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# 11 Townscape and Visual

## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

11.1.1 This chapter identifies and evaluates the existing townscape and visual resources of the Site and the surrounding area and assesses the predicted townscape and visual impacts of the Proposed Development. It is based upon an assessment undertaken by Waterman Energy, Environment & Design Ltd (Waterman).

11.1.2 The methods used to assess the impacts, the baseline conditions currently existing at the Site and within the surrounding area, and the potential direct and indirect effects of the Proposed Development will be described. This chapter also considers the outline application mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset the effects of the proposed development parameters.

11.1.3 This chapter (and its associated figures and appendices) is not intended to be read as a stand alone assessment and reference should be made to the Front End of this ES (**Chapters 1 – 5**), as well as **Chapter 15 - Cumulative Effects**.

## 11.2 ECOLOGICAL LEGISLATION

11.2.1 The applicable legislative framework is summarised as follows:

### *International Conventions and Directives*

- The Bern Convention 1982;
- Bonn Convention 1979,
- Convention on Biological Diversity 1992;
- EU Directive 92/43/EEC Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 1992;
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994;
- Wildlife & Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended); and
- Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

11.2.2 The Bern Convention 1982 imposes legal obligations to protect over 500 wild plant species and more than 1,000 wild animal species. These requirements are implemented in UK law through the WCA 1981 (as amended) (see overleaf).

11.2.3 The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, also known as CMS or Bonn Convention 1979, aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. Migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix 1 of the Convention, whilst migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix 2 of the Convention.

11.2.4 The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1993. Contracting Parties are required to create and enforce national strategies and action plans to conserve, protect and enhance biological diversity. The UK government ratified the Convention and published the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) in 1994. The CBD has three main goals:

- The conservation of biological diversity;
- The sustainable use of its components; and
- The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

11.2.5 Natura 2000 consists of a network of ecologically valuable designated areas in Europe. This network is established under the terms of the EU Directive 92/43/EEC Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Anon., 1992) (known as the 'Habitats Directive'). The main aim of the Habitats Directive is “to promote the maintenance of biodiversity” through the protection of habitats or species. Annex



I of the Habitats Directive lists habitats and Annex II lists species for which sites are designated. The network comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated under EU Directive 79/409/EEC Conservation of Wild Birds (Anon., 1979) (known as the 'Birds Directive').

#### *National Legislation*

11.2.6 The WCA 1981 (as amended) is the principal mechanism for wildlife protection in the UK, originally aimed at consolidating and amending previous legislation to implement the requirements of the Bern Convention and the Birds Directive. Of particular relevance are Schedule 1, which lists birds afforded special protection; Schedules 4-6, which protect various wild animal species from injury, killing or disturbance; and Schedule 8, which confers protection to certain plant species. The statutory designation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the main site protection measure in the UK established under the WCA 1981 (as amended).

11.2.7 The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (known as the 'Habitat Regulations') place a duty on planning authorities to meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive and to provide protection for priority habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive outside of protected areas.

11.2.8 The CRoW Act 2000 extends the public's ability to enjoy the countryside whilst also providing safeguards for landowners and occupiers. It gives statutory right of access to open country and registered common land; modernises the rights of way system; gives greater protection to SSSIs; provides better management arrangements for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation.

#### Protected Species

11.2.9 In recognition of those habitats identified on-site during the extended Phase I habitat surveys (**Appendix 2.5 and Figure 11.38**) and subsequent protected species assessments, particular consideration has been given to the presence of bats and breeding birds. The relevant legislation for these species is detailed below:

#### Bats

11.2.10 All species of bat (*Chiroptera* spp.) and their roosts are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000, which added the word 'recklessly') and the Habitats Regulations. It is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its place of shelter;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy its place of shelter; and
- Possess, transport or sell a bat.


#### Birds

11.2.11 All species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or capture any wild bird;
- Intentionally damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or eggs;
- Intentionally disturb the habitat of any breeding bird; and
- Possess, transport or sell any wild birds.

### 11.3 TOWNSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

11.3.1 The relevant planning designations that cover the Site and study area are set out by policy at a national, regional and district level. This policy (including relevant ecological policies) have been listed and assessed in detail within **Chapter 5 – Planning Policy and Context** and **Appendix 5.1**. However, some of



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the key landscape/townscape policy considerations from the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (adopted February 2000) are set out below within the context of the principal landscape planning issues and illustrated on **Figure 11.0**.

11.3.2 The review of the policies which encompass the above designations, together with analysis of associated guidance, has enabled Waterman to determine four principal landscape planning issues. These issues are identified and their importance set out below:

- Impact of the Proposed Development on the character and views to and from ‘*Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City*’ World Heritage Site;
- Impact of the Proposed Development upon the views and character of Birkenhead Park;
- Impact of the Proposed Development upon the views and character of Hamilton Square; and
- Impact on skyline views and character from Bidston Hill - Area of Special Landscape Value.

Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City’ World Heritage Site (WHS)

11.3.3 The Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City was inscribed onto the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage List on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2004. The WHS contains a number of internationally important building groups, which provide evidence of the City’s historic character and significance, centred around its outstanding waterfront. This rich architectural legacy includes the Pier Head Group, the William Brown Street Civic Buildings, the Docks and Warehouses and the Commercial Centre, one of the finest and most complete Victorian Commercial Districts in Britain. The city and port of Liverpool are an exceptional testimony to the development of maritime culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, contributing to the building of the British Empire.

11.3.4 In order to retain World Heritage Status, Liverpool must adhere to advice and guidance from UNESCO. This is concerned particularly with protecting the WHS from the potentially adverse impact of new development and the historic integrity of the Site. The Government is obliged to consult UNESCO and its United Kingdom representative, International Council on Monuments and Sites UK (ICOMOS) on major applications affecting the WHS. These organisations are particularly concerned about the effect of tall buildings within the setting of the WHS and on strategic views to and from the WHS.


