.
- 2.7 Yet, in many respects, the borough has now reached what may be described as a 'cross-roads' in its future growth aspirations. Looking forward, the forecast growth anticipated, whilst

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positive, is less marked than the historic profile would suggest. There are a number of reasons for this, which establishes an important context for the Mersey Gateway project.

- 2.8 The first point relates to the labour market conditions necessary to deliver growth. Halton's modest forecast growth in population and within this falling numbers of working age residents due to an ageing population, coupled with a constrained latent labour supply, are expected to act as a supply-side constraint to the borough's economic trajectory looking forward. Despite its relative economic successes as a whole, there exists a very real challenge for Halton that is connected to working-age inactivity and low skills in particular localities within the borough – the Priority Regeneration Areas – with several of these areas directly affected by the Mersey Gateway project.
- 2.9 Given such 'tight' labour market constraints it is unlikely that there is sufficient local capacity providing for these existing forecasts<sup>4</sup>. The implication will be for increased net in-commuting if forecast economic aspirations are to be realised, or alternatively a stymied economic growth scenario, and the implications this has for undermining neighbourhood regeneration and urban renewal programmes.
- 2.10 The Mersey Gateway will on the one hand help to overcome a current constraint in terms of the relief to Silver Jubilee Bridge by allowing for the ease of flow of workers and businesses. Unlocking this constraint will facilitate net in-commuting and in one sense allow for such growth. This in itself raises the importance of the Sustainable Transport Strategy supporting the Mersey Gateway project. It also raises the importance of the Sustainable Transport Strategy designed to enhance local accessibility in the Priority Regeneration Areas where car ownership is particularly low.
- 2.11 The second point concerns the sectoral composition of Halton's business community, as previously stated a key strength is in the traded sectors with notable contributions from financial, business and professional services, distribution and communications (including telecommunications). For the borough to deliver its forecast growth then these sectors are particularly important.
- 2.12 The foremost influence of the business performance of these sectors, and others, stemmed directly from the ability to access markets and customers (51%). With over 75% of those businesses surveyed sourcing their labour within a 10 mile radius, the importance of enhanced accessibility is therefore paramount over other locational considerations. Given congestion levels on the Silver Jubilee Bridge – used by over 80,000 vehicles every weekday

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<sup>4</sup> *And notwithstanding any further employment growth opportunities attributable to a 'Mersey Gateway effect'*

and ten times the number it was originally designed for – a clear majority of business surveyed have suggested that traffic congestion is a major constraint on the business going forward. This is both in terms of the markets they serve and in their workforce morale and productivity.

### A Profile of Multiple Deprivation

- 2.13 The multi-faceted nature of the problem is such that for the Mersey Gateway to be considered truly holistic then a range of interventions will be required across a number of fronts including: education, skills and health etc. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007) for Halton illustrated overleaf (figure 2.1) which identifies the most pronounced areas of multiple deprivation and confirms that the location of the Mersey Gateway bridge is closely aligned with these areas
- 2.14 A fuller account of the profile of multiple deprivation is contained within Appendix A but the significant conclusions to be drawn with respect to the Mersey Gateway project are outlined here:
- Windmill Hill situated within the top 1%, and Kingsway and Riverside (West Bank) within the 5% most deprived wards nationally.
  - Within the seven main sub-domains all the Priority Regeneration Areas show significant problems. In terms of education, skills and training deprivation and crime and disorder, all are within the 30% most deprived wards nationally.
  - For employment deprivation, the majority of Castlefields and the southern area of Windmill Hill are situated within the 5% most deprived wards nationally and Riverside, Windmill Hill, Halton Lea, Appleton and areas of the Grange ward are situated within the 10% most deprived wards nationally.
  - The areas exhibiting the highest levels of health deprivation are Halton Lea, Windmill Hill, Castlefields and the southern area of the Kingsway ward. Each of the wards features in the 5% most deprived wards at a national scale. Riverside, Grange, Appleton and the northern area of Kingsway also demonstrate a poor level of health, each being within the 10% most deprived wards nationally.
  - Income deprivation analysis indicated a similar severity. Of particular significance are the Windmill Hill ward and the southern area of Kingsway which, all having extremely low income levels, are situated within the 1% most deprived wards in England and Wales. Several of the priority wards are situated within the 5% most deprived wards in the country; namely Castlefields and Halton Lea.





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- 2.15 It is important to consider the Mersey Gateway project in this context. At one level this provides a snap-shot of the conditions without construction of the Bridge but on the other, highlights the importance of considering the effects of the project in this light<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.16 These findings relate back to the points raised previously as regards the local labour market. Economic inactivity and worklessness remain a key issue for Halton, indeed and regional priority for action, but the underlying problems, as suggested here, are much more deep-rooted. The Mersey Gateway in itself will not be the panacea for all issues in Halton but it *will* have a significant role to play in considering both the socio-economic benefits but also the physical effects of the bridge in these areas, which in themselves will lead to *further* socio-economic benefits.
- 2.17 In effect, the Mersey Gateway allows the opportunity to enhance and improve local employment areas, thereby sustaining them for the longer term and allows new employment floorspace to be created. As the Regeneration Strategy will detail, it will also facilitate the new neighbourhood centres to be delivered, such as that proposed for West Bank. Finally, the Mersey Gateway will facilitate key place-making interventions that will forge a new identity for these areas, raising aspirations and changing perceptions.

### A Distinct and Unique Character

- 2.18 The Mersey Gateway will deliver an exceptional piece of architecture, which will help to reverse the image and perception of this stretch of the river Mersey. Here is an opportunity, realised through the rationalisation of infrastructure and movement, which not only allows greater flexibility with regard accommodating future development, but can also facilitate improved connections between settlements and the waterfront.
- 2.19 Halton is an area of great physical identity forged over many years of development and re-development, influenced by many planning, design and architectural philosophies. It is important to understand the proposed Mersey Gateway in this context.

### *Historic Development*

- 2.20 The proximity of Runcorn to the River Mersey helped to underpin the town's economic importance in the eighteenth century and its urban growth in the late nineteenth century. Runcorn's early urbanisation was based on its development as a canal port. In the mid-18th Century the Bridgewater canal was completed and connected Manchester with the seaport of

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<sup>5</sup> For the project itself, a comprehensive Socio-Economic Impact Assessment has been completed for the Environmental Statement which provides a Do-Nothing and Do-Something assessment.

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- Liverpool and marked the beginning of the trade in coal and shipbuilding activity in Runcorn. Further canal links were established to Warrington (Old Quay Canal) and Weston Point by 1807.
- 2.21 As a direct consequence of this canal building the pace of industrial growth accelerated. These included shipbuilding, tanneries, soap works, the chemical industry and quarrying.
- 2.22 Runcorn in the 19th Century was dominated by an industrial landscape. The coming of the railway established the first direct crossing across the Mersey between Runcorn and Widnes. In 1868 the Runcorn Railway Bridge was opened across the River Mersey, providing a strategic linkage from the towns to Liverpool.
- 2.23 Urbanisation in Widnes was triggered later than Runcorn, in the 19th Century with the extension of the Sankey Canal to the town. This combined with the St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway in 1833 and the world's first railway dock at Spike Island just to the east of Widnes. The opening of a major chemical factory (Hutchinson), the first in Britain, in 1862 at Spike Island established the industrial character of the town. Widnes grew dramatically with the development of associated worker housing, such as at West Bank, with the growth gradually subsuming the original outlying villages.

#### *Contemporary Period*

- 2.24 Significant expansion in Runcorn occurred with the construction of the Silver Jubilee Bridge in 1961 and it's Designation as a New Town in 1964. This led to the expansion from the Old Town eastwards.
- 2.25 As was common with New Town philosophies, a number of key urban characteristics can be identified:
- A unique road system, which included an Expressway, which defined the town in a figure of eight. Within these areas dedicated public transport routes, or 'Busways', were provided. The structure effectively separated the Old town from the New Town.
  - The separation of the industrial estates (including Astmoor) along the Manchester Ship Canal and to the east along the river Mersey and River Weaver, from residential areas.
  - New neighbourhoods were centred around a new Town Park including Palace Fields, Southgate and Castlefields. Halton Lea shopping centre acted as the focus for these new neighbourhoods with a series of smaller local centres.

- For the most part, the neighbourhoods of the New Town were separated from the canals and the waterfront.
- 2.26 It is quite evident that Halton has experienced a quite dramatic interplay of rapid growth matched only by periods of significant decline, which have combined to create the place that Halton is today. When considering the Mersey Gateway in the context, then it genuinely offers an opportunity to become the catalyst to help redefine places and spaces. The Regeneration Strategy has considered in detail the various and varied strengths of place that exist and where weaknesses are to be found. Through the Mersey Gateway, here is an opportunity to address these challenges through a comprehensive and phased approach.
- 2.27 One of the most unique and prominent challenges facing the area however is the legacy of contamination that exists. This represents a significant constraint that requires continued public sector support and intervention in order to bring back land into productive use.

#### *Constraints on Land - Contamination*

- 2.28 The Borough became a national production centre for bulk chlorine, alkalis, copper smelting, soap manufacture, phosphate fertilisers and other chemicals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The most dangerous material, calcium sulphide waste (nicknamed galligu), was deposited on over 200 hectares of agricultural and floodplain land in the Borough, rendering such areas devoid of any biological life sustenance.
- 2.29 As of 2002 Halton Borough Council had spent over £20 million on land remediation, as a result of contamination, enabling reuse of 180ha of previously developed land (PDL). Of which, 129ha was for green, and 51ha hard, end use. In 2000 remediation was estimated to cost the Council £200,000 per hectare. In addition, the Council expected that costs would escalate from £2 million to £8 million per annum by 2005.
- 2.30 The Council's recently published Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review (2006), suggests that the prevalence of contamination has affected the confidence of potential private sector investors who no longer see it is economically viable to reclaim a large proportion of the sites due to the imbalance between land value and remediation costs upon completed redevelopments. Nevertheless, this issue is a continuing and high-level priority for the Council, particularly in the Mersey Gateway regeneration area, where there is a commitment to perform a full analysis of remediation requirements and resolve any outstanding issues regarding contamination by 2009<sup>6</sup> as preparation for the new Mersey Gateway crossing<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Halton Borough Council (2006) Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review



### Local Character Area Profile

2.31 Reflecting the great diversity of places within Halton, the five Impact Areas forming the basis of the Regeneration Strategy are addressed here. A fuller account is included within Appendix A.

#### West Bank, South Widnes

2.32 The character of West Bank, South Widnes is largely defined by the infrastructure of roads, railway lines, and waterways, all of which dissect and isolate the area from Widnes Town Centre and other parts of the Borough. These man-made, and natural, barriers collectively dissect the area and effectively isolate the community. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: West Bank / Southern Widnes Character**



2.33 The lack of permeability, which afflicts the area today, can be traced back to the historical development of the area coupled with recent investment aimed at improving the wider

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of the development appraisals, a conservative estimate has been assumed, at 10% of the construction/build costs for any remediation requirement – upto £60m has been factored into the appraisals to target contamination issues.

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- transport network. Undoubtedly, these have enhanced the wider movement network and opened up specific sites but these improvements have often been at the expense of local permeability.
- 2.34 The River Mersey creates a definitive edge forming the eastern boundary and a natural barrier to movement. The estuary landscapes offer few access points for pedestrians and the disused Sankey Canal reinforces the separation between the river corridor and the residential hinterland. Links across the Mersey (at this location) are restricted to the Silver Jubilee Bridge predominantly serving the wider transport network. Local links are frustrated by the congestion and speed of traffic running across the bridge resulting in poor inter-town connectivity.
- 2.35 Victoria Road forms a further division, running north to south, through the centre of the area. As a gateway to Widnes south (the junction of Ashley Way West and Victoria Road), it is unfortunately restricted and narrow in character. The feeling of separation between the town centre and West Bank is further accentuated by Ashley Way West itself, which as a main vehicular thoroughfare presents a number of challenges for pedestrians and local traffic wishing to cross it. The A562 (Ashley Way) forms the northern boundary of the Southern Widnes area.
- 2.36 The location is dominated by vehicles and road infrastructure creating an environment, where pedestrians are only likely to use the route out of necessity (most likely preferring to use the route within day light hours). The current layout means that pedestrians are less likely to feel safe or comfortable walking along Victoria Road and this creates an 'obstacle' impeding free movement between West Bank and the Town Centre.
- 2.37 Several distinct character areas can be found in West Bank:
- Catalyst Centre – with the listed Discovery Centre as the focal point for the area, the open space surrounding the building provides a locally valued resource and provides excellent views of the Sankey Canal, Spike Island and the Mersey Estuary.
  - Hutchison Street – occupying largely industrial land between Wandsworth Way and the A533, it currently forms a low quality gateway into West Bank area with a fractured urban layout limiting east-west movement. Yet it is an area that has been the focus for recent regeneration (Ted Gleave Fields) and the Mersey Gateway will have a significant impact on the area.
  - Ashley Way – will be directly affected by the Mersey Gateway but is currently an area containing a number of older industrial premises, scrap yards, workshops and trade
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counter uses occupying land fragmented by Ashley Way West, Ditton Road and the railway, which runs east to west along its southern boundary despite this being a highly visible southern fringe to the town centre.

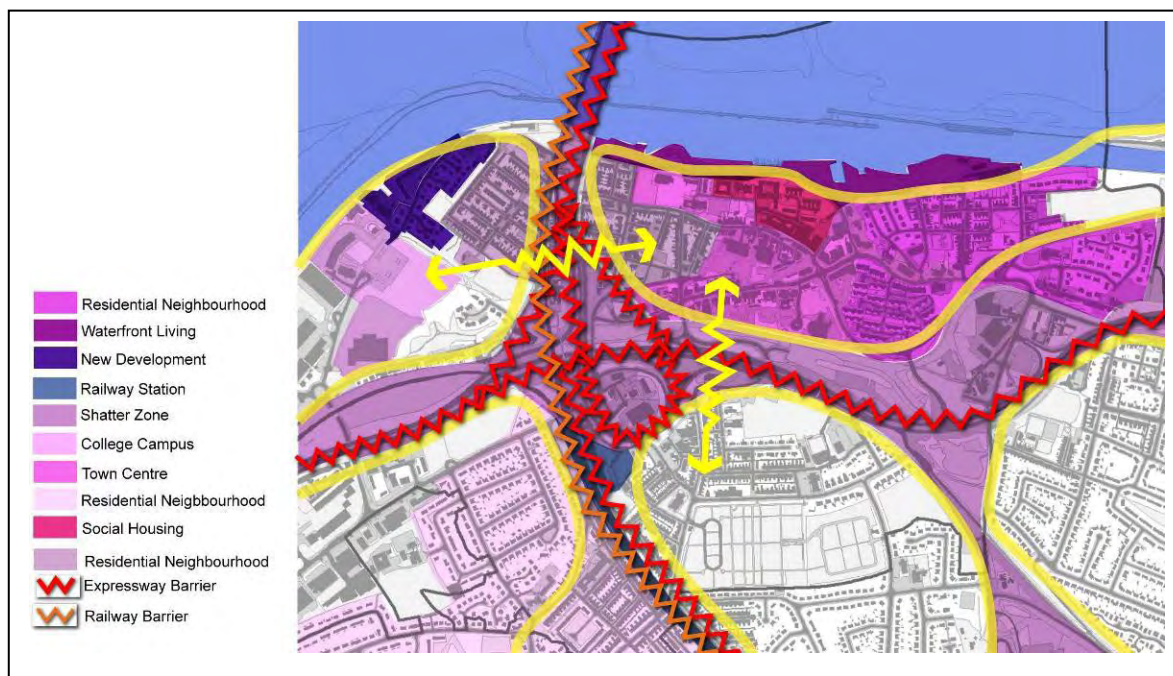
- Waterloo Road – despite a quite negative image in environmental terms and aspects, this area continues to support a mix of uses providing a mix of employment opportunities and valuable local employment uses. Trafalgar Court houses a number of workshops and lock up premises and to the east the Catalyst Trade Park also houses a mix of employment uses. Mersey Gateway proposals will impact on the area but herein is an opportunity to reconfigure the employment profile of this area.
- West Bank – the existing mixed-tenure community is located around a collection of terraced streets, which are predominantly arranged north to south. Older terraced properties are arranged to the east and west of Mersey Road. The condition and quality of the properties appears generally poor with the area inadequately served by shops and facilities. A relatively permeable urban grid has in some cases been disrupted by more recent residential development.

#### *Runcorn Old Town*

- 2.38 The character of Runcorn Old Town can be broken down into a number of discrete character zones, which are largely defined by the underlying topography and the layout of streets, roads, waterways and the railway.
- 2.39 There is a recurring theme of poor circulation and poor permeability, which is a by-product of the transport networks which converge upon the town at the crossing point of the river Mersey, creating ‘Shatter Zones’.
- 2.40 The character of the town is also defined by the quality of the views to the north, which offer an impressive sense of scale with some of the best views found on the north facing Runcorn slopes, which lie above the older town.
- 2.41 Runcorn Old Town has the potential to feel more like a ‘market town’ where its special location - on the banks of the Mersey can be used to create a vibrant, place to live, shop or visit, and is defined by its waterway, rail and road networks. Figure 2.3 illustrates the man made and natural features, which define the character of the town.
- 2.42 The Promenade to the north of Mersey Road includes waterside pocket parks, visitor car parking and some limited interpretation boards from which excellent views of the Mersey and

the Silver Jubilee Bridge can be enjoyed. 466 new apartments (by Bryant Homes – The Deck) are also under construction to the east of the promenade.

**Figure 2.3: Runcorn Old Town Character**



- 2.43 The Bridgewater Canal is located to the south of the town centre and has recently received a number of improvements under the Bridgewater Way Programme – a leisure scheme that is regenerating the waterside area along Runcorn’s length of the Bridgewater Canal as part of a wider transformation, which will connect numerous communities along the 39 miles stretch of waterway.
- 2.44 Complementary investment has also led to the opening of the Brindley Arts Centre on the north bank of the Bridgewater Canal, which currently terminates at the Runcorn Basin to the west. In former times the canal continued westwards and joined the Manchester Ship Canal. The original route and alignment of the canal (now dismantled beyond the Runcorn Basin) is protected from development under current planning policy although the alignment and layout of the “Runcorn loops” of the expressway (leading to the Silver Jubilee Bridge) currently limits the likelihood the original route being reopened.
- 2.45 Within the Old Town an emerging canal side quarter now straddles the Bridgewater Canal incorporating land to the rear of High Street and south of the town.