11.3.5 The World Heritage Site Management Plan addresses key issues affecting the WHS, and clearly states that new buildings should respect the historic townscape. Development proposals which will be visible from Liverpool’s world famous waterfront should conserve or enhance the setting, and views to and from the WHS should aim to increase and not lessen in any way, the attractiveness of the WHS context. Conservation of important views is an important objective for the Liverpool World Heritage Site Management Plan. A selection of strategic views identified by the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA/Entec) from the WHS across the Mersey to the Site, will be assessed as part of this chapter.

Birkenhead Park

11.3.6 As well as being Grade I listed on the English Heritage Register, the park is also world renowned. Designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and opened in 1847, Birkenhead Park is universally acknowledged to be the first publicly funded park in Britain and was the model upon which Frederick Law Olmstead based his design for Central Park, New York.

11.3.7 The concept was of an idealised country landscape of open meadows and woodland belts with lakes shaped to appear as sinuous rivers. Although the development of the park was financed by the sale of the surrounding land for residential development, with time the woodland belts have largely obscured surrounding built form so that the character of the park is largely as originally intended.

*“Policy CH6 – Birkenhead Park Conservation Area: Planning objectives aim to preserve the character and appearance of a Victorian Public Park. The design of buildings which will be visible from Birkenhead Park Conservation Area must endeavour to comply with the objectives set out in the UDP. Proposals will need to preserve the character and appearance of the park.*”



*Policy CH26 - The Preservation of Historic Parks and Gardens: Requires that where a proposed development would affect a site included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, proposals will not involve the loss of features or otherwise detract from its character and setting.”*

## Hamilton Square

11.3.8 Hamilton Square dates from 1826 and is of particular importance as it contains the largest Grade I Listed Buildings Victorian Square, outside Oxford.

11.3.9 Proposals for any new development which will be visible from the Hamilton Park Conservation Area will need to preserve the wider visual amenity and character of the Square. The design and scale of new development located beyond, but visible from the Central Square, will need to be designed in order that the historic character, unity of design and ‘sense of space’ and enclosure is preserved.

*“Policy CH5 – Hamilton Park Conservation Area: Planning objectives aim to preserve the historic character and the unity of design, formal setting and sense of enclosure within the central square. The policy stipulates that the design and scale of any new development proposals located outside, but visible from the central square must preserve the wider visual setting of the square.”*

## Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value

11.3.10 Bidston Hill has extensive views over the Wirral Peninsula and across the Site to the Liverpool waterfront. The view from Bidston Hill was originally identified as a strategic view by the NWDA/Entec, but was later omitted.

11.3.11 The visual impact of the Proposed Development will be expected to be appropriate in terms of the character, scale, appearance and landscape setting. This is particularly important in the case of designated Areas of Special Landscape Value. The existing skyline and view from Bidston Hill will need to be considered, to establish the extent to which important views of landmark elements within Birkenhead and the Liverpool World Heritage Site should be protected and managed.

*“Policy LA1 – Protection for Areas of Special Landscape Value: Explains that the Local Planning Authority will protect the character and appearance of Areas of Special Landscape Value from the adverse effects of development. Proposals should not introduce new intrusive development within an otherwise open setting, especially along a prominent skyline. They should protect existing landscape features, or include appropriate replacement provision and the siting, scale and appearance of the development should not detract from the appearance of the area or intrude within important views into or out of the area.”*


## Principles for Landscape

11.3.12 Strategic Policy LAN1 explains that the LPA will have regard to the visual impact of the development proposals upon the local and wider area. In particular they will seek to protect areas of Special Landscape Value and promote improvement and enhancement of Areas Requiring Landscape Renewal. The visual impact of proposals must be appropriate, in terms of the character, appearance and landscape setting of the surrounding area.

## 11.4 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

11.4.1 As set out above, the most important planning factors to consider include the Sites proximity to a number of conservation areas and listed buildings, valuable heritage structures and a historic park of national significance. The development proposals should aim to:

- Respect the context of the Wirral and Liverpool skyline;
- Preserve or enhance the character of the Liverpool World Heritage Site and protect strategic views to and from the Site;

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- Preserve or enhance the character of the conservation areas, listed buildings and the historic park taking into consideration available views to and from the areas - this is particularly important where the development will include tall buildings;
  - Ensure that any new tall buildings are in an appropriate location and will enhance the qualities of their immediate location and setting, including views from the River Mersey; and,
  - Retain the townscape value and visual quality of the area and seek to improve the attractiveness and accessibility of the area for tourism and business.

#### Assessment Methodology

11.4.2 Additional detail regarding the assessment methodology adopted in the compilation of this Chapter is contained within **Appendix 11.1**. The assessment methodology used is based on the following guidance, with assessment principles within the documents applying to both landscape and townscape contexts.

- *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'*, Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) 2002; and
- *'Landscape Character Assessment'*, the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) 2002.

11.4.3 This assessment consists of two separate, but inter-linked issues as follows:

- **Townscape Impacts:** The effects of the new development on the physical and cultural characteristics of the Site and its surroundings and on the townscape character of the study area; and,
- **Visual Impacts:** The effects of the new development on views from visual receptors and on the amenity value of these views.

11.4.4 The assessment of the development and its impact on the environment encompasses the following stages:

- Impact Identification;
- Impact Prediction;
- Assessing Significance; and
- The proposal of mitigation measures to reduce the significance of adverse impacts.

11.4.5 The assessment methodology adopted in the compilation of this chapter consists of a combination of desktop and field studies which includes the following:

- An overview of planning data regarding relevant designations and policies for the area;
- An assessment of the townscape character and quality of the Site, together with the sensitivity of the townscape to change. This includes the classification of the townscape into units of distinct and recognisable character;
- Identification of viewpoints and classifications of sensitivity;
- A visual appraisal of the Site and its surroundings was carried out during November 2009 before existing vegetation had been able to fully blossom, which represents the optimum in terms of visual effects. The appraisals included analysis to determine the visibility of the Site from surrounding areas and to identify key viewpoints from publicly accessible areas;
- Identification and assessment of the potential townscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, in terms of their magnitude and sensitivity; and,
- The preparation of outline mitigation proposals with the aim where possible of avoiding or reducing significant adverse townscape or visual effects, determined during the course of the assessment.