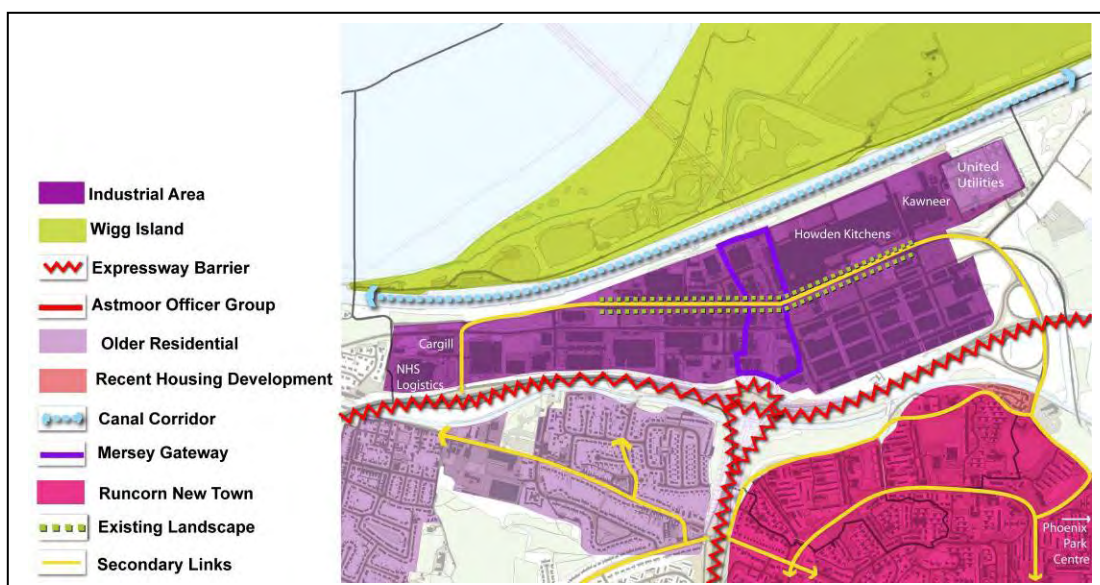
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- 2.46 The proposed waterside developments at Canal Quarter and at the Deck overlooking the Mersey Estuary will complement the Old Town's convenience centre helping to create nodes of activity stimulated by the waterside character of the town.
- 2.47 The town's transport infrastructure makes the area distinctive. However, the expansive elevated rail structures impede movement from one local area to the next. In particular, a number of poor pedestrian routes form low quality connections between the Station, traditional residential areas (west of the railway) and also between the houses and Runcorn Basin. Pedestrian routes are also diverted along convoluted routes using subways and stairways to circumnavigate the expressway.
- 2.48 The expressway road network, which includes grade -separated routes, has effectively created a large barrier between the Old Town and the residential suburbs lying to the south.
- 2.49 The town has a mixed character and is laid out around well-defined streets, with the changes of level giving the town its own sense of place. The buildings are predominantly small-scale even within the town centre.
- 2.50 Runcorn Old Town Centre is the smallest of the Borough's three centres. It serves as the dominant convenience centre within Runcorn's local catchment. Convenience goods retailing remains below capacity when measured against the Borough's other centres, which is unusual for a small town.

#### *Astmoor & Wigg Island*

- 2.51 The character of Astmoor and Wigg Island can be broken down into a number of discrete character zones which, for the most part, are the result of the comprehensive planning of this northern part of the Runcorn New Town (figure 2.4):
- Astmoor Industrial Estate represents a sizable part of the impact area. Its urban form is defined by east-west connections including Astmoor Road which service this business park and the Runcorn Busway. A mix of very small, small and large building footprints characterise the area and a mix of ownerships and tenures has undermined effective estate management. It is also characterised by a significant degree of vacancy, upto 25% and is recognised as a future priority for investment, starting with a BIDs scheme (live April 2008)
  - The potential negative impact of Astmoor Industrial Estate on the area to the north is mitigated against through generous landscaping and changes in topography with the industrial estate located on higher ground.

- To the west of the Central Expressway older inner-war residential neighbourhoods predominate. Developed in the 1920's these suburban mostly semi-detached houses are organised in cul-de-sacs feeding off Halton Road.
- This area forms part of the Runcorn New Town Development and its identity is determined by both the Central Expressway running north - south and its classic residential Radburn layout. Typically, there is a separation between vehicle and pedestrian movement. Vehicle access is gained through adjacent cul-de-sacs and pedestrian connections lead to the Express Busway route to the south of the area.
- The character zone to the north of the area is determined by excellent views of the River Mersey, the Manchester Ship Canal, the Jubilee Bridge and Wigg Island. The most dominant feature of the area is Wigg Island which is a 25 ha Community Park. The park facilitates views of the Mersey with denser landscaping and trees on the eastern edge.

**Figure 2.4: Astmoor and Wigg Island Character Area**



2.52 There are a number of man-made and natural barriers, which collectively critically dissect the area from Runcorn Town Centre as well as isolating the neighbourhoods to the south. For the most part the over-predominance of east-west vehicle connections through the area causes severance.

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- 2.53 The Manchester Ship Canal creates a definitive edge forming the northern boundary. Wigg Island can only be accessed by vehicle from the east, along Astmoor Road, across a single lane bridge (Wigg Island Swing Bridge).
- 2.54 The Daresbury Expressway runs east-west through the area and adds a further layer of severance particularly between the north eastern character area and Linnet Park.
- 2.55 Pedestrian connections from the character area to Runcorn Old Town along the Manchester Ship Canal are poor.

#### *Halton Lea*

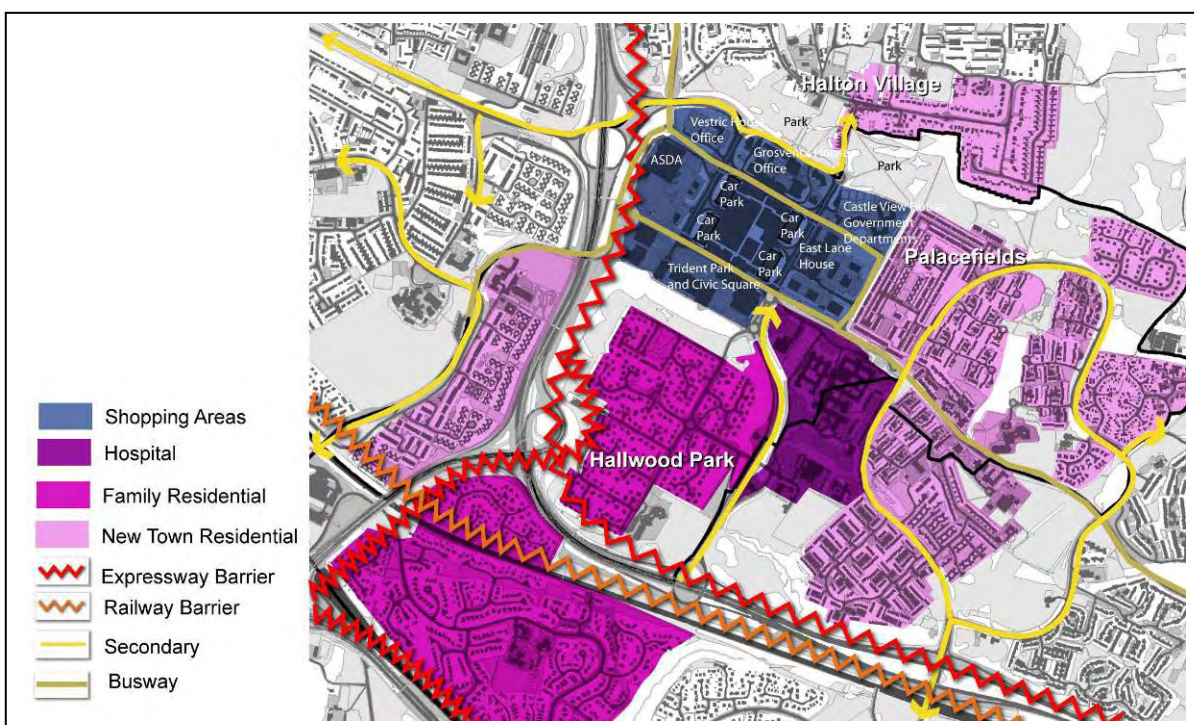
- 2.56 The Halton Lea Impact Area is located directly to the east of the Central Expressway and contains four broad character zones highlighted in figure 2.5.
- Halton Lea Shopping Centre - the character of Halton Lea reflects its initial development in the 1970's when it was one of the largest shopping centres in Europe with a layout and appearance typically characterising some of the urban design features of the time:
  - An aspiration to make Halton Lea the focus of surrounding new town neighbourhoods and the dominant centre where retailing is concentrated.
  - A framework which favoured the unconstrained use of the motor car, but offered surrounding neighbourhoods and residents the choice between public and private transport.
  - A separation between pedestrian and vehicle movement.
  - Large development blocks and a retailing experience which was concentrated within an enclosed second floor mall.
  - First impressions of the centre are defined by the large monolithic multi-storey car parks which have blank facades, the absence of ground floor uses and the pedestrian bridges and the elevated busways. The general quality of buildings surrounding the centre is poor and creates an unattractive and uncompromising environment. Some examples include Grosvenor House, East Lane House and buildings associated with Trident Park.
  - Halton Hospital – occupies a sizeable part of the south eastern edge.
  - Hallwood Park and Beechwood – these neighbourhoods date from the 1970's. Hallwood Park, previously know as Southgate, was redeveloped in the 1990's and now provides larger residential family properties in response to changing market demand. The areas are suburban in character and semi-detached houses predominate which are arranged in



cul-de-sacs off the primary routes of Hallwood Park Avenue and Beechwood Avenue. Crucially direct vehicle access from Hallwood Park, Beechwood and Palacefields to Halton Hospital and the shopping centre is not possible.

- Palacefields - again dates from the 1970's and its layout and properties are older in nature than Hallwood Park. Palacefields, to the east of the shopping centre, is an area of Radburn-style housing with properties within the estate are internal looking and small terraced housing predominates. Vehicle and pedestrian movements are separated and there is substantial internal open space. Despite the poor layout, properties, open space and landscaping have been well maintained and there seems to be little or no vacancy.

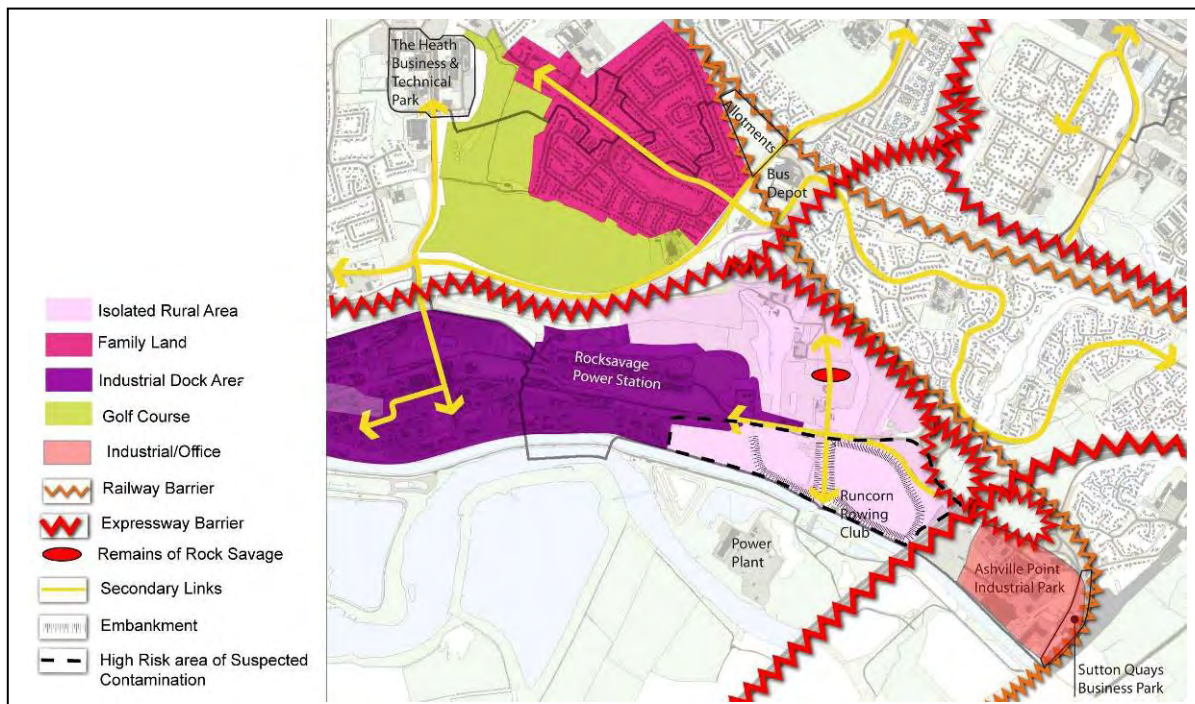
**Figure 2.5: Halton Lea Character Areas**



*Rocksavage & Clifton*

2.57 The eastern part of Rocksavage and Clifton is a key southern gateway to Runcorn from the M56 and the A557. The character of Rocksavage and Clifton is defined by a number of large land uses and road infrastructure which determine specific character zones (Figure 2.6):



**Figure 2.6 Rocksavage and Clifton**

- **Cholmondeley Road:** This isolated rural area, Clifton Village, was once connected by Cholmondeley Road to Halton in the north. A small number of late Victorian terraced houses remain and run along Cholmondeley Road which sweeps steeply toward the Weaver Canal. There are remnants of Rocksavage house, a 16th Century mansion owned by Sir John Savage, which is the site of a former historic building Clifton Hall.
- **The Weaver Canal** forms the southern edge of the Impact Area and is used by the Runcorn Rowing Club. The character of the area is undermined by views from the canal which include the southern part of Weston Point Docks, large overhead power lines, and the M56 to the east. A narrow stretch of the Canal is subject to flooding and falls within Environment Agency Flood Zone 3 and 4. Previous industrial uses and associated activity means that area could be constrained by contamination.
- **Clifton Road** – does much to define the suburban character of this zone. This is an important arterial route to Runcorn, which is lined with well matured trees and large detached residential properties. Behind Clifton Road more recent 1970's residential development of detached and semi detached properties are inward looking and are arranged in cul-de-sac's.

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- Weston Point – both the Rocksavage Power Station and Weston Point industrial dock define the south-western edge of the Impact Area. This strong heavy industrial character limits the future development potential of the area.
  - Ashville Point/Sutton Quays – the Industrial Park and Business Park determine the character of the eastern edge of the impact area. More recent office development is associated with Sutton Quay’s Business Park. Ashville Point Industrial Park represents a mix of light industrial uses, storage and distribution services with poorer quality buildings. Much of the eastern part of the estate is used by a car storage and distribution company.
- 2.58 In overall terms north-south movement within the Impact Area is particularly restricted by the Weston Point Expressway, the railway lines to the north, and the sizable golf course.
- 2.59 The existence of the Power Station restricts east-west movement on Cow Hey Lane and other east-west vehicle links are dominated by the Dock and associated traffic. Finally, access to the M56 from the Sutton Quay’s Business Park is complicated by a series of two roundabouts.
- 2.60 The Mersey Gateway offers a tremendous opportunity to positively enhance the strengths of place that exist across these areas and where required, an opportunity to address fundamental weaknesses. Whether this is through the direct impacts of the new infrastructure, as will be the case in West Bank, Runcorn Old Town and Astmoor, or through indirect effects such as increased movement and flows in turn increasing the visibility and prominence of Halton Lea and Rocksavage, the Mersey Gateway could justifiably be conceived as the catalyst for change.

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## 3. THE STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MERSEY GATEWAY

- 3.1 The Mersey Gateway is embedded in a number of strategic regional, city-regional, sub-regional and local economic, spatial, and transport policy documents. The relevance and relationship between the Mersey Gateway and the suite of regional, sub-regional and local policy is detailed in Appendix A, but the purpose of this Section is to present the strategic significance of the Mersey Gateway, as this has influenced and informed the Regeneration Strategy.
- 3.2 The Mersey Gateway is a transformational project as defined in the Regional Economic Strategy and accordingly prioritised in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Reflecting this priority status, the project is seen as one of the key investment projects of both the Liverpool City Region and the Merseyside sub-region.

### A Well Connected...Premier Destination

- 3.3 The performance of the Liverpool City Region and the Merseyside sub-region is therefore a significant consideration for the Regeneration Strategy. The policies and the programmes developed at this spatial level will have a direct bearing and influence on the Regeneration Strategy locally.
- 3.4 The underlying reason why the Mersey Gateway is such a priority for the Liverpool City Region is that it currently contributes a 40% share of the North West region's Gross Value Added contribution – a £106billion economy<sup>8</sup> – and over a third of its jobs – 2.98million across the region. Moreover, it is 'an economy on the move' and one of the fastest growing city-regions in the UK, predicting fast short term growth of some 50,000 jobs by 2010<sup>9</sup> with productivity growth exceeding regional and national averages.
- 3.5 An important ambition of the City Region is to create a '*well connected*' and '*premier destination*'.
- 3.6 The strategic aim to be '*well connected*' seeks to maximise the benefits of the common ownership of the Port and John Lennon Airport, and the supply chain hinterland, serving the North of England. The expansion of Liverpool John Lennon Airport is based on forecast

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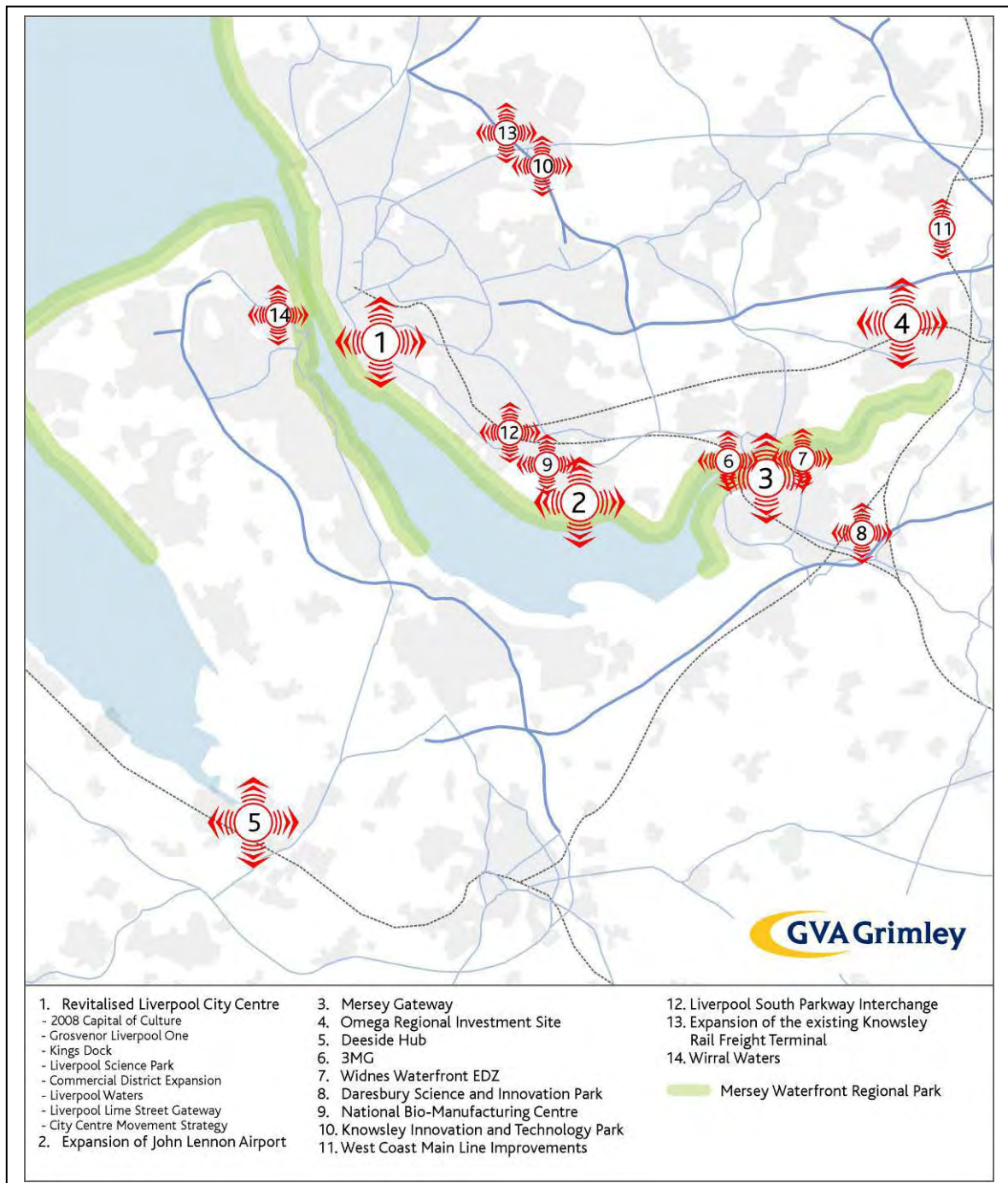
<sup>8</sup> Northwest Development Agency (June 2007) Baseline Update Report

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- growth of 12.3 million passengers per annum and cargo activity to around 220,000 tonnes per annum by 2030 – an investment in excess of £600million. The Mersey Gateway represents a further key priority project designed to enhance connectivity in the City Region.
- 3.7 These represent the strategic transport projects that will have a significant impact on the development of the City Region as an efficient and effective transport hub. Underpinning these strategic projects are more localised projects such as improved connectivity within, to and from the City Region, across the Northern Way and connections to international markets and improved intra—city region connectivity.
- 3.8 These *transformational projects* are designed to increase the competitiveness and productivity of the city region and together represent important priorities under the current City Region Development Programme and Merseyside Action Plan. If the City Region is to deliver its potential, then being well connected is absolutely critical to the cause.
- 3.9 These projects only represent one strand however of what is a much a wider investment context (figure 3.1) that in part driven by the continued investment in Liverpool city centre and the Mersey Waterfront. Taken together this represents an investment programme of over £2.9billion.
- 3.10 Yet, GVA per head remains at 73% of the UK average in the Merseyside sub-region and thus, poses a significant challenge for the City Region going forward. Therefore, despite accelerating growth, economic challenges and constraints remain. Economic inactivity and worklessness remain barriers to raising productivity, which when coupled with some of England's most deprived localities, represents a long term programme of sustained regenerative investment in the City Region's communities.
- 3.11 Further programme and project interventions are also being delivered (table 3.1) which captures the holistic nature of economic regeneration being delivered across the wider Merseyside sub-region (and aligned with projects delivered across the City Region). It is important to appreciate the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy in this context as many of the issues faced within the Mersey Gateway Impact Areas are germane to issues being tackled on a wider spatial stage, such as skills, employability and local enterprise.
- 3.12 The Regeneration Strategy therefore offers the opportunity to channel and closely align such programmes and projects into the areas of need through the construction and operation stages of the Mersey Gateway.

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<sup>9</sup> The Mersey Partnership (2005) City Region Development Programme

**Figure 3.1: Liverpool City Region Investment Projects** <sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Fig. 3.1: Sites 6 and 7 are situated closer to site 3 in South Widnes than is displayed – their position on the plan is for illustrative purposes in the context of the City Region and Mersey Gateway.



**Table 3.1: Merseyside Action Plan Transformational Action and Projects (2006-09)**

Priorities	Description	Projects (of relevance to MG)
<b>Skills for Productivity</b>	Building a larger, more skilled and flexible workforce to meet demand by - analysing and understanding employer skills requirements linked with brokering access to and the delivery of demand-led skills programmes at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstream skills provision (LSC Train to Gain, FE/WBL)</li> <li>• Enhanced Train to Gain offer including 'Skillworks'</li> <li>• Local / sector skills agreements</li> <li>• Graduate recruitment and retention</li> </ul>
<b>Full Employment</b>	Build skilled, working communities by accelerating the pace at which more economically inactive people are brought into, stay and progress in the labour market, through direct individual employment interventions, employer driven routeways to work and skills brokerage services. Creating a continuum approach to developing employability skills and skills for life linked to actual job vacancies, following through with on going workforce based retention support and the on going development of vocational skills. These activities will be targeted at areas of high worklessness, young people and underrepresented groups. Integral to these measures are lifting more children out of poverty and increasing social mobility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Employment Strategy</li> <li>• Mainstream Job Centre Plus provision (New Deal, Pathways)</li> <li>• Local employment initiatives including Northern Way pilot schemes</li> <li>• Demand led routeway approaches e.g. Public Sector Academy</li> </ul>
<b>Productivity Growth</b>	Increase numbers of high growth, high productivity SME start-up and growth, especially in key clusters through business finance, tailored business advice and private sector led initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merseyside Sector Development Programme</li> <li>• Business Link provision</li> <li>• Merseyside Special Investment Fund</li> <li>• Local Business Support</li> </ul>
<b>Raising Enterprise Levels</b>	Raise the overall level of enterprise and business density through the delivery of high quality business finance, advice and support. These services will be particularly focused on low enterprise areas, under-represented groups, and innovative business models such as social enterprise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local enterprise programmes, coordinated by Entrepreneurship Commission</li> <li>• LEGI implementation</li> <li>• Social Enterprise Network and key procurement initiatives</li> <li>• Merseyside Gender Agenda</li> </ul>
<b>Driving Innovation</b>	Develop a world class research capacity to deliver human capital and knowledge transfer which will stimulate innovation in Merseyside's key sectors / clusters in product, process and technology. This objective will be delivered in collaboration with the private sector, focused on key sectors and clusters, and will include improvements to Merseyside's thought leadership and market intelligence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daresbury Science and Innovation Park</li> <li>• Liverpool Science Park</li> <li>• Liverpool Research Alliance</li> <li>• National Microsystems Packaging Centre</li> </ul>
<b>Generating Inward Investment in</b>	Equip Merseyside with a fit for purpose inward investment vehicle that supports and enhances NWDAs regional and cluster mechanisms. This will provide the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liverpool and Merseyside Investment Agency</li> <li>• Investment Image Campaign</li> </ul>

<b>Merseyside</b>	focal point for Merseyside inward investment activity on behalf of all partners. It should be resourced to compete effectively for the region in national markets and with the region in international markets. This is a transformational activity that will create a leading edge business development resource.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Merseyside Portal</li> <li>• Corporate Sales &amp; Research Programme</li> <li>• Network Development Programme</li> <li>• Investor Development Programme</li> </ul>
<b>Destination Management Plan</b>	Promote Merseyside assets as premier tourist destination through the Destination Management Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Management Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Mersey Waterfront Regional Park</b>	Deliver a range of activities and investments to transform, energise and connect the Mersey waterfront to complement the Liverpool Attack Brand and help position the sub region as a Premier Destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River of Light</li> <li>• Pride in our Promenades</li> </ul>
<b>Community Regeneration</b>	Spatially targeted regeneration of Merseyside's most deprived communities as part of building sustainable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castlefields</li> <li>• Neighbourhood renewal</li> <li>• 3rd sector capacity improvement</li> </ul>
<b>Merseyside Digital Development</b>	Embed the use of digital and ICT technologies within enterprise, skills for all, communities and health and social welfare. A joined up approach linking the private, public and voluntary sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Development Strategy (Greater Merseyside Digital Development Agency)</li> <li>• Digital Academy</li> <li>• Advanced Internet Methods and Emergent Systems</li> </ul>
<b>Improving Merseyside's Environmental Performance</b>	Coordinate and improve Merseyside's approach to the economic opportunities and challenges presented by the environment agenda, focusing on those actions that can most positively influence the interdependency between economy, environment and society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority Programme</li> <li>• Environmental Business Support</li> <li>• Environmental Technology Development</li> <li>• Sustainable Procurement Programme</li> </ul>
<b>Health is Wealth</b>	Drive productivity change across Merseyside through specific health related activities, specifically to: develop Merseyside as an internationally competitive location for health research and innovation, investigate the link between health and productivity, and take specific actions to reduce levels of ill-health and levels of incapacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health is Wealth Commission</li> <li>• Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine</li> <li>• Bio-medical research centre (University of Liverpool)</li> </ul>

Source: Mersey Partnership Merseyside Action Plan 2006-09

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## 4. MERSEY GATEWAY REGENERATION - VISION AND THE OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 In the context of the overarching vision for the Mersey Gateway and the objectives underpinning the Scheme itself, the Regeneration Strategy has established three Priority Regeneration Objectives, which signify key strands that, when combined, represent a holistic regeneration investment framework for those parts of Runcorn and Widnes, affected by the Mersey Gateway proposals.
- 4.2 The purpose of this Section is to establish these Objectives which will guide regeneration activity.

### The Mersey Gateway Vision

- 4.3 The adopted vision for the Mersey Gateway is that it will be *'more than just a bridge'* and that by unlocking economic regeneration it will provide the catalyst for change - driving forward the continued renaissance of Halton and the Liverpool City Region.
- 4.4 The Regeneration Strategy integrates with the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy to ensure that sustainable modes of movement and public transport accessibility and provision are maximised in a co-ordinated, holistic approach.
- 4.5 The Regeneration Strategy also builds upon existing Council policy and plans where appropriate, such as the Waterside Regeneration Strategy. Important, and key, principles from such documents have been integrated into the Regeneration Strategy and have informed several of the opportunities contained within this section<sup>11</sup>.
- 4.6 A number of principal objectives for the Mersey Gateway have been defined (para 1.6) which have guided the development of the project for a number of years. These have also informed the Regeneration Strategy.

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<sup>11</sup> A review of existing Council policy and plans is included within Appendix A and in commentary supporting the character area analysis, which ultimately informed the Options (Appendix B)

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## The Regeneration Strategy Objectives

4.7 The Regeneration Strategy is an important element of the Mersey Gateway project and takes a lead from the overarching Mersey Gateway objectives. The vision for regeneration is as defined by the Mersey Gateway itself – the Regeneration Strategy is about what ‘more than a Bridge’ actually means locally. Accordingly a number of Priority Regeneration Objectives have been defined and set the framework of the Strategy.

4.8 The Priority Objectives for regeneration are:

### *Priority Regeneration Objective 1 – Image and Place-Making*

- Significantly lift perceptions of Widnes and Runcorn to meet the visionary aspirations held by the Council, as embodied in the Mersey Gateway Project, and ensure any new development, attributable to the catalytic effect of the Bridge, makes a positive enhancement to the character of the locality in terms of design quality and resource use.
- Building on the strong local sense of community, and place, deliver the considerable regeneration opportunities presented by the Mersey Gateway, enhancing and promoting key assets in each of the localities (physical and community).

### *Priority Regeneration Objective 2 – Accessibility and Sustainable Movement*

- Increasing the catchment area for labour, goods and markets, such that the Mersey Gateway opens up new opportunities for employment in the Liverpool City Region for Halton’s residents and increases the ability to access markets and customers for Halton’s businesses.
- Facilitate enhanced movements by pedestrians, cyclists and local vehicular travellers (particularly by public transport patronage) through the de-linking of unnecessary infrastructure, the down-grading and removal of unnecessary expressway infrastructure, improved access to the expressway / highway system where appropriate, the removal of through-traffic presently utilising the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the provision of new, dedicated infrastructure for sustainable modes of travel.
- Build on the positive impacts for all user-groups attributable to the Mersey Gateway and maximise opportunities for further local connectivity and accessibility for existing communities by coordinating with the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy<sup>12</sup> in promoting ease of movement throughout the area and beyond, particularly by public

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<sup>12</sup> Gifford (May 2008) Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy

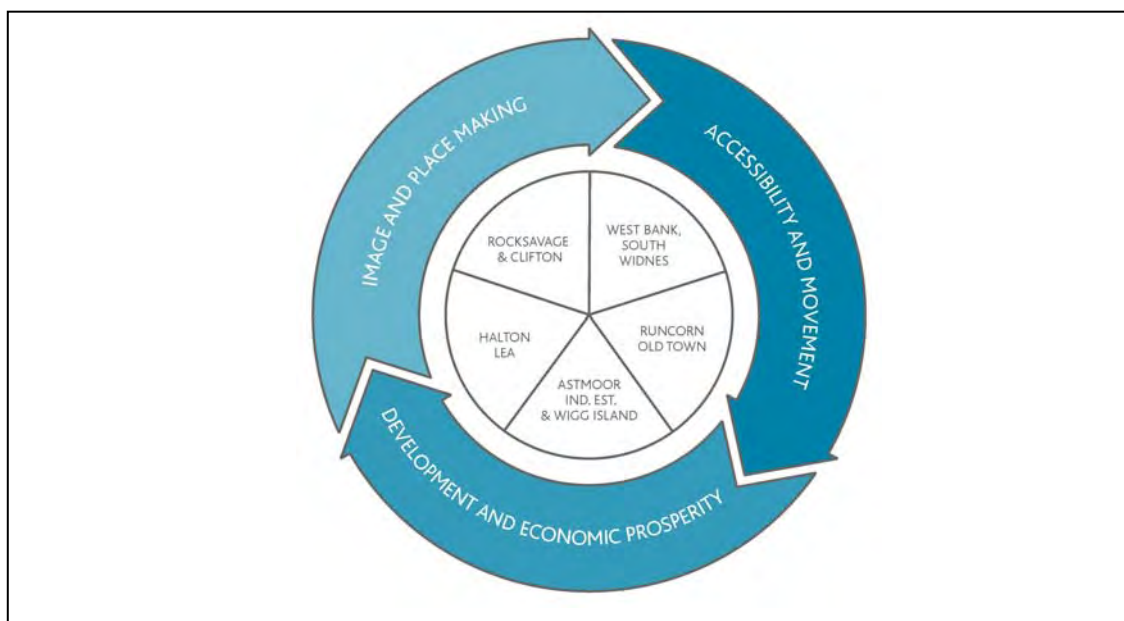
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transport modes but also through greater opportunities for walking and cycling linked to health benefits.

*Priority Regeneration Objective 3 – Development and Economic Prosperity*

- Significantly improve the commercial, and residential, accommodation in the area having particular regard to local needs, and providing good quality, affordable and resource efficient accommodation to meet contemporary and future market requirements and aspirations, through key redevelopment proposals attributable to the scheme.
  - To bring back into use land for new development that is currently occupied by highways infrastructure deemed unnecessary following the completion of the Mersey Gateway, with a particular focus on bringing back into use contaminated land in West Bank and Southern Widnes, for new uses.
  - Development should use land, energy and water resources prudently, minimising the production of waste and increasing reuse, recycling and recovery of waste.
- 4.9 The Priority Regeneration Objectives seek to provide a visionary, imaginative and a deliverable set of solutions to the wide-ranging economic, social, and environmental problems identified within Halton in which the Mersey Gateway project can facilitate. These are not solely physical objectives but seek to encapsulate the wider objectives of creating sustainable communities and defining the priorities for what will make these ‘places’ function better.
- 4.10 The Priority Regeneration Objectives are supported by a number of direct key objectives relating explicitly to the five Impact Areas, as illustrated overleaf in figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1: Approach to Regeneration**

- 4.11 The Priority Regeneration Objectives relate back to the Issues identified in the evidence base (Appendix 1) and are presented in Section 2. These objectives establish a framework by which Options were developed and considered with a preferred Option forming the basis of the Strategy (section 5).

### Impact Area Objectives

- 4.12 The proceeding section will specify the key objectives in the five Impact Areas of West Bank, Runcorn Old Town, Astmoor Industrial Estate and Wigg Island, Halton Lea and Rocksavage and Clifton arising from the investigation of the issues and consultation with local residents and stakeholders.

#### *West Bank, South Widnes*

- 4.13 The evidence presented within the Issues Report highlights that the South Widnes area is characterised by high incidence of multiple deprivation. It is also the case however that the West Bank area functions as an area in which the employment base supports many of the communities that reside there. The area is typified by very short travel to work distances.
- 4.14 Housing market analysis finds local values are particularly low, with the residential offer skewed towards terraces and in general lacking in larger family housing and more aspirational housing that realises the benefits of the location. At present, West Bank is incapable of

- 
- providing the aspirational environment to encourage skilled professionals into Halton to support present, and future, employment growth needs.
- 4.15 The physical analysis highlights that South Widnes currently lacks a recognisable gateway; a situation which is further compounded by the dense, over-bearing transport infrastructure, inadequate public realm and poor-quality industrial nature of the Waterloo Road area.
- 4.16 Poor level of connectivity between West Bank and Widnes Town Centre is an issue, physically severing local communities from the vital services offered by the Town Centre. Further severance is experienced between residential areas when attempting to travel east-west across the area.
- 4.17 Consultation with local residents and stakeholders raised several important issues for the regeneration of West Bank and South Widnes. These views have directly informed the objectives for the area.
- 4.18 Local residents highlighted the prevalence of high levels of anti-social behaviour, and crime, including significant vandalism by local children and youths. Further, it was deemed vital to develop a stronger sense of local identity and provide local youths with adequate facilities to ensure their engagement in local community activity.
- 4.19 The single point of access into West Bank area of Southern Widnes, and one-way system, was also highlighted as an impediment, resulting in frequent congestion and frustrating movement for the elderly and parents with children.
- Objective 1: Re branding West Bank through the creation of high-quality gateway locations with excellent access to the regions principal conurbations and population – inherent in this is the development of high-quality, aspirational and affordable housing and services. For, to enable the labour supply to meet, and facilitate, further demand within the local economy, West Bank provides a significant opportunity to encourage skilled workers to permanently reside within Halton.
  - Objective 2: Facilitating the development of resource efficient high-quality business accommodation, providing mixed-use leisure and recreational facilities, providing resource efficient and affordable housing and upgrading the standard of the public realm including access to high quality greenspace.
  - Objective 3: Enable local residents to share directly in the wider investment benefits of regeneration working with initiatives such as the Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy (LCRES) to develop local skills and capacity, increase local employment
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opportunities and reduce worklessness in West Bank. It is important that local employment opportunities must remain, and be further encouraged into the area.