11.4.6 The townscape and visual baseline survey was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009 in sunny conditions.



11.4.7 Townscape Character Areas (TCAs) and the visibility of the Site were identified through a review of baseline data and field surveys. The visual analysis is based on views from external spaces within the public domain and not from inside buildings or private spaces.

11.4.8 Photographs were taken from selected viewpoints with a digital camera with the equivalent of a 50mm focal length lens at eye level (1600mm) from the ground. The camera location and details of each viewpoint were recorded.

11.4.9 This assessment does not consider the architectural merits/quality of the scheme, but it does consider the relationship of new buildings to their context.

#### *Ecological Assessment Methodology*

11.2.12 This ecological aspect of the assessment has been undertaken with reference to the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom (IEEM, 2006) and IEMA's Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (1997). Best practice guidance is available for survey techniques and mitigation measures for a number of species and habitats and the following guidance has been adhered to in the preparation of this assessment:

- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (1993) Handbook for Phase I Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit; and
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature.

#### Extent of Desk Study

11.2.13 A search radius of 2km from the Site boundary has been employed for a desk top study of available species records and habitat data (presented in **Appendix 2.5**). This has been extended to a 5km radius for a search of bat records, in recognition of the landscape scale habitat requirements of these species.

#### *Extent of Field Surveys*

11.2.14 An extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the Site and its immediate surroundings was undertaken on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2009 and the associated report is presented in **Appendix 2.5**.

11.2.15 The desktop data was requested and received from rECOrd, the ecological database for the Wirral and Merseyside.

11.2.16 In addition, the following metadatabases were searched for protected sites, habitats and species:

- NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Gateway;
- MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside); and
- Nature on the Map.


11.2.17 The results from the desk study and walkover field surveys were used in conjunction with the responses from consultees and information on the Proposed Development to assess the possible significant ecological effects that the Proposed Development could have during operational phase.

#### Significance Criteria

11.4.10 Best practice guidelines stipulate that the significance of any townscape and visually related effect should be evaluated, both during the site preparation, earthworks and construction phase and following completion of the Proposed Development. The significance is determined by assessing:

- The sensitivity of the affected townscape;
- The sensitivity of the visual receptor; and
- The magnitude of the potential change that will occur.

11.4.11 This is illustrated graphically as 'significance matrices' for both townscape character and visual effects within Tables 11.0 and 11.1.



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11.4.12 The assessment process aims to be objective and quantify impacts as far as possible. However, it is recognised that subjective judgement is appropriate, if it is based upon training and experience, supported by clear evidence, reasoned argument and informed opinion. Whilst changes to a view can be factually defined, the evaluation of townscape character and visual impact does require qualitative judgements to be made. The conclusions of this assessment combine measurement with informed professional interpretation.

11.4.13 The assessment of the nature of the impact will depend on the degree to which the Proposed Development:

- Complements, respects and fits into the existing scale, landform and pattern of townscape context;
- Enables enhancement, restoration or retention of the townscape character and visual amenity; and
- Affects strategic and important views in addition to the visual context of receptors.

11.4.14 Based upon the significance matrices, the assessment of potential and residual effects (after the site preparation, earthworks and construction phase and implementation-maturation of mitigation measures) can be described as being:

- **Very high beneficial:** The Proposed Development would fit extremely well with the scale, landform and pattern of the townscape and bring substantial enhancements. The Proposed Development would create a significant improvement in views;
- **High beneficial:** The Proposed Development would fit very well with the scale, landform and pattern of the townscape and bring substantial enhancements. The Proposed Development would create significant improvement in views;
- **Moderate beneficial:** The Proposed Development would fit well with the scale, landform and pattern of the townscape, maintain and/or enhance the existing townscape character. The Proposed Development would create a noticeable but improved change in the view;
- **Minor beneficial:** The Proposed Development would complement the scale, landform and pattern of the townscape, whilst maintaining the existing character. The Proposed Development would result in minor improvements to the existing views;
- **Neutral:** The Proposed Development would cause a change in the townscape and/or views but this does not harm or bring significant benefits to the townscape and/or views;
- **Negligible:** The Proposed Development would cause very limited changes to the townscape and/or views but creates no significant impacts;
- **Minor adverse:** The Proposed Development would cause minor permanent and/or temporary loss or alteration to one or more key elements or features of the townscape, to include the introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the surrounding townscape. The Proposed Development would cause limited visual intrusion;
- **Moderate adverse:** The Proposed Development would cause substantial permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the townscape, to include the introduction of elements that are prominent but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding townscape. The Development would be visually intrusive and will adversely impact upon the townscape;
- **High adverse:** The Proposed Development would cause total permanent loss or major alteration to key elements and features of the townscape, to include the introduction of elements totally uncharacteristic of the surrounding townscape. The Proposed Development would be very visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views both into and across the area; and
- **Very High adverse:** The Proposed Development would irrevocably damage, degrade or badly diminish townscape character features, elements and their setting. The Proposed Development would be irrevocably visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views both into and across the area.

## 11.5 BASELINE CONDITIONS



## Other Planning Considerations

### Tree Preservation Orders

11.5.1 There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on the Site or in the immediate surroundings.

### Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

11.5.2 Being within an urban area, the Site is widely accessible via a public highway and public footpaths. There are no definitive rights of way recorded.

### Listed Buildings and Heritage Features

11.5.3 There is one Grade II listed building within the Site. At the eastern end of the Site lies a hydraulic generating system [3289/40]. The system comprises a hydraulic engine house and tower, and was originally built in 1863 but rebuilt after bomb damage during World War II.

11.5.4 The wider study area does contain other listed buildings and heritage features, including the Grade II listed grain warehouses [3190/16], which were the first warehouses constructed on Great Float in 1968.

11.5.5 For further information, please refer to **Chapter 12 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage** and **Appendix 12.2**.

### Townscape Context

11.5.6 The first Mersey Ferry began operating from Birkenhead in 1150 when a Benedictine Priory was built there. Despite the massive changes taking place on the Liverpool side of the river, particularly during the Industrial Revolution, the Wirral was generally distanced by the physical barrier of the River Mersey and retained its largely agricultural bias until the introduction of the steam ferry service in 1820. From then up until the arrival of William Laird, Birkenhead became a small seaside resort based around Church Street with a hotel located in Abbey Street.

11.5.7 The development of the town of Birkenhead was magnified by the arrival of William Laird in 1824. He bought a piece of land in Wallasey Pool and started a business that was to make Birkenhead internationally known. This was reflected in the population of the town which increased by 1300% over ten years from 1821 to 1831. Hamilton Square, built by William Laird, was opened in 1833 followed by the first Hall and market hall in Hamilton Street in 1835. In 1840 the Birkenhead to Chester railway, planned by George Stephenson, opened. In 1843, 123 acres of land was bought for the construction of Birkenhead Park which was subsequently designed by Sir Joseph Paxton and is recognised as being the first publicly funded park in Britain as well as the inspiration for Central Park in New York.

11.5.8 The principal features/elements of the study associated with the townscape context can be summarised as:

- Hamilton Square and environs;
- Birkenhead Park;
- The River Mersey waterfront, Liverpool City and associated inter-visibility;
- Birkenhead and Liverpool docks including the Wirral Waters site; and
- Scattered historic buildings and landmark elements (including the more distant context of the World Heritage Site).

### Site Context

11.5.9 The majority of the northern Site area is currently in a derelict state, cleared of most built form and secured by chain link fencing. However, the central East Float area and southern Site margins contain examples of both redundant and operational dock warehouses. To the east sits the remaining building components of the Grade II listed hydraulic engine house, including the prominent brick tower.

11.5.10 The Site currently lacks any real townscape quality as a component of the former Birkenhead Dock environment, and has little cohesion with the surrounding land use.



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### *Townscape Character and Land Use*

11.5.11 Townscape character is assessed at different scales, from national and regional down to county, district and site specific. The assessment of townscape character is an important part of the appraisal process and helps to ensure that key issues are addressed, including:

- The understanding of how and why urban landscapes are important;
- The promotion and appreciation of townscape issues and a thorough understanding of the local urban context;
- The successful accommodation of new development within the urban environment, including the capabilities of the local townscape to absorb change; and,
- The establishment of townscape enhancement and management principles aimed at reinforcing the urban environment.

### Regional Character

11.5.12 In terms of regional landscape character, the Wirral peninsular is split into two main character areas as identified within the Countryside Agency's Character Map of England (see **Figure 11.1**). The presence of a dramatic sandstone ridge running through the peninsular has resulted in the two widely differing Character Areas of 'Wirral' (Character Area 59) to the west and 'Merseyside Conurbation' (Character Area 58) to the east. The boundary between the character areas largely follows the line of the M53 motorway and runs from Bidston Hill in the north, through Noctorum and Mountwood, to Storeton in the south. To the south-east, Character Area 58 abuts Character Area 60 'Mersey Valley' which is a distinctive river-valley landscape focusing on the Mersey, with its estuary and associated tributaries and waterways.

11.5.13 The Wirral Character Area 59 has the following key characteristics<sup>1</sup>:

- The land slopes gently westward from the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge to the coastal strip along the Dee estuary;
- Low-lying plain punctuated by wooded sandstone ridges and gorse-clad sandstone outcrops;
- Formal landscape created by former, large, country estates, country parks and mixed agricultural land interspersed with residential development and extensive areas given over to horticulture;
- Medium sized field pattern defined by intermittent clipped hedgerows with copses and field ponds. Coastal areas (often degraded) with a geometric field pattern bounded by ditches draining former marshlands;
- Coastal scenery of inter-tidal mud/sand flats and salt marshes along the Dee estuary and extensive dune systems, particularly at Meols;
- Predominantly mixed woodland with a high proportion of mature pines which are concentrated on sandstone ridges and country estates, as well as extensive areas of heathland associated with sandstone outcrops;
- Intricate network of lanes, bridleways and footpaths; and
- Many garden centres and market gardens.

11.5.14 The settlement pattern of this part of the Wirral is a mixture of large country houses and estates, predominantly built using local red sandstone, and larger towns and villages such as Heswall, Hoylake and West Kirby. In recent years the towns and villages have developed as dormitory settlements for workers in

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<sup>1</sup> Character Area 59 – Wirral, The Countryside Agency



Birkenhead, Liverpool, Ellesmere Port and Chester resulting in the development of an effective road and rail network with strong links to the national motorway network in particular.

11.5.15 The majority of settlements are a mixture of traditional sandstone buildings, post-war housing development and restricted modern infill housing and apartments. The development of this area as a commuter belt has resulted in development pressures which have impacted upon the setting of individual settlements and the gradual increase of modern property which does not make reference to the local vernacular. The core of the area is predominantly mixed agricultural land, with areas of improved pasture, arable farming and market gardens interspersed with residential development and scattered country houses with associated parkland.

11.5.16 In stark contrast to Character Area 59, the Site itself falls within Character Area 58 'Merseyside Conurbation', which is located to the east of the Wirral peninsular. This character area incorporates the City of Liverpool and its environs in addition to the urban/industrial areas of Birkenhead which lie to the north-east of the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge.


11.5.17 The amount of open countryside within the urban fabric of the Merseyside Conurbation is extremely limited and generally is restricted to isolated pockets of versatile, high quality Grade 2 agricultural land. To a lesser extent, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the railway network form important landscape corridors. The urban growth and built-up landscape of the Liverpool Conurbation is dominant on the north of the Mersey Estuary and extends to Birkenhead in the south. The urban influence largely overrides the underlying geology and physiography with just hints remaining of previous landscape elements such as the ridge at Allerton and Childwall. On the Birkenhead side of the river it is still possible to identify some of the underlying topography which led to the development of this area although the key characteristics of the area are less well-defined than other surrounding regional character. The key features include:

- Eastern portion of the Wirral peninsular, sloping gently eastward from the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge to the River Mersey;
- The Liverpool urban area sloping gently westward down to the River Mersey from the Allerton/Childwall sandstone ridge;
- The shallow valley of the River Birket which has been widened and excavated to create the Great Float and associated docklands;
- The rolling landscape of the Wirral ridge creating a shallow basin surrounded by Wallasey Hill to the north, Bidston Hill to the West and Storeton Hill to the south;
- The strongly urban and highly developed coastline to the River Mersey;
- A network of manmade open space including several Victorian public parks;
- Limited amount of open countryside restricted to isolated pockets of versatile, high quality Grade 2 land;
- Birch woodland clumps and gorse associated with exposed sandstone ridges such as Bidston Hill;
- Distinctive cultural landscape with major city/towns of Liverpool, Birkenhead and Wallasey having much in common in relation to past and existing development pressures; and
- The highly distinctive waterfront to the City of Liverpool associated with World Heritage Site.