- Objective 4: To provide investment to support, and develop, training facilities for local sporting provision, incorporating flood lights and changing rooms.
- Objective 5: To provide an additional access route, served by public transport through the Sustainable Transport Strategy in particular, but also serving new walking and cycling routes, into West Bank to negate the existing bottleneck situation, improve east-west connectivity, upgrade links to Widnes Town Centre and the River Mersey and utilise the de-linking of redundant expressways to unlock new development opportunities and reduce the severance and isolation experienced by local communities.
- Objective 6: To improve safety (incorporating Secured by Design principles), and local physical amenities, by upgrading street lighting and the wider public realm within West Bank and the links from this area to Widnes Town Centre.
- Objective 7: to create a new heart for West Bank with the consolidation of local retail, services and improved education and health provision.

#### *Runcorn Old Town*

- 4.20 Re-establishing Runcorn Old Town as an attractive and viable centre for Runcorn is an important opportunity that will be delivered by the Mersey Gateway project. Significant employment growth is forecast within Halton particularly in the business services sector which underpins a vision for the Old Town, particularly when considering the opportunity that Runcorn Station, with direct links to London, Birmingham and Liverpool, offers to this end.
- 4.21 Runcorn Old Town has the potential to feel more like a 'market town' where its special location - on the banks of the Mersey can be used to create a vibrant, place to live, shop or visit, which is defined by its waterway, rail and road networks.
- 4.22 Building on this, the Regeneration Strategy provides an opportunity for under-utilised or vacant land in the town to be brought forward to support the economic aspirations of the area by diversifying the residential offer, offering mixed use employment and commercial space alongside a revitalised public realm sympathetic to the 'market town' tendencies of the area.
- 4.23 Key in achieving this is the redevelopment of the transport infrastructure and connectivity within Runcorn. Local residents specified the necessity for a rationalisation of the transport infrastructure – particularly the overcomplicated road system providing access into, and out of, the Old Town. The expansive elevated structures impede movement from one local area to

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- the next. In particular a number of unsatisfactory routes form low quality connections between the Railway Station, traditional residential areas (west of the railway) and also between the houses and Runcorn Basin. Pedestrian routes are also diverted along convoluted routes using subways and stairways to navigate the expressway.
- 4.24 Significantly, Halton Council has undertaken a recent Car Parking Study which highlighted a particular issue for the Old Town, given pipeline developments and future regeneration aspirations.
- 4.25 As at West Bank, consultation with local residents and stakeholders raised several important issues for the regeneration of Runcorn Old Town. These views have directly informed the objectives for the area.
- 4.26 Local residents specified the necessity for a rationalisation of the transport infrastructure – particularly the overcomplicated road system providing access into, and out of, the Old Town which included the ‘Runcorn Loops’;
- 4.27 Shopping facilities were perceived as low quality with the Old Town, demonstrating a restricted offer of retail choice for shoppers, which was viewed as having declined in recent years. An improved shopping experience, with higher quality retail businesses, was seen as a priority for the area;
- 4.28 Improved environments for pedestrians, with increased access to the Old Town, along safer and more attractive routes that are properly segregated from road traffic, were seen as important for the area; and
- 4.29 Residents indicated they would like to see the Bridgewater Canal reconnected to the Manchester Ship Canal along its original alignment on historical and leisure-use grounds, and were supportive of opportunities to facilitate this.
- **Objective 1:** Increase, and diversify, the housing offer within Runcorn, providing resource efficient and affordable housing – with a particular focus on developing sites with high potential in Runcorn Old Town to meet forecast population expansion.
  - **Objective 2:** Provide regeneration opportunities for the development of improved services, high quality commercial space and public realm upgrades to meet demand within Runcorn Old Town and in protecting, managing and enhancing the cultural, built and natural environment, positively enhance the ‘market town’ characteristics of the place and promote links to the waterside.
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- **Objective 3:** Rationalise the existing road infrastructure, including Runcorn Loops providing improved and simplified vehicular, particularly for public transport, access to Runcorn Old Town.
- **Objective 4:** Initiate physical redevelopment, following environmental and secured by design principles, at Runcorn Station utilising the improved access and visibility, which could be achieved through remodelling at the Runcorn Loops. The quality of the gateway is to be emphasised, where improvements would include new pedestrian crossings and public realm improvements making the Station more accessible from other areas of the town. The quality of the route serving the College and western areas of the town is to be significantly improved.

#### *Astmoor Industrial Estate & Wigg Island*

- 4.30 Commercial analysis indicates that high levels of vacancy have permeated the more dated accommodation located at key employment sites – Astmoor Industrial Estate has become particularly unattractive to business occupiers with 21% of its units left vacant at present. Demand for property is associated with smaller unit sizes of a higher quality which the area has not supplied. Lower density development is prominent.
- 4.31 The estate currently still plays an important local employment role however and employs over 3,000 people. Furthermore, the positioning of this site, in close proximity to the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge and Runcorn Town Centre, offers strong potential to maximise the inward investment benefits of new occupiers encouraged into Runcorn by improved accessibility alongside vital regeneration investment in upgrading the offer of commercial stock.
- 4.32 Overall there is a need for rationalisation of existing road infrastructure as movement and connectivity remain inadequate in Astmoor. North-south pedestrian and vehicle links are particularly poor, hence isolating the valuable green space amenity of Wigg Island from residential neighbourhoods located to the south. This is exacerbated by the lack of an existing direct vehicle access from Wigg Island and Astmoor to the Town Centre. Furthermore, the Astmoor section of the Express Busway is under utilised and adds an unnecessary layer of additional road infrastructure within the Industrial Estate.
- **Objective 1:** Build on the accessibility potential of the Mersey Gateway Bridge at Astmoor Industrial Estate by up-grading the office and industrial accommodation, taking into account resource efficiency to suit contemporary business demand and requirements

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– encouraging new, high value companies into Runcorn and securing Astmoor’s status as a leading employment site within Halton.

- **Objective 2:** Integrate Astmoor and Wigg Island into the social, economic, and urban fabric of Runcorn Town Centre and adjacent residential neighbourhoods, whilst ensuring that the protection and management of biodiversity on Wigg Island and the provision of sustainable transport options.
- **Objective 3:** Transform the image and perception of Astmoor Industrial Estate from one of decline to a successful, flexible and resource efficient business, and enterprise, location, which fosters a vibrant and high quality environment, seeks to promote diversity and competitiveness in the Halton economy and maximises the benefits accruing from the Mersey Gateway project.
- **Objective 4:** Retain, and assist in the continued development of, locally accessible employment opportunities for existing communities in Halton. Establishing stronger north-south movement links and improved links to the Town Centre, which provide improved choice of sustainable transport modes is important.
- **Objective 5:** Create a comprehensive urban structure which enhances areas of distinctive character through the creation of a series of distinctive places, gateways and arrival points.
- **Objective 6:** Rationalise the excessive road infrastructure to the benefit of place making, legibility and local connectivity.

#### *Halton Lea*

- 4.33 The analysis highlights that Halton Lea shopping centre is of a type; defined by its large monolithic multi-storey car parks which have blank facades, an absence of ground floor uses, pedestrian bridges and walkways and the elevated busways. The general quality of buildings surrounding the centre is poor which creates an unattractive and uncompromising environment leading to a poor reputation.
- 4.34 While the Halton Lea centre has recently succeeded in diversifying its retail and leisure offer, it continues to under-perform with a noticeable absence of higher quality retail occupiers.
- 4.35 Movement and accessibility analysis demonstrates that way finding is difficult, with the centre effectively inward looking - the main entrance to the centre is hidden within Trident Park and the centre is not visible from the Expressway. Overall, the vehicle access arrangements are



over complicated and constitute a grid of dual carriageways arranged around the shopping centre. This arrangement does not encourage on-street pedestrian movement and on-road external pedestrian movement is not adequately provided for around the shopping centre and civic quarter.

4.36 Crucially, direct vehicle access from Palacefields (and other surrounding neighbourhoods to the east) to Halton Hospital and the shopping centre is not possible. Two pedestrian access routes from the centre to the east (Palacefields) exist which utilise footbridges. This is replicated to the west of the shopping centre. Pedestrian access from the centre to the north (Halton Village) is achieved through an underpass. The development of Trident Park has reduced direct pedestrian links from Hallwood Park to the shopping centre.

- **Objective 1:** Improve the comparison and convenience retail offer of the centre and create a legible shopping centre and attractive shopping environment through key redevelopment proposals.
- **Objective 2:** Establish vibrant and active shopping streets, which are designed to Secured by Design principles.
- **Objective 3:** Rationalise excessive road infrastructure to the benefit of place making, pedestrian movement and the shopping activity.
- **Objective 4:** Deliver a greater mix of uses within the centre to encourage night-time activity.
- **Objective 5:** Respond to and enhance areas of distinctive character including Runcorn Town Park, Halton Village and other open spaces.
- **Objective 6:** Improve and develop east-west vehicle, cycle and pedestrian connectivity and linkages to surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

4.37 The following section will specify the key objectives in Rocksavage arising from the investigation of the Issues.

#### *Rocksavage & Clifton*

4.38 The western part of this area is dominated by heavy industrial activity associated with Rocksavage Power Plant and the Port of Weston, thus limiting the opportunities for residential development. What remains in the central areas represents an isolated rural settlement, which has been cut off from the rest of Runcorn by the implementation of the Weston Point Expressway.

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- 4.39 The urban design-led analysis demonstrates that Clifton Road demonstrates strong suburban characteristics with a good quality family housing offer. Cholmondeley Road offers excellent view to the south surrounded with valuable areas of woodland. However, the character of the Weaver Canal, the existing boating club, and Sutton Quay are undermined by surrounding industrial and light industrial uses, with high risk areas of contaminated land exist within the area close to the Weaver Canal.
- 4.40 Analysis of movement and connectivity highlights the considerable severance of the area associated with the Rocksavage Power Station and the Weston Point Expressway.
- 4.41 Market interest for higher quality office development within the area is demonstrated through Sutton Quay's Business Park where future phases of development are currently underway. Hence, Rocksavage and Clifton represent an area of underutilised economic potential for Halton. This location will offer a significant opportunity for commercial market development as a result of the Mersey Gateway project for it will act as the main connection between the Mersey Gateway and the M56. The area will therefore provide a key southern gateway to Runcorn and offers excellent links to the strategic highway network.
- **Objective 1:** Strengthen the distinctive character assets of the area including the Weaver Canal, Sutton Quay's and areas of woodland through the promotion of leisure and recreation which will promote accessibility to a valuable resource.
  - **Objective 2:** Respond to the demand for smaller better quality resource efficient employment accommodation to cater for SME's and Business start ups.
  - **Objective 3:** Seek to promote alternative energy production within the area due to the opportunity offered by the area's relative seclusion and locational links into the Borough's electrical supply network, providing also a valuable educational resource.
  - **Objective 4:** Encourage high quality visible gateway development opportunities, which are accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes.
  - **Objective 5:** Maximise the use of contaminated land through appropriate redevelopment, which includes creation of high quality public open space and which protects and enhances biodiversity.
  - **Objective 6:** Promote east-west pedestrian links along, and a north-south pedestrian crossing over, the Weaver Canal.
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## Living through Change

- 4.42 The construction period for Mersey Gateway will be between 2012 and 2014 and for communities affected, particularly those in West Bank, the disruption to everyday lives will be inevitable. For the communities of Runcorn Old Town, the principal impacts of de-linking will be felt during later phases post-2014, following the opening of the Mersey Gateway, but the impacts will be felt also.
- 4.43 How the Council manages this transition period is very important *both* in terms of managing the direct impacts but also in ensuring that the opportunities for intervention as prescribed in the Regeneration Strategy are not undermined.
- 4.44 In terms of the former, this will be addressed by the Council as part of the Orders and Applications process and subsequent activity. In respect of the latter, the Regeneration Strategy establishes the following important principles to be observed in the formative stages of Mersey Gateway implementation.
- The local community has been involved in shaping the proposals contained within the Regeneration Strategy and it is important that this process of engagement continues. Detailed work will be required with the community in establishing the phasing and detailed design of the projects contained within the Strategy. Importantly, local communities need to feel ownership of the proposals.
  - Working with businesses will be particularly important. The Mersey Gateway Relocation Strategy<sup>13</sup> will establish the principles for dealing with those businesses directly affected by the bridge, but further engagement work is required, particularly in Astmoor but also Southern Widnes, in ensuring minimum disruption to working practices.
  - It will be important to consider any possible 'pre-recruitment' opportunities that may emerge locally, whether these be directly related to construction of the bridge itself for example, or whether this is through the resulting new business and inward investment.
  - In physical terms, the Regeneration Strategy contains a number of important projects, whether these are movement related or concerned with new development or environmental enhancement. This Strategy will inform the Mersey Gateway, procurement, design and development programme and so ensure that any proposals concerned with the construction of the bridge ultimately do not undermine longer term regeneration objectives.

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<sup>13</sup> Halton Council (2008) Mersey Gateway Relocation Strategy

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## 5. THE MERSEY GATEWAY REGENERATION STRATEGY

- 5.1 The purpose of the Regeneration Strategy is to provide a holistic economic, social, physical and environmental framework in which the delivery of the Mersey Gateway is the catalytic investment that will trigger the programme.
- 5.2 The development Strategy has been based upon a comprehensive evidence base compiled and included at Appendix A together with the consideration of various Options, consulted upon with the community between February and April 2008 (and included at Appendix B). These options were appraised in terms of their ability to meet the Priority Regeneration Objectives (and hence the overarching objectives for the Mersey Gateway), their economic impact and their contribution to sustainability objectives (and the results of the initial Sustainability Appraisal). All options were subject to an iterative development appraisal in order to assess them in terms of both delivery and affordability.
- 5.3 Each of the Options has been developed in co-ordination with the Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy<sup>14</sup> to ensure that all Options for regeneration facilitate improved permeability and accessibility for public transport
- 5.4 This Section presents the preferred option for each of the Mersey Gateway Impact Areas.

### West Bank, South Widnes

- 5.5 West Bank is an area which will be subject to considerable long-term change not least associated with the Mersey Gateway and the removal of a redundant road infrastructure.
- 5.6 Currently the area exhibits a unique blend of natural and manmade place-specific assets which need to be protected and enhanced. The waterside environment represents a real asset in this sense. To deliver the objectives for the area, it is essential that all future developments within West Bank are of the highest design quality, complementing and positively enhancing such strengths of place.
- 5.7 The development strategy for West Bank seeks to establish a new 'walk-able' neighbourhood within the area and respecting the opportunity to forge linkages with the Trans Pennine Trail.

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<sup>14</sup> Gifford (May 2008) Halton Sustainable Transport Strategy

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- A permeable movement network is promoted with walking and cycling particularly encouraged, where this contributes to health objectives. Linked to the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy there will be a particular emphasis in providing for enhanced public transport movements, both within the area and in improved connections with Runcorn and the wider sub-region. The Mersey Gateway allows the opportunity to establish a more sustainable pattern of movement based on a new hierarchy and corridors, hubs and destinations.
- 5.8 A range of housing will be provided, but the emphasis will be predominately focused toward providing family accommodation and new affordable and mixed tenure housing. The continued investment in the existing housing stock by Halton Housing Trust forms an early-intervention, which will be particularly important in the early construction years of the Mersey Gateway. Opportunities for investment in the existing private stock, particularly along Mersey Road and other visible corridors, will be re-examined.
- 5.9 A new neighbourhood centre is proposed, linked to a new Sankey Square, which will seek to improve the retail and service offer, as well as providing space for new community uses that will include education and training facilities and new health facilities, within the area to serve existing and new communities, and therefore complement the revenue based projects being delivered across the area (table 3.1).
- 5.10 In addition, future development within the area will seek to improve the quality of employment provision. Given its excellent strategic highway links has the potential to attract a mix of larger office and commercial occupiers together with smaller office and light industrial accommodation to meet the growing number of small to medium sized businesses in the area and across the borough.
- 5.11 Furthermore, sustainable transport links from Widnes Town Centre and Widnes Waterfront will be strengthened through the proposals for West Bank through the introduction of dedicated cycle and pedestrian access along the new Sankey Waterside Boulevard, along Waterloo Road from the new Sankey Square and across to 3MG at the proposed junction B. This junction will also allow for public transport access to 3MG, as will the existing junction to the north where Hutchinson Street meets the A533.
- 5.12 The approach underpinning the preferred Option includes (figures 5.1 to 5.4):
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### *Image and Place-Making*

- Changing perceptions of West Bank and Southern Widnes with the delivery of high quality gateway treatments and new flagship developments, setting new standards for design, resource use and environmental quality.
- A new neighbourhood centre is introduced as a new 'heart' for the area (intersection of sites 14 and 15), providing local retail and key service provision and providing a focal point between new proposed residential development and existing West Bank community.

A new Sankey Square (intersection of sites 14 and 15) linked to quality public realm enhancements to improve existing green areas and leisure uses, complementing the Council's Waterfront Strategy and establishing a quality corridor framing a new Sankey Boulevard (figure 5.6/5.7).

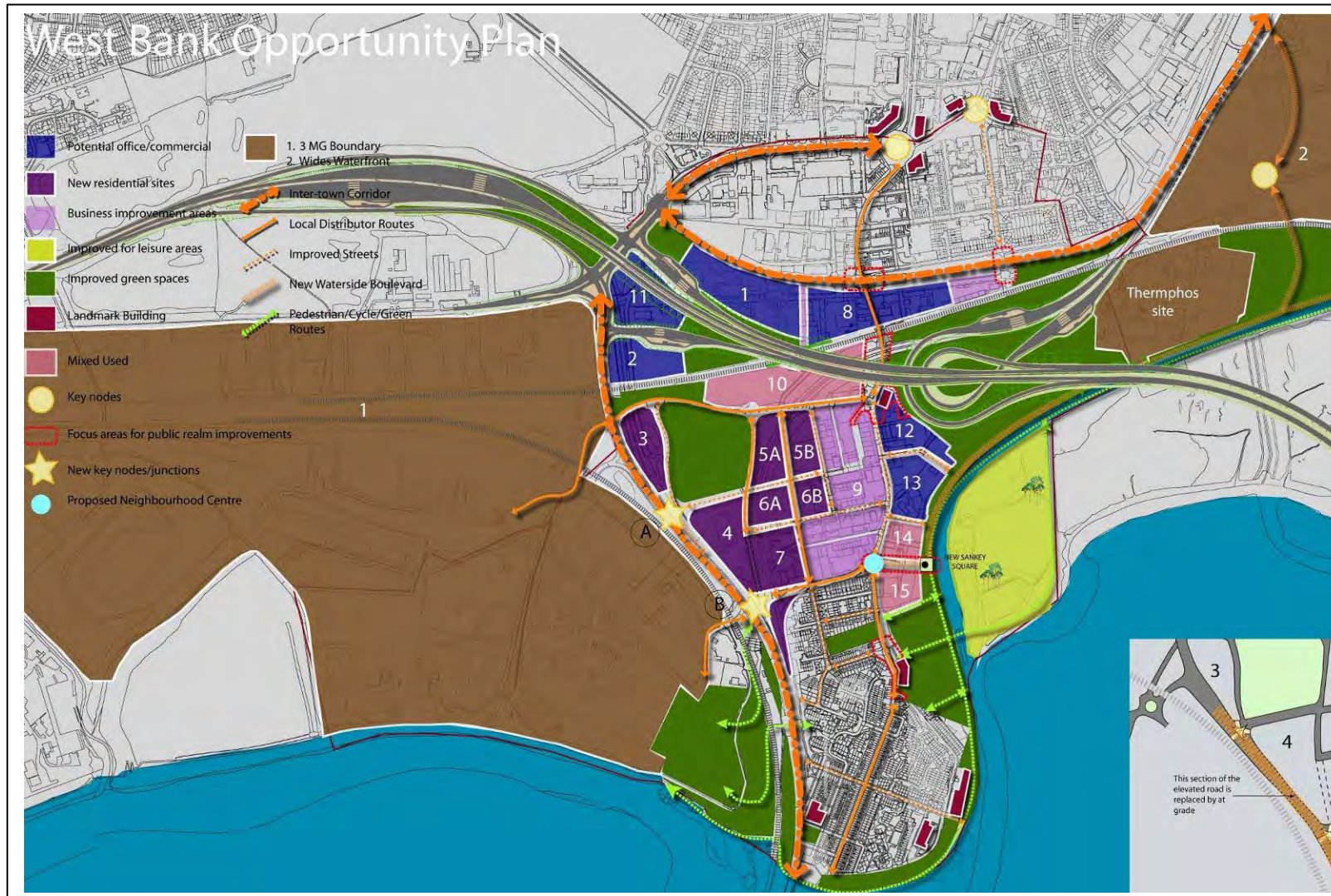
- Public realm investment at the existing Victoria Bridge gateway delivered as part of the Mersey Gateway scheme complemented by new high quality development that is integrated with the scheme itself.
- A sustained programme of remediation to deliver sites for the uses proposed in the Plan.

### *Accessibility & Movement*

- A new high quality public realm 'gateway' is to be introduced to the Victoria Road Bridge area, improving linkages for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists from West Bank to Widnes town centre.
- The A533 (Queensway) is downgraded using modifications to the existing road infrastructure to create more direct access into West Bank area to incorporate at-grade junctions allowing left and right turning into and out of West Bank. The A533 (Queensway) becomes a two way road to simplify and maximise accessibility (figure 5.5).
- The Sankey Boulevard provides a waterfront recreational amenity and second access into the area connecting the Catalyst Museum, the new Sankey Square, extending up to Venture Fields and Widnes Waterfront and the highway network.
- A clear hierarchy of routes is defined, including an additional route is proposed which will improve north - south connectivity and served principally by sustainable transport modes as part of the Mersey Gateway Sustainable Transport Strategy.
- Upgrading of long distance foot and cycle paths, linked to health benefits.



Figure 5.1: West Bank Plan



*Development and Economic Prosperity*

- Mixed-use, office and commercial areas are to be brought forward as a result of the Mersey Gateway releasing land, which will encouraging higher value businesses into the area (sites 1, 2, 8 and 11).
- Existing businesses are retained within West Bank, and a business improvement scheme to address the environmental quality of the existing estate and to manage a better physical relationship with the existing neighbourhood (sites 9, 12, 13 and 14) – ensuring connections to local employment opportunities remain and are strengthened in the area and thereby contributing to local enterprise and skills objectives.
- Improving the quality of the streets and public realm to local businesses (site 15), aided by the training facilities as part of the new neighbourhood centre.
- New mixed tenure housing (up to 330 units) providing a range of new family housing (sites 3, 4, 5A, 5B, 6A, 6B and 7) and waterside housing where practical.



Figure 5.2 West Bank Phase1 (2011-16)

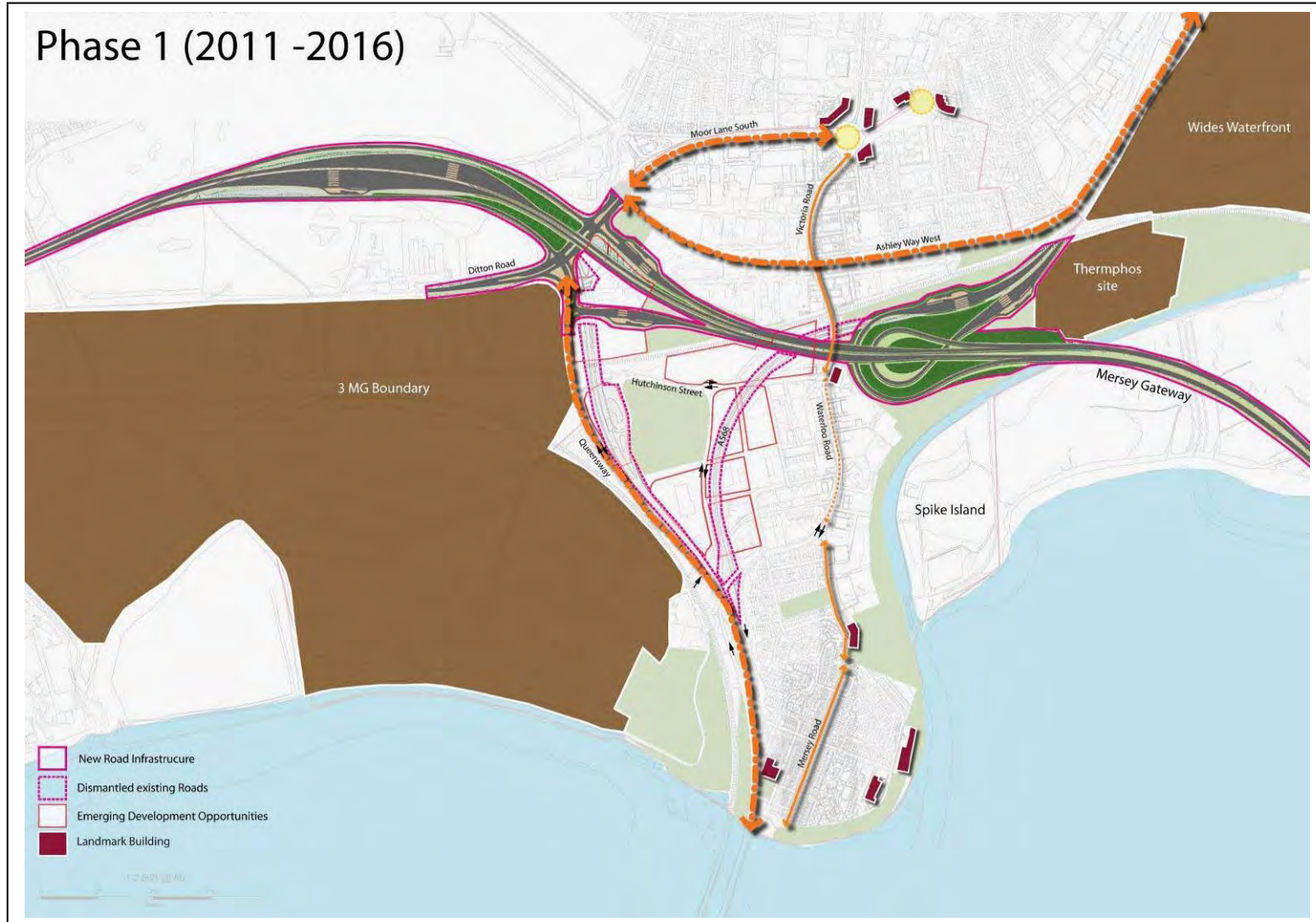


Figure 5.3 West Bank Phase2 (2016-21)

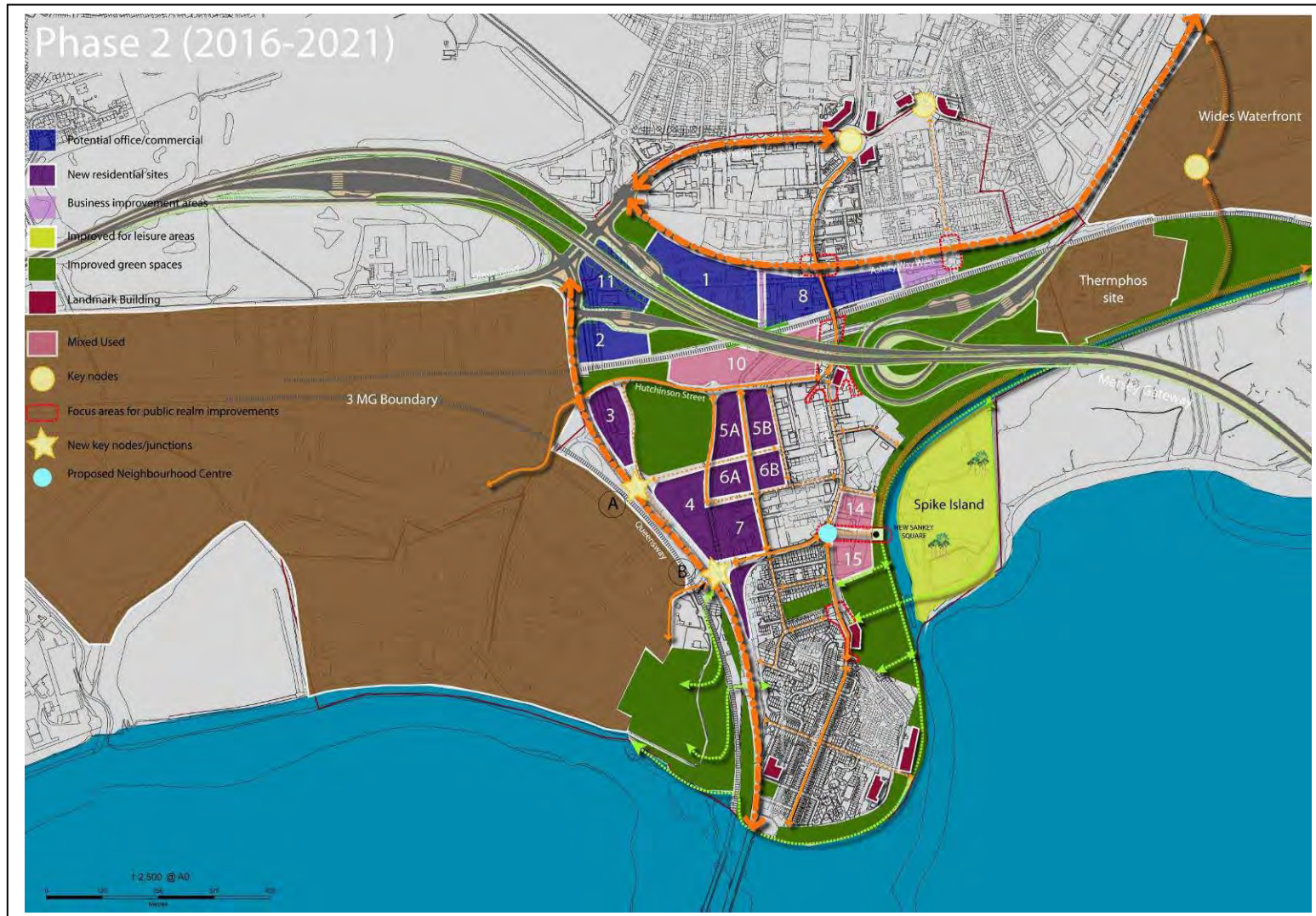
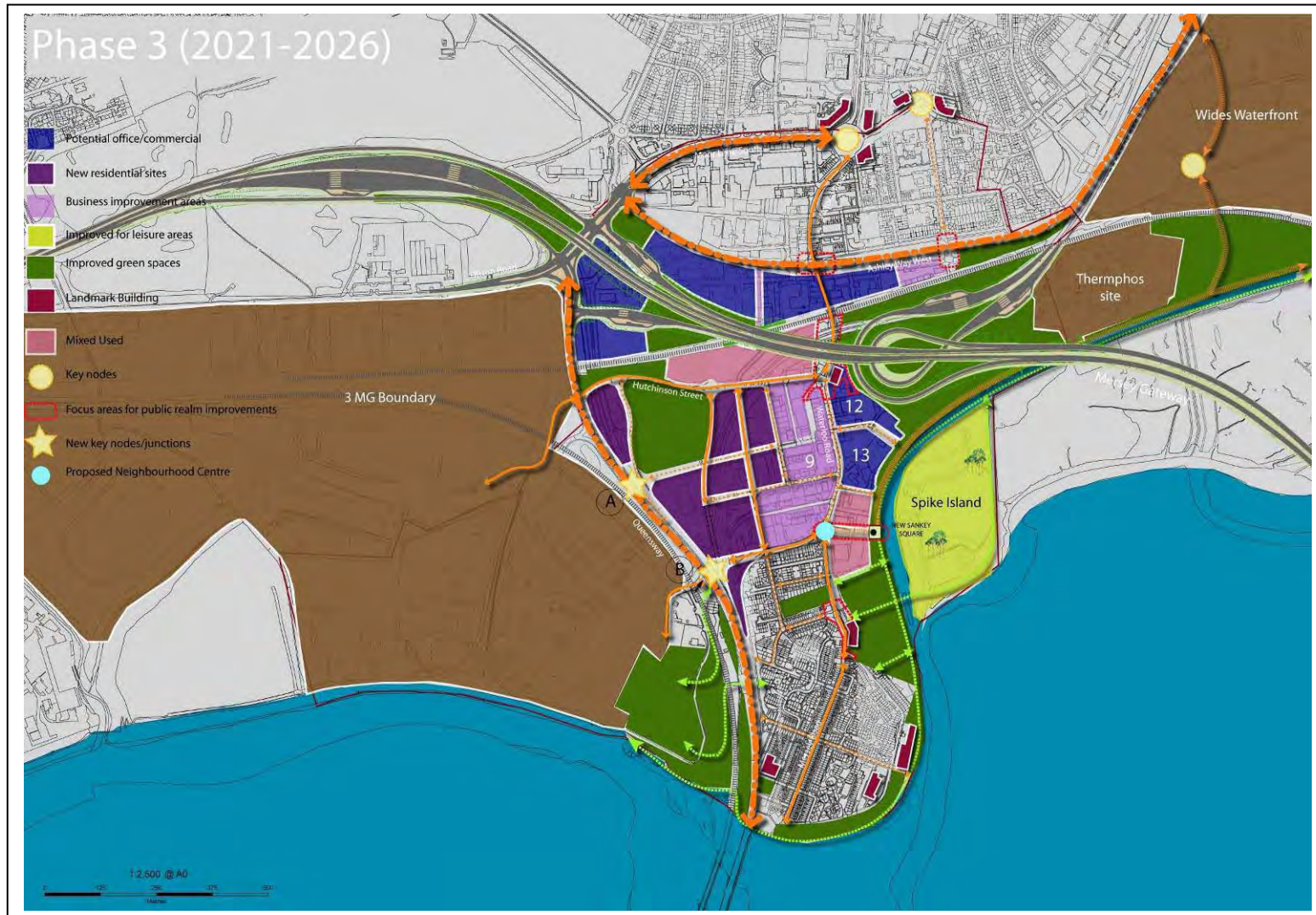




Figure 5.4 West Bank Phase3 (2021-26)

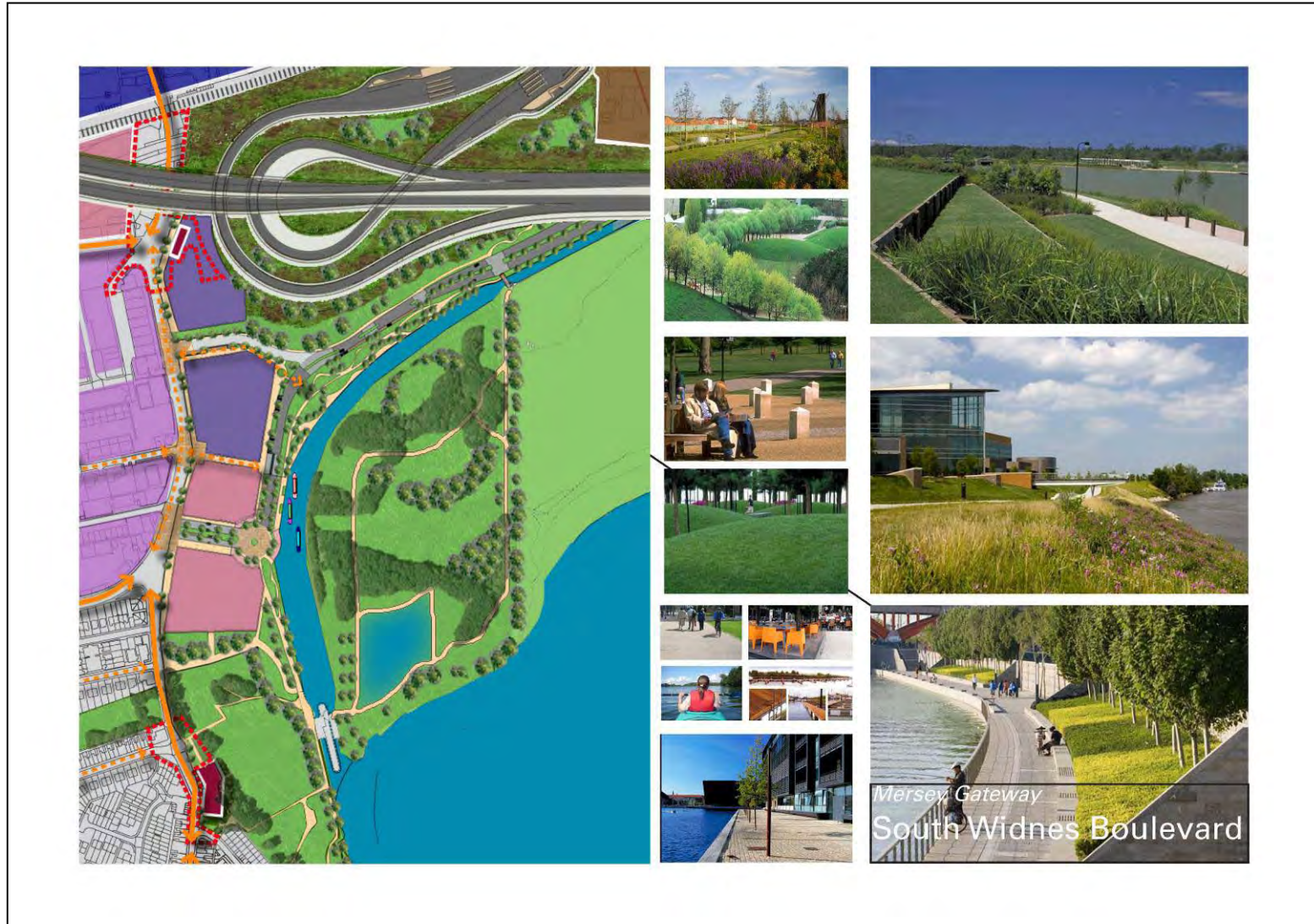


**Figure 5.5: Mersey Gateway Queensway**





**Figure 5.6: Mersey Gateway Sankey Boulevard**



**Figure 5.7: Mersey Gateway Sankey Boulevard (Section)**





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- 5.13 As well as seeking to protect and enhance the provision of current employment in the area, the new commercial development envisaged has the potential to deliver 160 new jobs locally (within Halton) and through multiplier effects, over 410 jobs across the sub-region (see Appendix B).