#### Local Character

11.5.18 Following the Site appraisal, the Site and its immediate environs have been classified into 10 Townscape Character Areas (TCAs) as illustrated on **Figure 11.2**. This characterisation assists in defining the capacity of the townscape to accommodate the Development. TCA2 includes the Site area. The character areas identified are:

- TCA 1: Mersey Corridor;
- TCA 2: Dock System/Wider River Valley (which includes the Site);
- TCA 3: Structured Parkland/Birkenhead Park;

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- TCA 4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor;
  - TCA 5: Structured Industry;
  - TCA 6: Fragmented Industry;
  - TCA 7: Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood;
  - TCA 8: Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs;
  - TCA 9: Northern Neighbourhoods; and
  - TCA 10: Southern Neighbourhoods.

11.5.19 The key features of the local townscape character areas are described below.

*TCA1: River Mersey Corridor*

11.5.20 The River Mersey originates at the confluence of the River Tame and the River Goyt. It flows west towards Liverpool, passing through South Manchester and Warrington where the river becomes tidal. It widens to form the Inner Estuary at Runcorn which coincides with the navigable River Weaver.

11.5.21 The Mersey estuary continues west through the 'Narrows', a straight narrow channel with depths of up to 30m driven by a change in geology. It forms the outer estuary, a large area of inter-tidal sand and mud banks as it flows into Liverpool Bay and the Irish Sea. The Mersey is a tidal river with the second highest tidal range in the UK of about 10m (the third fastest tidal rip in Europe). These strong tides have created deep channels and sandbanks throughout the Mersey Estuary which can make navigation difficult.

11.5.22 The navigable Mersey runs for 43 miles from Warrington to Mersey Bar and makes connections with various inland lines including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, via Liverpool Docks, and the Manchester Ship Canal. The Mersey corridor's most distinctive feature is the easily identifiable Liverpool waterfront. The Wirral waterfront is less characteristic with fewer riverside features, including Wallasey Town Hall and the Mersey tunnel ventilation shaft.

11.5.23 The River Mersey Corridor TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Redundant dockland infrastructure;
- Active dockland/ferry/container base;
- Public promenade/open space; and
- Urban waterfront.

11.5.24 The key features of TCA1 can be summarised as follows:

- Busy local and national ferry services;
- Historic dock system (originating from 1715 in Liverpool and 1820 in Birkenhead);
- Links to the Manchester Ship Canal and other waterways to the east;
- Architecturally distinctive river frontage, including a World Heritage Site, in Liverpool;
- Active river frontage with significant public access; and
- Wide estuary and river basin.

*TCA2: Dock System/Lower River Valley*

11.5.25 In recent years the area at the eastern end of the docks, between the East Float and the river, has been developed into The Twelve Quays. Cargo passing between Merseyside and Ireland leaves from this location to avoid having to pass through Liverpool's enclosed dock system. A new floating stage has been constructed and Wallasey and Bidston docks infilled. Morpeth and Egerton docks have been improved and their quaysides developed with industry, offices and museums.



11.5.26 The Birkenhead dockland area is less complete structurally than the Liverpool Docks and also lacks the architectural interest of Liverpool particularly in the detailing of such features as the dock walls. Materials used in construction differ and appear to be of poorer quality with brick built dock walls being characteristic of the Birkenhead docks and appearing less impressive than the substantial sandstone walls and gateways across the river. The dockland infrastructure which is particularly in evidence at the Albert Dock has been utilised to provide residential, retail, entertainment and cultural benefits but these opportunities are lacking in Birkenhead. A number of small museums have been created but lack cohesion in their distribution across the area. The surviving Grain Mill has been renovated and converted to provide residential accommodation.

11.5.27 In contrast to its heyday the dockland character is predominantly focussed on areas such as the ferry terminals and other port industries. Many of the industries currently occupying dockside workshops have no links with the dockland or river.

11.5.28 The Mersey Dock System/Lower River Valley TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Redundant dockland infrastructure;
- Active dockland/ferry;
- Limited Public Promenade; and
- Urban waterfront.

11.5.29 The key features of TCA2 can be summarised as follows:


- Large under-utilised expanses of water;
- Dominant river corridor and estuary;
- Local and regional ferry infrastructure;
- Areas of dereliction;
- Mixed surface and building treatments, a variety of textures and colours;
- Redundant railway/tram infrastructure;
- Workshops and industrial units housing businesses unrelated to the dockland location; and
- Isolated buildings of historic and cultural interest.

#### *TCA3: Structured Parkland*

11.5.30 Birkenhead Park, opened in 1847, is located to the west of the town centre and east of Bidston Hill and lies south of the A553 Park Road. The park is universally acknowledged to be the first public park in Britain and forerunner of the Park's movement which subsequently inspired other parks around the world including New York's Central Park. The park was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton based on a concept of an idealised countryside landscape of open meadows and naturalistic woodland belts. The lakes within the park were shaped to appear as sinuous rivers with views across to features such as the Boathouse and Swiss Bridge. Paxton incorporated surrounding land into the park which was sold at an enhanced value for housing to help pay for the building of the park. As part of the design, he also provided a separate perimeter road for traffic which allowed the park interior to be enjoyed by pedestrians.