#### *Phasing of Development*

- 5.14 The development of West Bank and Southern Widnes is to take place within three distinct phases proceeding in 2011 and completing in 2026. Figure 5.2 to 5.3 show the phasing programme for the regeneration of Southern Widnes and its five character areas in detail.
- 5.15 The first Phase of development (Phase 1 – figure 5.2) will take place simultaneously to the scheduled commencement of construction of the Mersey Gateway in 2011 and will continue beyond completion of the Mersey Gateway until 2016. This Phase will include the introduction of new highway infrastructure associated with the Mersey Gateway crossing and the removal of redundant existing highway sections. This process will result in a number of opportunity sites being brought forward for redevelopment.
- 5.16 Phase 2 (figure 5.3) will occur from 2016 until 2021 with the majority of opportunity sites, arising from infrastructure alterations during Phase 1, to be brought forward for regenerative development during this period.
- 5.17 During this Phase sites 14 and 15 will come forward for mixed-use development incorporating local retail, leisure and key services within a new neighbourhood centre for West Bank, joining the existing, and new, residential communities within the area. This development will also incorporate the new Sankey Square located on the waterfront beside the Sankey Canal, which is to provide a high quality landscaped waterside public realm environment for social and recreational uses.
- 5.18 In the latter part of Phase 2 a new waterside boulevard incorporating a canal-side vehicular, pedestrian and cycle link through to Widnes Waterfront is to be developed leading from Sankey Square. The design characteristics of this boulevard are to strongly reflect the surrounding landscape character of this area to embrace the existing canal-side sense of place, views of greenspace located on Spike Island and across the Mersey Estuary to ensure this access route provides a distinctive recreational leisure facility in addition to a transport connection promoting sustainable modes of movement.
- 5.19 New road infrastructure will also be introduced towards the latter part of Phase 2 to provide improved accessibility into Southern Widnes from the A533. This will involve the downgrading
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of the existing highway to a single-lane carriageway, and the introduction of two new at-grade junctions to enable access into opportunity sites 2, 3, 4, 7 and 11, and the existing business and residential areas.

- 5.20 Phase 3 (figure 5.4) will take place from 2021 until 2026 and will form the final segment of development and infrastructure proposed through the Strategy.

### Runcorn Old Town

- 5.21 The Old Town area of Runcorn represents a key area of change and through the physical impacts of the Mersey Gateway, which include the downgrading of the Silver Jubilee Bridge for local uses and the removal of redundant nature of the remaining strategic highway infrastructure, a number of opportunities can be identified in transforming the nature of the Old Town from a place people largely pass through to a place people wish to work, live and visit.

- 5.22 The approach underpinning the preferred Option includes:

#### *Image and Place-Making*

- The removal of the 'Runcorn Loops' together with the downgrading of redundant infrastructure will enhance the attractiveness of the Old Town by allowing important connections to be established with Runcorn Station as well as facilitate a further phase of investment in the existing town centre.
- The removal of the 'Loops' will establish the potential to re-open the link between the Bridgewater Canal and Manchester Ship Canal at Runcorn Docks, promoting leisure uses along side the corridor and increasing green recreation space for local communities – reinforces the Old Town brand recognising the value of canal based heritage and tourism.
- As an important gateway into Runcorn, new high quality 'flagship' developments will be delivered in a new Station Quarter, providing a new sense of arrival in Runcorn.
- Positive enhancements to existing pipeline schemes, including the Bridgewater Canal strategy and Runcorn Docks.
- Better integration of waterside frontages into the town centre through selective new development and implementation of an environmental improvement strategy.
- Environmental improvements and targeted investment in the existing housing stock will be implemented at sites 5, 6 and 7 to upgrade the existing residential environment and provide significant improvement to the public realm.

Figure 5.8: The Runcorn Old Town Plan



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- Residential development will be brought forward on infill opportunity sites within sites 5, 6 and 7 to expand the volume, type and tenure of housing accommodation within the Old Town.
  - Removal of derelict and under-utilised sites.

#### *Accessibility & Movement*

- The removal of the 'Runcorn Loops' bridge infrastructure over the Bridgewater Canal, which currently prevents it rejoining with the Manchester Ship Canal, facilitates potential for re-linking the waterways allowing maritime accessibility.
- Comprehensive redesign of the road layout from, and to, the Silver Jubilee Bridge, involving the removal of the Runcorn 'Loops' infrastructure will simplify vehicular movement into and out of the town centre and allow for pedestrian, direct bus and vehicular movement from the bridge to the rail station.
- The Eastbound slip-way road will remain, converted as a two way road terminating at a new crossroad junction, which again improves station accessibility and movement into and out of the town centre.
- Reconnecting Runcorn Docks – a priority under the Housing Growth Point – into the town centre and beyond into Astmoor. A junction to the east of the Town Centre will provide an access from the expressway onto Picow Farm Road facilitating access to development opportunities on sites 2B and 2C, and provides a direct link to the Station and the Town Centre. In addition, this junction will allow for a direct access from the expressway to Runcorn Docks via Runcorn Docks Road, which is absent at present, and will support any future development on the site.
- The downgrading of the road infrastructure from the 'Loops' format allows improved pedestrian and cyclist movement from the town centre to new commercial development on sites 1A, B, C, D, 2B and 2C via upgraded and new pedestrian and cycle links.

#### *Development and Economic Prosperity*

- Remodelling of the public realm area surrounding the station and the regeneration of adjoining areas (sites 1A, B and C), for new high quality offices, a hotel, and car park, will uplift the built environment, street and townscape, and provide increased employment opportunities;
- A new mixed use office, residential and commercial quarter in the East (sites 2A, B and C) will increase the supply of high-quality commercial office floorspace within the town, and will increase the supply of housing; and



- The removal of the 'Loops' allows for increased development space on sites 3, 1A, 1B and 1C, thus also improving the sense of place and permeability by enabling the rejoining of areas previously divided by this transport infrastructure.

5.23 The new commercial development envisaged has the potential to deliver over 230 new jobs locally (within Halton) and through multiplier effects, over 590 jobs across the sub-region (see Appendix B).

#### *Phasing of Development*

5.24 The development of the Old Town (figures 5.9-5.11) is to take place within three distinct phases proceeding in 2016 and completing in 2031.

5.25 The first Phase of development (Phase 1 – figure 5.9) will take place simultaneously to the scheduled opening of the Mersey Gateway in 2014. It is at this stage that consideration will be given to the removal of any redundant existing highway sections linked to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge. This process will result in a number of opportunity sites being brought forward for redevelopment.

5.26 Phase 2 (figure 5.10) will occur from 2021 until 2026 with the majority of opportunity sites, arising from infrastructure alterations during Phase 1, to be brought forward for regenerative development during this period.

5.27 Phase 3 (figure 5.11) will take place from 2026 until 2031 and will form the final segment of development and infrastructure proposed through the Strategy.

#### **Astmoor Industrial Estate & Wigg Island**

5.28 The industrial estate at Astmoor is by common consent becoming increasingly 'tired' in the sense that many of the properties in the estate represent first generation New Town product which is becoming increasingly difficult to let. Vacancy is high as a result and the myriad of ownerships on the estate do not provide for an easy solution.

5.29 Consequently, the approach will be to work with the existing land owning interests to devise a new future for Astmoor, given the catalytic effects provided by the Mersey Gateway and the opportunity to consider new land uses, new floorspace and a higher quality context for investment. The approach underpinning the preferred Option includes:

Figure 5.9: Runcorn Old Town Phase One (2016-2021)

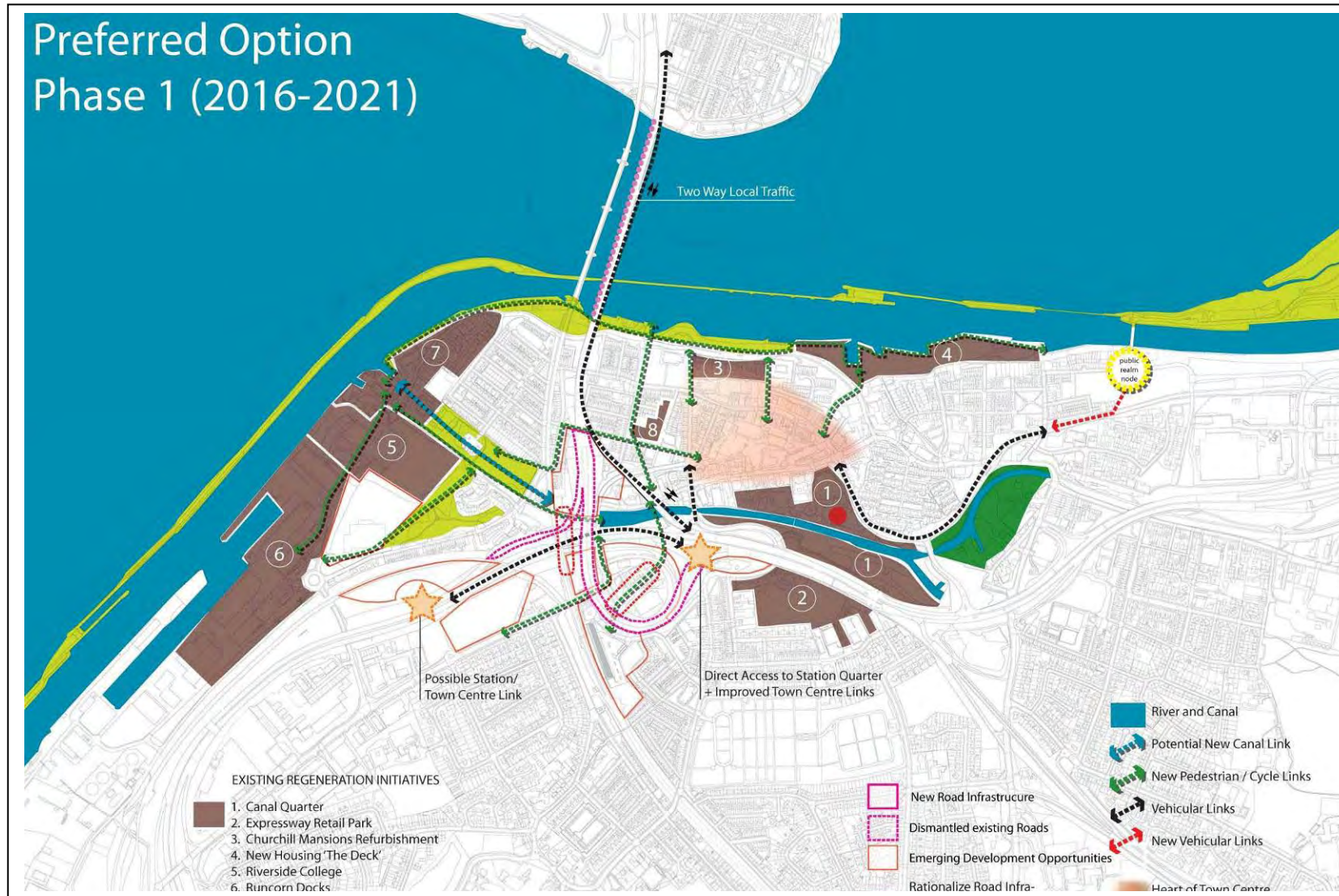


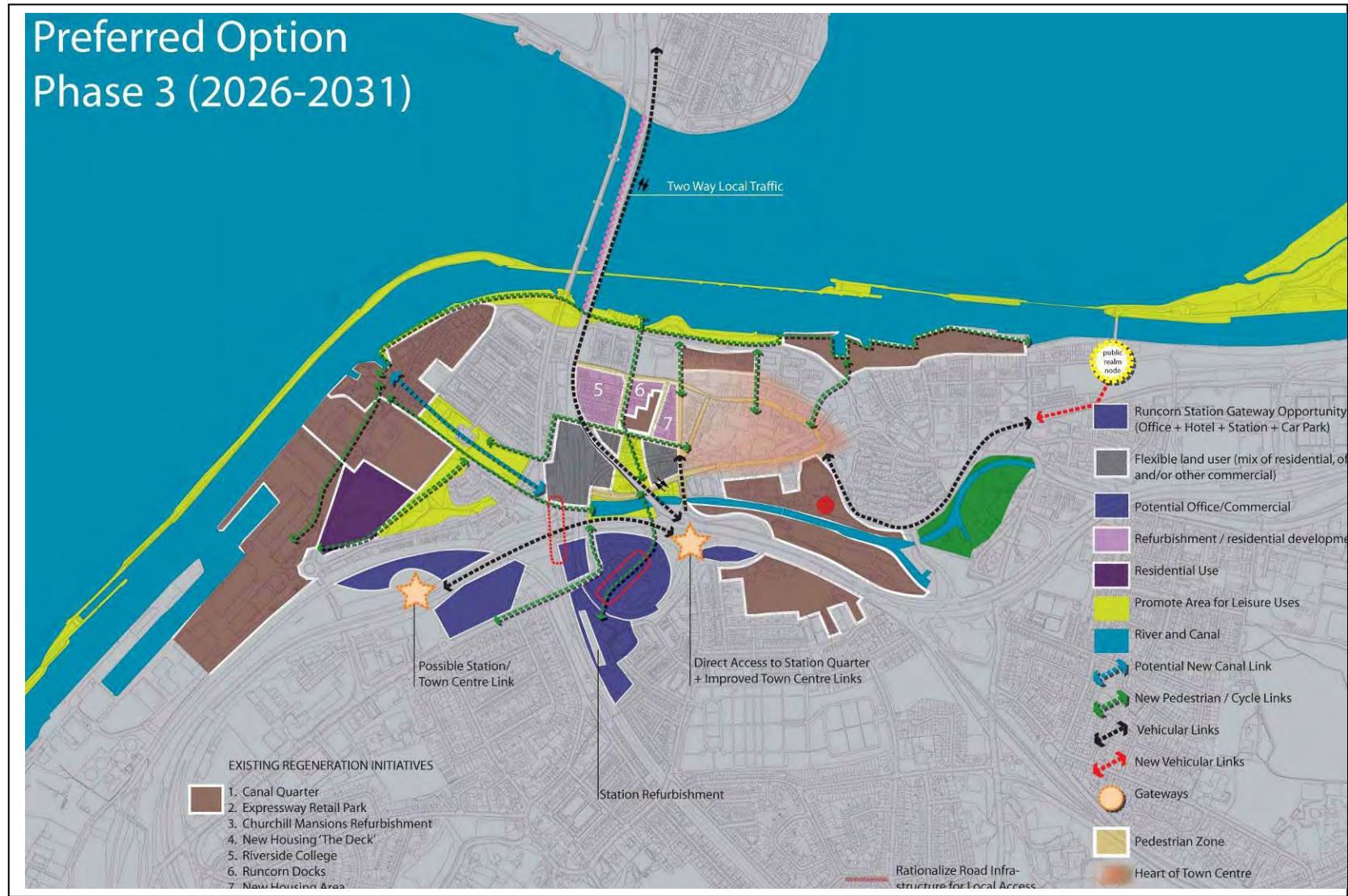


Figure 5.10: Runcorn Old Town Phase 2 (2021-2026)





Figure 5.11: Runcorn Old Town Phase 3 (2026-2031)



### *Image and Place-Making*

- Creating a high-profile feature entrance to estate with high-quality landscaping to raise the image and public realm standards. Environmental upgrades to the estate include public realm improvements along key access corridors, alongside removal of vacant plots seeks to significantly raise impressions of the estate.
- Facilitating additional development to the east and south of the estate, either side of a new green space corridor and node, linking Astmoor and its associated employment opportunities and services to existing neighbouring residential areas.
- New development on sites 15-20 will surround a high-quality public realm featuring upgraded internal green spaces and key view-point nodes looking out across to Wigg Island.

### *Accessibility & Movement*

- An improved vehicular gateway to the Town Centre and along the Waterfront Development will be provided to facilitate improved accessibility and integration between the neighbouring areas of the Old Town, Astmoor and Wigg Island Nature Reserve.
- New waterside vehicular links between key view-point nodes provide an improved linkage across to Wigg Island, link access to potential new mixed-use development sites (21, 22 and 23), and provide a new waterside boulevard pedestrian and cycle amenity.
- The under-utilised bus-lane will be removed and priority bus movement will be integrated within existing key access corridors.
- New, and improved, pedestrian and cycle linkages will be introduced throughout the Estate and with neighbouring residential areas. An upgraded long-distance cycle-path and footpath will also be provided on the waterfront of the Manchester Ship Canal for leisure and access purposes.
- A new signalled junction to the eastern access route into the Estate will open up potential for a new mixed-use development (site 29).