11.5.31 The park retains this character with large open areas fringed by tree belts which largely screen the surrounding urban sprawl even during the winter months. Properties overlooking the park are generally of even height and predominantly comprises of substantial residential dwellings of three storeys high. The park is very accessible from the surrounding area with numerous pedestrian routes and the benefit of sections of the perimeter road which are extensively used by car owners for access and parking. Overall the character is one of managed informal open space which is largely removed from the surrounding residential properties.

11.5.32 Central Park is located further to the north, in Wallasey, and was originally the private parkland associated with Liscard Hall (Moor Heys House). The land was bought by Wallasey Local Board on 1889



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and opened to the public in 1891 becoming an important and well-used open space. The park comprises three formal gardens in addition to informal open space, sports pitches, nature ponds, a fishing lake and children's play areas.

11.5.33 The Structured Parkland TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape type:

- Victorian public park.

11.5.34 The key features of TCA3 can be summarised as follows:

- Ornamental landscape planting;
- Water features;
- Formal and informal footpaths;
- Play facilities and pitches; and
- Public visitor facilities.

*TCA4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor*

11.5.35 The Birkenhead area is ringed by a series of green spaces which vary in character and topography from the managed landscapes of the golf courses to the more informal spaces around Bidston Hill and the reclaimed Bidston Moss.

11.5.36 To the west of the study area, Bidston Moss includes a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) sandwiched between the River Birket, the M53 and A554 which was designated in 1994 and covers approximately 8 hectares (ha). The land was formerly a borrow pit used during the construction of the M53 motorway and access is now available to the public. To the east of the LNR is the former Bidston Moss landfill site which covers some 40 ha. Its domed finish is clearly visible from Liverpool and the surrounding area. To the north, the former Cross Lane tip (domestic refuse) has been unmanaged and consequently supports a ground cover of invasive weed species.

11.5.37 In contrast the final area of Bidston Moss comprises the land adjacent to Bidston Golf Course and takes the form of a flat-topped mound constructed, in part, from waste materials arising from the construction of the Mersey Tunnel. The combination of the four spaces creates a feeling of openness and informal/unmanaged green space which links visually with Bidston Hill nearby. In the wider context, the Bidston Moss area provides a largely green space in the vicinity of the motorway which is visible from the surrounding area as far as Liverpool.

11.5.38 To the south, Bidston Hill features strongly in views across Birkenhead with the distinctive forms of the Windmill and Observatory visible on the ridgeline. The hill comprises mainly scrub woodland with clearings permitting views across the wider area. From the windmill, a public footpath leads down the hill, through Taylor's Wood, to Boundary Road giving access to Flaybrick Memorial Gardens (formerly Flaybrick Cemetery).

11.5.39 Flaybrick Memorial Gardens date from 1864 when the site was opened as Birkenhead Cemetery. The Cemetery was designed by Edward Kemp, curator of Birkenhead Park, as the result of a competition and covers some 26 acres of gardens. The cemetery was designated as a Conservation Area in 1990 due to its considerable local significance. The character and appearance is mainly derived from the quality of landscaping, the formality of the design and the topographical setting. Within the site the primary unifying features include the tree-lined processional avenue, the prominence and setting of the twin chapels and the sandstone perimeter wall with cast-iron coping railings.

11.5.40 The Conservation Area status seeks to preserve and maintain important elements of the character of the cemetery including the extensive views of Birkenhead and Liverpool as well as the quiet character and landscape quality of the cemetery itself.

11.5.41 The gardens today are managed for a number of functions including historical/cultural interest, wildlife, wildflowers, a summer flowering meadow and an arboretum.



11.5.42 The Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor TCA can be sub-divided into the following landscape/townscape types:

- Semi-natural open space;
- Open space linked to the mid-Wirral sandstone ridge;
- Reclaimed land;
- Golf courses; and
- Cemeteries.

11.5.43 The key features of TCA4 can be summarised as follows:

- A cluster of reclamation areas including Bidston Moss;
- Bidston Hill/mid-Wirral sandstone ridge, including associated woodland groups;
- Golf courses;
- Flaybrick Cemetery Conservation Area; and
- Locally distinctive structures including the Observatory and Windmill on Bidston Hill.

*TCA5: Structured Industry*

11.5.44 Immediately beyond the dockland fringes, much of the area is given over to light industry and workshops. This informal industrial zone provides a buffer between the docklands and the gridiron street pattern of TCA6 to the south. The strong grid iron street layout is not in evidence other than on plan due to the diverse mix of structures and derelict/open/storage areas.

11.5.45 The Structured Industry TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Locally distinct/historic industry;
- Nationally/regionally distributed industry;
- Large scale units/sites; and
- Open land and car parking.

11.5.46 The key features of TCA5 can be summarised as follows:

- Small purpose built units/sheds of indeterminate character;
- Evidence of high security requirements due to urban location;
- Pattern of development restricted by the size and distribution of land available within the Laird Street Plan;
- Numerous derelict/demolished sites and poorly maintained structures; and
- Disrupted local identity.

*TCA6: Fragmented Industry*

11.5.47 To the north of TCA2 the industrial area is predominantly contained between the A5139 Dock Road and the Kingsway Tunnel Approach. The area has a more organic form in plan, and contains a disjointed pattern of built structures and corresponding spaces.

11.5.48 The Fragmented Industry TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Nationally/regionally distributed industry;
- Large scale units/sites; and
- Redundant industrial areas/car parking.

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11.5.49 The key features of TCA6 can be summarised as follows:

- Large units/sheds of indeterminate character;
- Evidence of high security requirements due to urban location;
- Sites predominantly accessed from the Dock Road; and
- Lack of any local identity.

*TCA7: Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood*

11.5.50 Birkenhead has experienced a number of periods of growth giving rise to extensive residential estates surrounding the town. The time line and cultural heritage is examined in more detail within **Chapter 12 – Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**. The area to the north of Birkenhead Park was laid out as part of the original town plan by Laird. In contrast the properties constructed within the environs of Birkenhead Park are generally large detached villas of individual design. Periods of industrial growth are reflected in the areas of more modest, brick built terraced houses. These properties, located at the back of the pavement, are also used as infill in many of the undeveloped areas of the original grid iron layout. Even within the more modest areas of worker's housing, strong vistas have been developed around focal points and landmarks such as St James's church.