### *Development and Economic Prosperity*

- A transformational approach involves the introduction of higher quality office space within a business park development, targeting new higher profile occupiers to lift the status of the estate to a primary employment location within the borough (sites 15-20).
- Selective and incremental demolition of vacant plots.



- Existing businesses, displaced by the Mersey Gateway Bridge, are relocated to the east of the estate, which will undergo a phased redevelopment to ensure accommodation is of high quality and meets contemporary standards. This is vital to secure the long-term economic viability of the area.
  - Utilisation of the existing BID programme to upgrade security and the environment.
  - The site of removed bus lane utilised for increased development floorspace.
  - The redevelopment of the western part of the estate for mixed-use waterfront schemes (sites 21-26); and
  - The development of mixed use residential and retail floorspace located at sites 26 to 29.
- 5.30 The new commercial development envisaged has the potential to deliver over 520 new jobs locally (within Halton) and through multiplier effects, just in excess of 1,360 jobs across the sub-region (see Appendix B).

#### *Phasing of Development*

- 5.31 The phasing of development for Astmoor starts with a concerted programme of site assembly to the east of the proposed Mersey Gateway and the redevelopment of vacant plots directly to the west. This will be carried out in partnership with the owners of the estate.
- 5.32 Later phases of development will progress to the west of the proposed Mersey Gateway or where the opportunities arise. It is anticipated that the residential led development to the south of the Expressway will proceed in the short term.

Figure 5.12: The Astmoor Plan

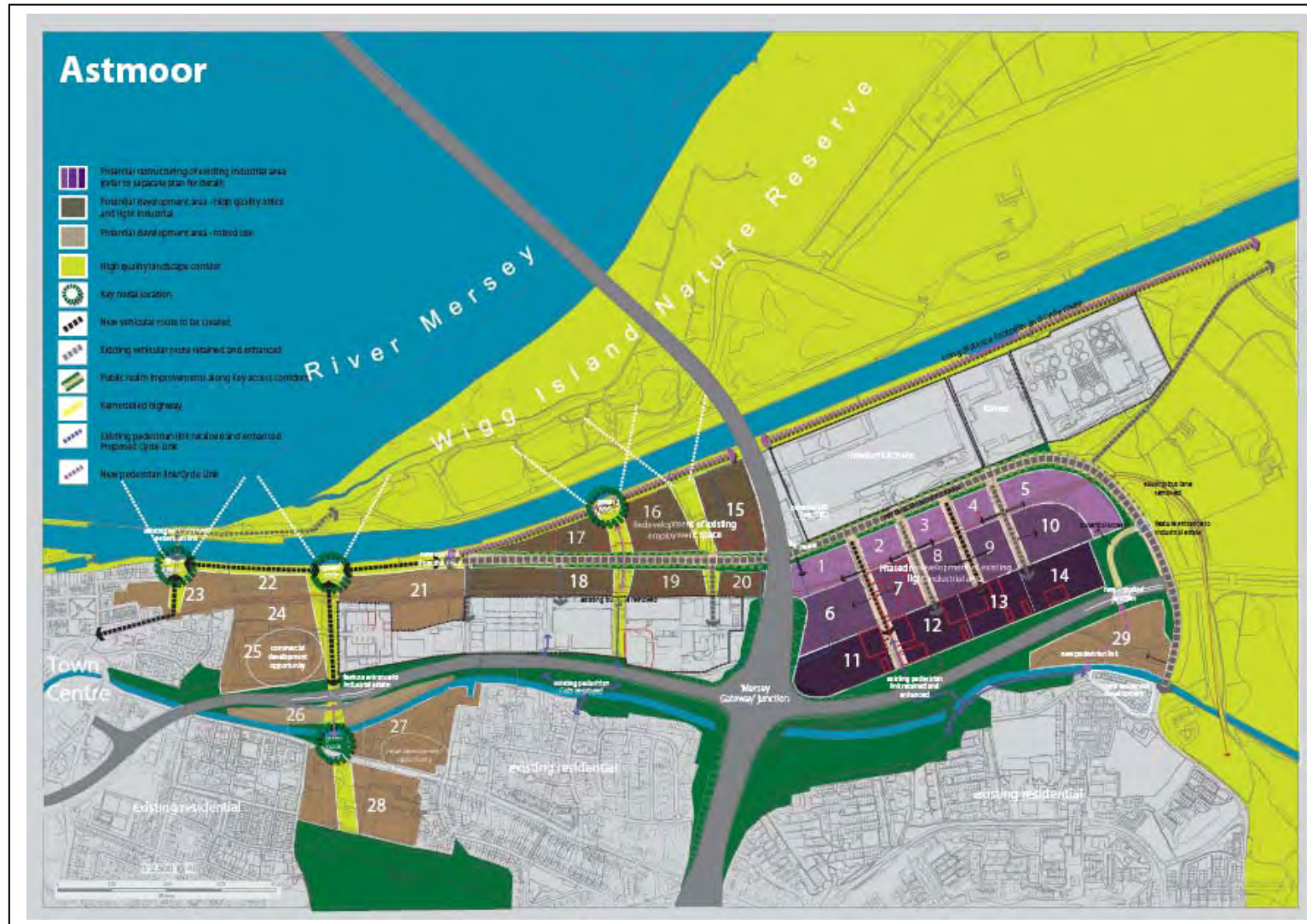








Figure 5.14: Astmoor Phase 2 (2016-2021)

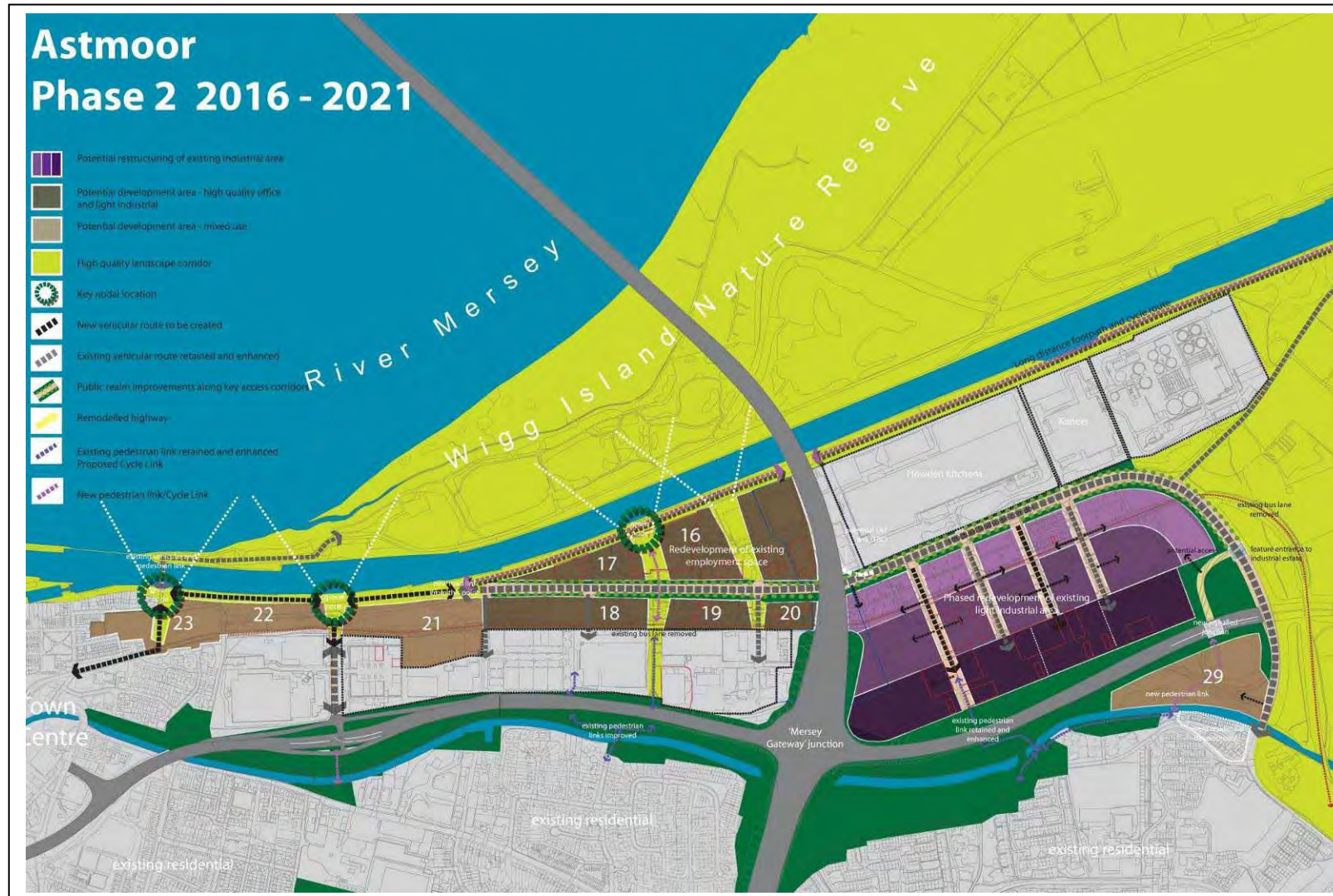
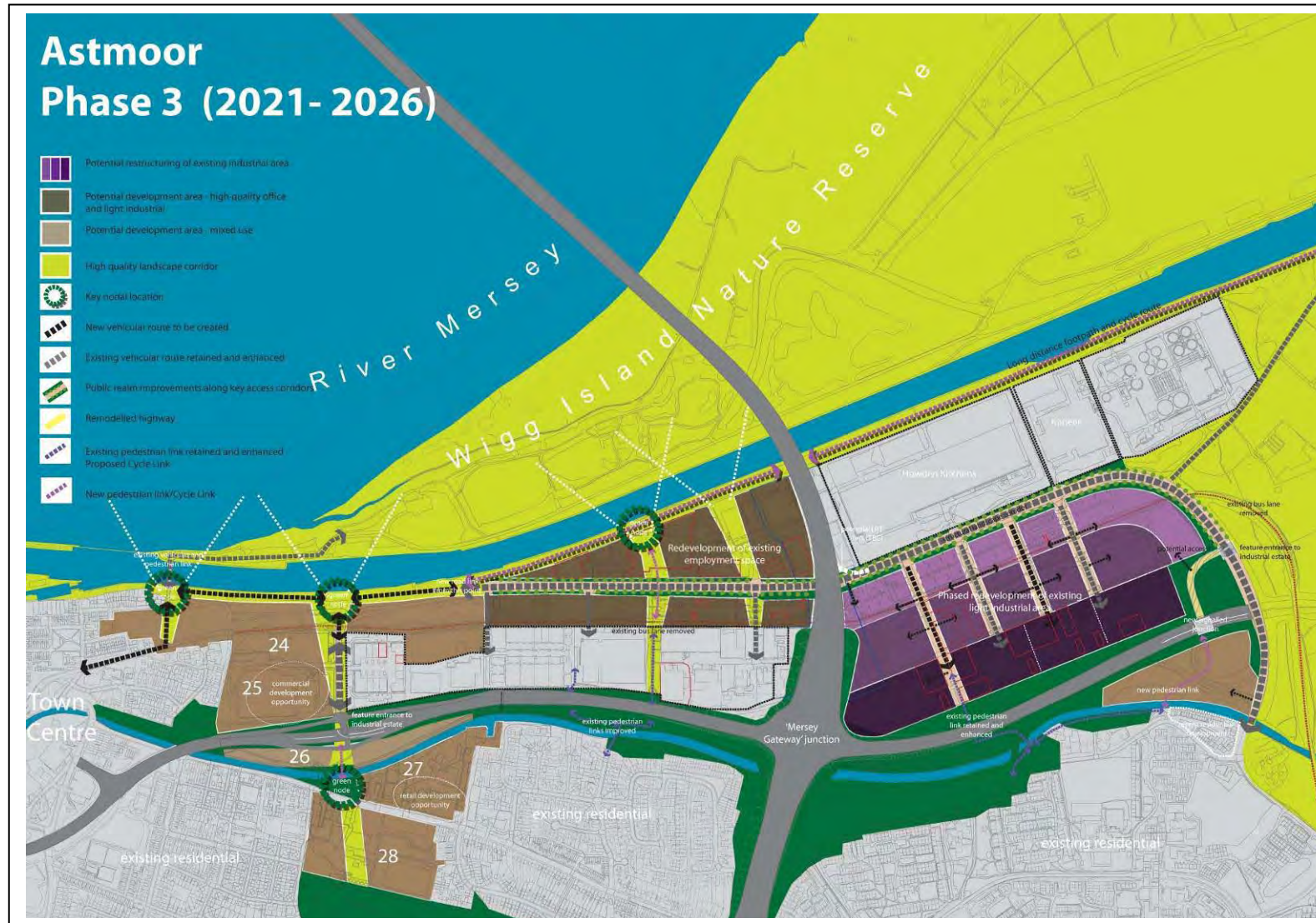




Figure 5.15: The Astmoor Phase 3 (2021-2026)





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## Halton Lea

- 5.33 For both Halton Lea and Rocksavage and Clifton, the consideration of preferred Options is considered to be less significant in terms of the direct impact of the Mersey Gateway. That said, there are important opportunities that may become available as a result of increased traffic movements which will raise the commercial attractiveness of both areas<sup>15</sup>.
- 5.34 For Halton Lea, the Council has already started to work with the owners to look at the future of the shopping centre. The Regeneration Strategy presents a preferred Option, which will add to the debate and set the basis for further working.
- 5.35 The approach underpinning the preferred Option includes:

### *Image and Place-Making*

- Establishing vibrant and active shopping streets at ground level enveloping the east and south sides of the existing shopping centre.
- Access to the existing shopping centre is enabled at ground level through new high-quality retail units and a new feature entrance located on the new shopping streets.
- Delivery of a greater mix of uses within the centre to encourage night-time activities.
- Responding to, and enhancing, areas of distinctive character including Runcorn Town Park, Halton Village and other open spaces, green space and areas of leisure and recreation.
- A new residential development is proposed to the south of Halton Lea (site 3), which would improve the townscape and enable linkages to the shopping centre from the existing neighbouring residential development. Both the existing, and new residential neighbourhoods would benefit from a new adjoining high-quality public open space node as part of the redevelopment.

### *Accessibility & Movement*

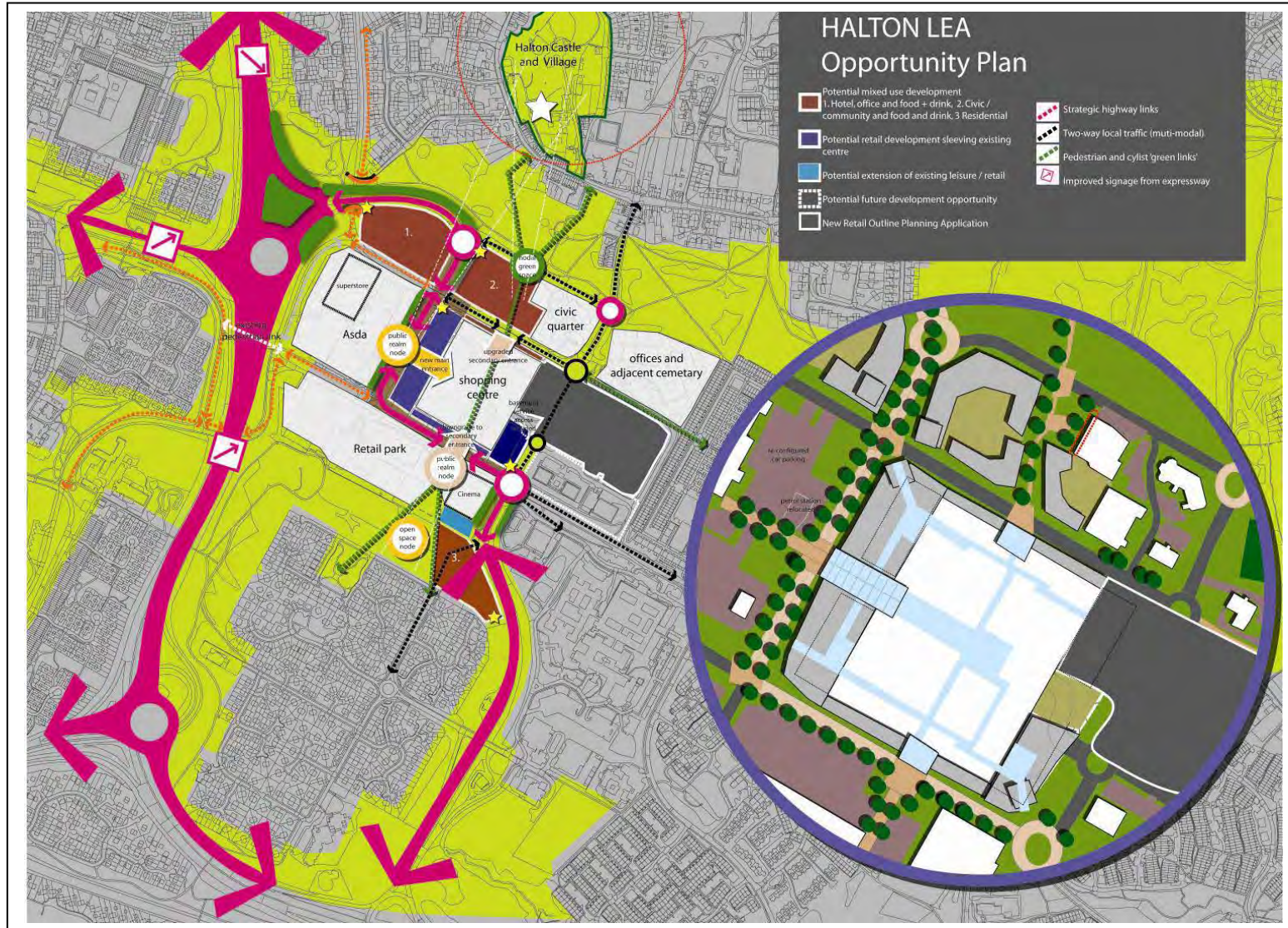
- Rationalising excessive road infrastructure to the benefit of place making, facilitating improved pedestrian movement and allowing simpler access to shopping facilities and community amenities within Halton Lea.

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<sup>15</sup> It will be necessary to subject opportunities identified to further detailed feasibility testing.

- Improvements to east-west vehicle connectivity and community linkages to surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

Figure 5.16: Halton Lea Concept Plan



- Improvements to signage for the centre on the Expressway will increase awareness of Halton Lea, increase footfall and facilitate simpler access.
- Pedestrian and cycle movement is improved to, and from, residential areas to the south, north and east facilitating simpler access to the shopping centre along new green access nodes.

#### *Development and Economic Prosperity*

- Improving the comparison and convenience retail offer of the centre, attracting higher value occupiers, and creating a legible shopping centre and attractive shopping environment through key redevelopment proposals at sites 1, 2, within the centre itself and enveloping the existing building with new high quality retail units to the south and west.

5.36 The new commercial development envisaged has the potential to deliver in excess of 100 new jobs locally (within Halton) and through multiplier effects, just over 260 jobs across the sub-region (see Appendix B).

### **Rocksavage & Clifton**

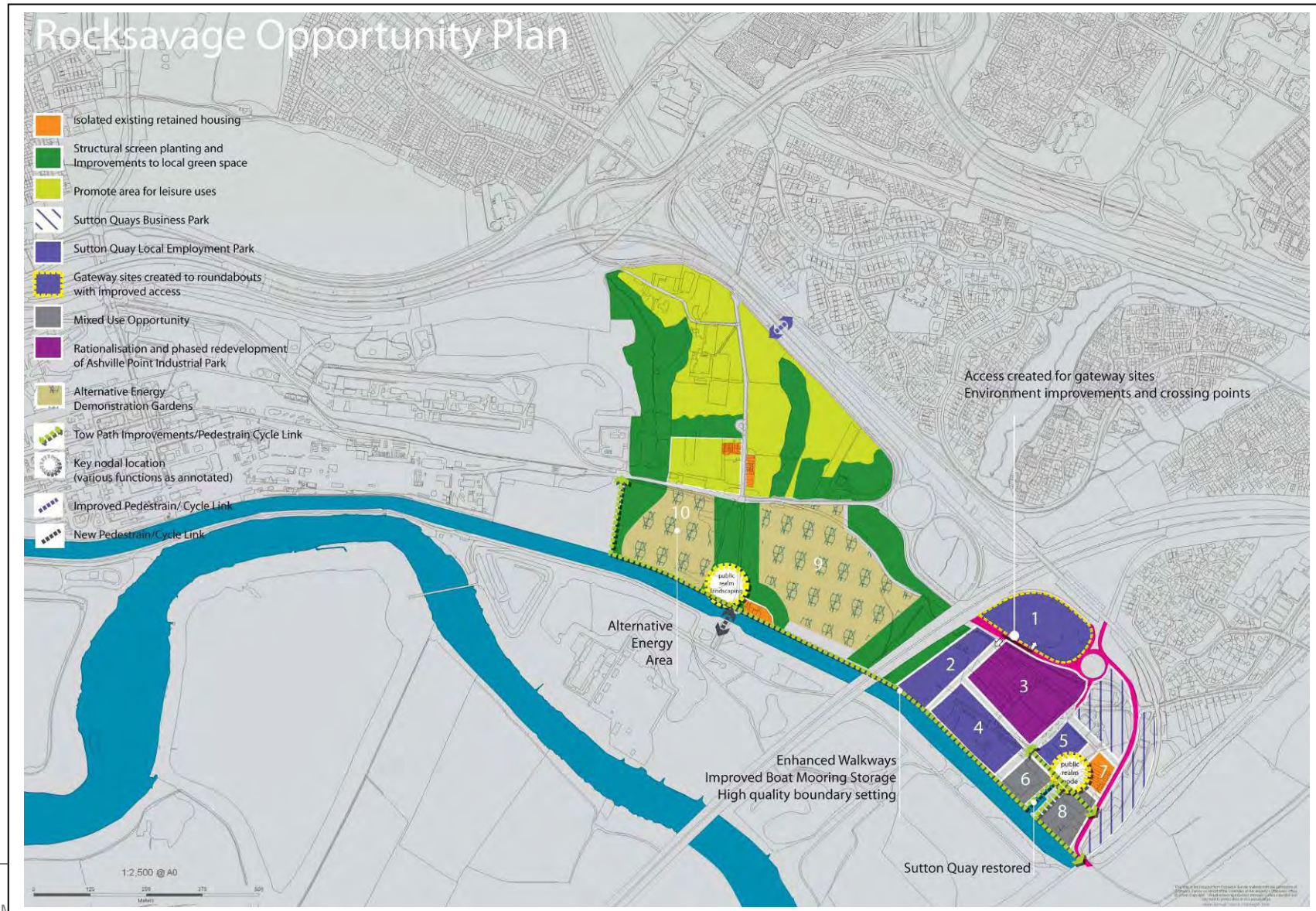
5.37 The approach underpinning the preferred Option includes:

#### *Image and Place-Making*

- Building on the rural character of the area at sites including the Weaver Canal, Sutton Quays and surrounding woodland by improving green spaces and pedestrian and cycle access to promote leisure and recreational uses;
- Establishing an alternative energy demonstration gardens as a sustainable use of contaminated land in a secluded environment. This could be used to demonstrate the future sustainability targets for the Borough, and could also link into the nearby electrical power supply grid as an additional sustainable energy source; and



Figure 5.17 Rocksavage Concept Plan



- Providing improved boat mooring storage at key points on Weaver Canal including the refurbished Sutton Quays, alongside improvements to the canal towpath encouraging pedestrian and cycle recreational use.

#### *Accessibility & Movement*

- Promotion of east – west pedestrian linkages along the Weaver Canal towpath encouraging leisure uses and access to green, rural spaces for tourists and the local community.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle access into the area, across the expressway, from residential areas to the North.
- Access and crossing facilities are improved to facilitate redevelopment and expansion of Sutton Quays Local Employment Park.

#### *Development and Economic Prosperity*

- Developing the potential of Sutton Quays Local Employment Park to cater for SME's, and start-up businesses.
- Establishing an alternative energy demonstration gardens could foster innovation and be utilised for educational purposes.
- Creation of a Gateway development opportunity at the roundabout leading into the area.

5.38 The new commercial development envisaged has the potential to deliver in excess of 160 new jobs locally (within Halton) and through multiplier effects, just over 410 jobs across the sub-region (see Appendix B).

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## 6. DELIVERING THE VISION

- 6.1 The vision underpinning the Mersey Gateway project provides the Regeneration Strategy with a holistic rationale in which to inform and shape the future of land use in the areas affected. The Regeneration Strategy draws the distinction between regeneration and economic outputs directly associated with the Mersey Gateway scheme itself and the regeneration, socio-economic and wider sustainability benefits that will result given the land use changes attributable to the delivery of the project. The purpose of the Regeneration Strategy is to address the latter objective within the overarching guiding vision of the project being seen as 'more than a bridge'.
- 6.2 The purpose of this section is to draw together the key conclusions to this end. Just as the Mersey Gateway scheme produces numerous multifarious benefits that could conceivably be constructed as part of a regeneration case<sup>16</sup>, then the Regeneration Strategy produces a series of outcomes which represent the added value outcomes of this project.

### Paying Dividends

- 6.3 The Regeneration Strategy delivers a wide range of economic, social and environmental outcomes that are bespoke to the place in question, relevant to the issues and challenges identified and that will assist Halton Council in meeting the strategic objectives set by a number of sub-regional and regional agencies.

### *Increasing Economic Activity that is Consistent with Local Needs*

- 6.4 A major thrust of the Strategy has been to respect the important relationship between local employment and local businesses. This is a relationship that needs a significant degree of protection if the Council is to meet its strategic economic objectives of addressing worklessness and enterprise. The Strategy actually plans for a net gain in terms of employment demand of some 1,180 jobs locally (within Halton) and 3,039 additional jobs across a wider area in terms of multiplier and supply-chain effects<sup>17</sup>.
- 6.5 The plans developed as part of the Strategy seek to retain the existing employment areas wherever possible and practical. Indeed, measures are included to rationalise the property

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<sup>16</sup> See the Environmental Impact Assessment produced in support of the Orders and Applications

<sup>17</sup> Figures reflect employment increases of Preferred Options detailed in the Options report (Appendix B)

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offer where vacancy exists, bring forward new floorspace attractive to the market and implement environmental and security enhancements.

6.6 The Strategy also seeks to ensure that the competitiveness of the local business bases is continuously enhanced. Although this is not solely a land use issue, it does refer back to key projects contained within the Merseyside Action Plan (table 3.1) and other local programmes designed to address innovation, business support and knowledge

6.7 In this light, revenue projects designed to ensure that the local resident population benefits from this investment, will need to go hand-in-hand with the physical interventions envisaged.

#### *Improving Educational Attainment and Opportunities for Lifelong Learning*

6.8 A key objective of the Community Strategy, programmes are in place locally to address these issues in a 'global' sense. This is also a Transformational Priority of the Merseyside Action Plan, delivered through projects such as the City Employment Strategy.

6.9 The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy takes a lead here and as part of the general employment thrust of the approach, projects are identified such as the new Neighbourhood Centre in West Bank, which it is envisaged would provide access to training and adult education facilities.

6.10 Other practical examples of how the Mersey Gateway project, through physical intervention in land use and the opportunities this creates, is contributing to wider strategic objectives include:

- increasing accessibility to Riverside College through new pedestrian and cycle routes;
- enhanced accessibility of Runcorn Station through a new hierarchy of sustainable movement allows for education and training facilities to be accessed further afield;
- potential to work with Ineos as part of an exemplar Alternative Energy project at Rocksavage and the educational benefits this would bring.

6.11 As part of the implementation of the Strategy, vocational training and skills development could also be provided by linking new construction to apprenticeships as part of local labour agreements.

#### *Sustainable Economic Growth and Business Development*

6.12 Enhancing the accessibility of the local business community to their markets, suppliers and workforce has been an important consideration which has informed the Strategy. The Mersey



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Gateway offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish a more sustainable hierarchy of movement from the national and regional network down to the very localised movement within areas. Within this sustainable movements by public transport, cycling and walking have been defined in the Strategy.

- 6.13 The Strategy has established new and improved access arrangements to Astmoor, Runcorn Old Town, and a direct access to West Bank area – important projects to be developed further but that will crucially give these areas a new raison d’etre.

*Improving Competitiveness and Productivity*

- 6.14 The Strategy has placed a great deal of importance in understanding the business relationships with the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge. A number of important Halton sectors have expressed their support for the project in the context of the Mersey Gateway unlocking the current constraint that is the Silver Jubilee Bridge. In particular businesses in Halton participating in the Business Survey concluded that:

- They would ‘strongly support’ proposals for the Mersey Gateway – equating to 49% and 44% of businesses in Widnes in Runcorn respectively. Indeed 6% of businesses believed that the development of the Mersey Gateway was ‘extremely important’ to their economic prospects over the next three years, and a further 27% of businesses felt it to be ‘fairly important’;
- The Mersey Gateway will have a positive effect on company turnover – equating to 28% of participating businesses in Widnes, and 22% in Runcorn;
- The Mersey Gateway will have a positive effect on the size of their company’s market – equating to 24%, and 21% of participating businesses in Widnes and Runcorn respectively; and
- Several participating businesses had already predicated employment growth and business expansion dependent upon the Mersey Gateway development<sup>18</sup>.

- 6.15 To this end, this is a benefit that could be attributed directly to the Bridge itself, but the Regeneration Strategy takes this forward in identifying new employment zones such as Widnes South / Ashley Way and the Station Quarter in Runcorn Old Town for higher value uses in the financial, professional and business sectors in particular. These are new employment areas that would only be created as a result of the Mersey Gateway proposals, for instance through new alignments and through the de-linking.

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- 6.16 The redevelopment proposals at Astmoor, working in partnership with the principal land and property interests, is designed to deliver a more viable commercial product attractive to new business occupiers and investors.

*Enhancing the Vitality and Viability of the Borough's Town Centres*

- 6.17 The Strategy will have a significant impact on Runcorn Old Town in particular, with lesser, though by no means unimportant impacts on Halton Lea and Widnes.
- 6.18 The proposals for Runcorn Old Town establish a bold vision of change that essentially opens up the town centre with the Station thus facilitating a further phase of regeneration and development. This can only be achieved through the removal of the 'Loops'. Furthermore, new direct links westwards with Runcorn Docks (canal based, walking and cycling) and eastwards with Astmoor, conceivably present a much expanded town centre with the potential for introducing significant quantity of new floorspace and uses.
- 6.19 For Widnes town centre, the Strategy makes important recommendations for dealing with the employment area to the south of Ashley Way, alongside Mersey Gateway, but importantly forges new and improved links from West Bank into the town centre. New patterns of sustainable movement, coupled with new residential development, will increase the viability of the town centre and complement existing investments by the Council.
- 6.20 For Halton Lea, the concept plan envisages a new solution to addressing the particular aspects of a new town structure, which is monolithic in its design and appearance. The increased flows of traffic along the Central Expressway will increase the prominence of Halton Lea and working with the owners of Shopping City, the concept plan is presented to stimulate new thinking in terms of regenerating the centre.

*Improving the Image of the Borough to Attract Investment*

- 6.21 The Strategy contains a number of discrete projects which are designed to deliver a step-change in the image and perception of these places.
- 6.22 A new Sankey Square and Boulevard, combined with gateway and corridor treatments, increased greenspace and quality public realm investment, will promote West Bank as a place for people to visit, enjoy and spend time. The investments will establish a new context for popular tourist attractions, the Catalyst Museum and Spike Island.

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<sup>18</sup> The results of the Business Survey are presented in full in the Audit & Analysis Report (Appendix A)

6.23 The reopening of the canal link between Runcorn Docks and the town centre will add value to both projects – the former the subject of the current Housing Growth Point and the latter as a result of the de-linking of the ‘Loops’ and links to a refurbished Station.

6.24 Neither of these projects would be possible without the delivery of the Mersey Gateway project.

*Improving Health, Reducing Health Inequalities and Promoting Healthy Lifestyles*

6.25 Addressing health inequalities will demand a concerted programme of investments, an issue identified as a priority under the Health is Wealth plan across Merseyside but also an important priority locally.

6.26 The Regeneration Strategy contributes in a number of ways:

- a new waterside Boulevard will be created providing valuable amenity space to encourage healthy lifestyles;
- the provision of new pedestrian and cycle routes will encourage active lifestyles;
- the provision of a new Neighbourhood Centre in West Bank area could provide new health provision facilities as part of a multi-use facility;
- resident consultation revealed support for the downgrading of redundant infrastructure (particularly associated with the Silver Jubilee Bridge) contributing to quality of life objectives; and
- the scale and ambition of change will crucially transform perceptions of these places as places of genuine and greater choice as places to live, work and visit – such investment is crucial in raising aspirations with proven health benefits.

6.27 The Primary Care Trust has been engaged in the production of the Strategy and the possibility of a Health Impact Assessment being undertaken is currently being considered.

*Improve Safety and Reduce Crime / Fear of Crime*

6.28 The opportunity to deliver a comprehensive plan for the area is only possible because of the physical opportunities that the Mersey Gateway delivers. The physical impacts associated with the construction of the Bridge, facilitates new areas of land to be assembled and vacancy and obsolescence to be addressed as part of a comprehensive masterplan approach.

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- 6.29 Improvements to the design and planning of streets and spaces, to sensitive design standards and principles, will encourage a greater feeling of well-being and inclusiveness. Mixed use areas will serve to increase vitality and viability and will ensure that there are a greater number of people around at different times of the day,
- 6.30 The provision of greater employment opportunities will help to regenerate the area, having knock-on effects in improving the multifarious nature of deprivation.

*Well Designed, Quality, Affordable and Resource-Efficient Housing*

- 6.31 The Strategy envisages the delivery of just under 1,400 new residential units. These have been appraised in terms of providing mixed tenure products – new social and affordable housing – and mix of types and densities. These have also been appraised on terms of their contribution to delivering a Code for Sustainable Homes Three standard.
- 6.32 Provision is also made for environmental enhancements and some targeted refurbishment of existing housing.

*Access to Basic Goods and Amenities, Quality Public Open Space and Natural Greenspace*

- 6.33 The Strategy is predicated on defining a new network of movement that identifies key hubs, destinations, gateways and corridors. The creation of a ‘new Heart’ for West Bank, enhanced access to the Riverside College, the Library/Community Centre, the provision of retail and leisure uses within the Astmoor Industrial Estate are important project priorities emerging, which will contribute to the sustainable principles underpinning the Strategy.
- 6.34 The Strategy places a great deal of emphasis on improving the environmental quality of all of the Impact Areas, whether this is through targeted projects such as the waterside Boulevard or New Sankey Square in West Bank, the new canal link in the Old Town or through enhanced pedestrian links to Wigg Island from Astmoor.
- 6.35 All are important objectives in addressing social exclusion and raising the image of these areas and all are only deliverable through the catalytic influence of the Mersey Gateway.

*Contribution to Environmental Enhancement*

- 6.36 The Strategy has been prepared in close adherence to its environmental impact. This has been an iterative process that has informed the thinking with regard to particular impacts:



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- Flooding – there is no risk of flooding in the area, despite the adjacency with the River Mersey, albeit with the majority of new development on hard-standing, managing the increase in surface run-off will be important;
  - Greenspace – a net additional increased in greenspace provision will lead to a positive contribution to biodiversity objectives;
  - Air Quality – the emphasis in the Strategy towards sustainable modes of travel will help to address air pollution and quality;
  - Contaminated Land – a nationally significant issue for parts of Widnes and Runcorn in which continued investment and public intervention is required to bring back land into productive use – a cost assumption in the order of £60million to address the remediation of such land has been made;
  - Resource efficiency – all development has been appraised in terms of the use of brownfield sites, the recycling of resources into new development where practical and in terms of new development meeting both BREEAM Very Good and Code for Sustainable Homes 3 standards.
- 6.37 These are the compelling reasons why the Mersey Gateway could therefore be considered as ***‘more than just a bridge’***. The Regeneration Strategy provides practical solutions to addressing the physical and socio-economic problems that exist, in which the Mersey Gateway provides the catalyst for a sustained, and sustainable, regeneration programme.
- 6.38 The impacts of the Mersey Gateway will be much wider than the consideration of the Bridge itself; its primary role will be to deliver an enhanced movement system but it actually has the potential to deliver much more – a new economic rationale for these localities; a new sense of community pride and aspiration; tangible improvements to the environment and the quality of life of the area’s residents; and overall a much improved context for new investment.
- 6.39 This is what the Mersey Gateway could potentially deliver. These are the added value benefits. This is why the Mersey Gateway is ‘more than just a bridge’ but a catalyst for sustainable change.