11.5.51 The Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century terraced properties and town houses;
- Park Villas;
- Pockets of garden suburbia; and
- Late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing renewal.

11.5.52 The key features of TCA7 can be summarised as follows:

- Historic grid iron road layouts around Birkenhead Park to the west of the river (partly mirrored by Rodney St/Upper Parliament Street in Liverpool);
- Finest Georgian square outside London;
- Larger, individual properties around Birkenhead Park;
- Grid iron street pattern; and
- Emphasis on views, vistas and focal points.

*TCA8: Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs*

11.5.53 Birkenhead town centre generally has a poor image with evidence of dereliction, vandalism and less commercial appeal than nearby retail centres such as Liverpool. Two modern shopping centres, The Grange and The Pyramids, are a feature of the town centre together with the Market Hall. The original Market Hall, built in 1835 and extended in 1909, was located on the site of the Land Registry building but moved to its present location in 1977. These buildings together with the pedestrianised shopping area around Grange Street and St Werburgh's Square make up the centre of the retail district.

11.5.54 As part of the Strategic Spatial Development Area Strategy document produced by Wirral MBC, three 'quarters' have been identified in the older part of the town centre. These comprise:

- 'The Grange West Quarter' which includes Grange Road West and Oxton Road;
- 'The Central Quarter' which includes Argyle Street, Grange Road East and Clifton Crescent; and
- 'The Hamilton Quarter' which includes Argyle Street, Market Street, Hamilton Square and Hamilton Street.



11.5.55 The Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Locally based retail units;
- High Street shops/shopping centres;
- Central Business District; and
- Waterfront small business parks.

11.5.56 The key features of TCA8 can be summarised as follows:

- Finest Georgian terrace outside Oxford;
- Separate retail and commercial districts;
- Scattered historic buildings including pump houses associated with the docks;
- Town centre museums associated with local industry; and
- Modern, purpose-built shopping centres and high street shopping.

*TCA9: Northern Neighbourhoods*

11.5.57 The majority of the northern housing areas fall into the category of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing in the form of long parallel streets of terraced housing. There are numerous areas where housing has been infilled including pockets of garden suburbia. The area also includes some high rise development (predominantly 1960's) to the southern edge of Wallasey Hill around Oakdale Park. On the edge of the 'Fragmented Industrial Zone' (TCA6) there are areas of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing renewal based around cul-de-sac layouts. The majority of the properties do not reflect the local vernacular or materials which add to the fragmented appearance of the urban fringe.

11.5.58 The Structured Industry TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- Terraces (19<sup>th</sup> Century/20<sup>th</sup> Century);
- Garden Suburbia;
- Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing renewal; and
- Apartments/high density development.

11.5.59 The key features of TCA9 can be summarised as follows:


- Prominent location on the side of Wallasey Hill;
- Large areas of traditional terraced housing (predominantly back of pavement);
- Pockets of infill comprising semi-detached properties and apartments;
- Some older style (1960-70) high rise properties (mainly on the southern edge of Wallasey Hill); and
- Areas of inter and post war garden suburbs.

*TCA10: Southern Neighbourhoods*

11.5.60 The southern housing areas are divided between pockets of 20<sup>th</sup> Century social housing, areas of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century terraced housing and the more affluent park villas, semi-detached and large detached properties which are characteristic of the Noctorum fringes. The higher density housing is generally associated with the Town Centre, abutting the Laird Street Plan, and takes the form of locally typical terraced houses. The more modern properties generally lack local distinctiveness.

11.5.61 The Southern Neighbourhoods TCA can be sub-divided into the following townscape types:

- 19<sup>th</sup> Century and 20<sup>th</sup> Century terraced properties;
- Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing renewal;

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- Garden suburbia;
  - Park villas and semi-detached; and
  - Apartments.

11.5.62 The key features of TCA10 can be summarised as follows:

- Large areas of locally indistinct social housing;
- Housing renewal areas; and
- Lower density areas to the south-west associated with open space such as the ladies' golf course.

#### Land Use

11.5.63 There are a number of land uses which may be found in one or more of the Townscape Character Areas. The main land use types identified within the study area at present include:

- Dockside workshops/dry docks/ship repairers;
- Town centre retail areas – including two modern shopping centres and a range of both local and high street shops;
- Town centre industrial units/workshops;
- Small business units frequently developed as business parks in locations at Woodside and Twelve Quays;
- Town centre car parking;
- Recreational venues;
- Schools; and
- Public buildings/Hospitals.

#### Townscape – Receptors of Change and Sensitivity

11.5.64 In assessing the level of sensitivity of a landscape/townscape receptor, a judgement needs to be made on the importance to society of the landscape or townscape under consideration. This judgement is required in order to:

- Establish the level of importance of the affected landscape/townscape and whether this is at local, regional or national level;
- Enable any losses of features, characteristics, or functions to be assessed in relation to the importance or value attached to them;
- Enable the effects on other, less tangible, perceptual characteristics to be assessed such as scenic quality;
- Assist in identifying features which could be enhanced; and
- Identify mitigation proposals, through avoidance or relocation, by appropriate remedy or offsetting negative effects through compensatory measures.

11.5.65 When describing landscape/townscape sensitivity, it is important to identify the people or groups who could be affected by the proposals because the landscape is valuable to people in different ways.

Consideration will therefore be given to:

- People who live and work in an area may have a different perception of the landscape to that held by visitors because of their more regular contact with the landscape/townscape and the ongoing changes within it;
- Special interests: for example, the ecological, cultural or historic value of the landscape/townscape, as knowledge of these issues can affect perceptions and appreciation of the landscape/townscape; and



- Landscapes/townscape valued by a wider public than the local population, because they have a strong image or are well known and valued nationally or internationally, such as the Liverpool waterfront.

11.5.66 The sensitivity of townscape character lies along a continuum depending on its importance ranges from international to low local importance. It is accepted that there is likely to be a degree of overlap between each defined category. The sensitivity depends on the level of existing designation and on the inherent quality and condition of the townscape character and individual features.

11.5.67 The categories are defined as follows:

- International – Internationally designated feature or townscape character, susceptible to relatively small changes;
- National – Nationally designated feature or townscape of particularly distinctive character, susceptible to relatively small changes;
- County – County designated feature or townscape reasonably tolerant of changes;
- High (local) – A townscape of feature designated as being of District/Borough value with characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes;
- Moderate (local) – Locally valued components or townscape reasonably tolerant of changes; and
- Low (local) – A non-designated townscape character or feature, the nature of which is potentially tolerant of substantial change.

11.5.68 The main townscape receptors likely to be affected by the development proposals are listed below and illustrated on **Figure 11.3**:


- The setting of the conservation areas (Birkenhead Park and Hamilton Square);
- The setting of listed buildings (Grain Warehouses and the Hydraulic Tower);
- The low Wirral skyline punctuated only by occasional historic buildings, structures and open space (Bidston Hill and Bidston Moss);
- Views across the River Mersey and the Liverpool World Heritage Site;
- The Birkenhead Docks; and
- The local Townscape Character Areas identified by Waterman (TCA1 – TCA10).

#### Visual Amenity

11.5.69 In order to establish a thorough understanding of the visual context associated with the study area and the consideration of views towards the Site, Waterman has undertaken a visual appraisal. The work has involved a desktop sieving exercise and supporting fieldwork to establish the baseline parameters.

11.5.70 This section considers the following visual parameters:

- Selection of Views;
- Context, Visual Connections and Linkages;
- Zone of Visual Influence;
- Landmark Elements and Skyline Appraisal;
- Designated Strategic Views;
- Receptors of Change and Sensitivity;
- Strategic Views;
- Local Views; and
- Distant Views.



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### *Selection of Views*

11.5.71 The primary objective of the visual appraisal work is to assess the current 'Strategic Views' policy and guidance available, and assess how it relates to the Site and proposed development. In association with this, Waterman has reviewed the types of view experiences particularly appropriate to Merseyside and the Wirral, and selected a range of suitable visual receptors (photoviewpoint locations). Both 'Strategic' and 'Local' views will be assessed.

11.5.72 The work has required the analysis of the Site area itself, the visual relationship with existing land use and the inter-visibility with local visual receptors.

11.5.73 For the purpose of this assessment, Waterman has utilised the following criteria to appraise views and visual amenity (based on the approach set out within SDS Technical Report Nineteen – London's Skyline, Views and High Buildings (DEGW for GLA, August 2002)<sup>2</sup>.

#### Viewing Place

11.5.74 The criteria identified for a viewing place are that it should be:

- Established – through use over time;
- Accessible – publicly accessible and well used; and
- Distinctive – embody a 'sense of place' and provide an opportunity to pause and contemplate the view.

#### The View

11.5.75 The three generic criteria linked to the view itself, include:

- View value – views are about aesthetic, cultural and historic considerations. An important view should represent one or more of these considerations;
- Composition – views are typically composed of foreground, middleground and background. Important views should express quality of one or more 'grounds' and good relationship between them; and
- Landmark elements – views provide visual settings for landmark element(s). An important view should reflect the value of the landmark element(s) and the compositional quality of its setting.

#### View Experience

11.5.76 The relationship between 'the view' and the 'viewing place' constitutes the 'view experience'. There are a number of generic view experience conditions, which include:

- The openness or enclosure of the view;
- Whether the view is confined or panoramic; and
- How the view unfolds for the user.

#### Context, Visual Connections and Linkages

11.5.77 The geographical prominence of the Wirral peninsula provides a unique identity in terms of visual reference when viewing the North West coast at a national scale. This is accentuated by the presence of the River Dee corridor to the west and the River Mersey to the east. When appraising the visual context of the study area, it is important to acknowledge the visual dominance of the surrounding water, and the legibility offered by the River Mersey when arriving from Liverpool Bay/Crosby Channel (see **Figure 11.4**).

11.5.78 On arrival via Liverpool Bay/Crosby Channel, the legibility of the coastline is defined by topography and built form associated with Crosby and Wallasey, with rural coast beyond. From the entrance to the River Mersey, the legibility of the channel is guided by the dock edges, wharfs and built skyline associated with Liverpool to the east and Birkenhead to the west. Distant views terminate at the industrial skyline associated with Ellesmere Port to the south.

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<sup>2</sup> London's Skyline, views and Hig Buildings, DEGW (for the Greater London Authority), August 2002



11.5.79 Despite the physical separation of the River Mersey corridor, the proximity of the Liverpool and Birkenhead conurbations offers a great degree of inter-visibility. This is accentuated by the local topography, which provides a subtle visual backdrop to both urban areas. The visual connection between Birkenhead and the Liverpool frontage is also strengthened by the filtered/framed views associated with the Wirral Docks (and 'Wallasey Pool' basin associated with the former River Birkett Valley).

#### Zone of Visual Influence

11.5.80 In order to determine the extent of the Site visible from the wider study area and to assist in defining the scope of the baseline visual assessment, Waterman has utilised MapInfo GIS software to generate a digital Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) map (see **Figure 11.5**). The software interpolates topographical data and provides a 'worst case view shed', based on the visibility of the Site surface (existing site circumstances). The ZVI generated does not take into account man-made landform, vegetation, buildings or other structures; however, it does provide a tool to refine the area of fieldwork required and to determine the extent of possible visual receptors.

11.5.81 The ZVI generated reveals a relatively limited 'view shed', largely as result of the rising topography and local ridgelines that surround the Site. The limits of the ZVI can be described as:

- To the east - the rising Liverpool topography and ridgeline associated with the A5058, Anfield, Everton and Woolton ( Allerton and Childwood Ridge);
- To the south – the rising ground associated with Oxton, Prenton Park and Storeton Hill beyond;
- To the west – the rising land associated with Bidston Hill (Mid Wirral Sandstone Ridge); and
- To the north – the rising topography associated with Egremont and Liscard.

11.5.82 Verification on-site has confirmed the accuracy of the ZVI; although, man-made features such as Bidston Moss and surrounding built form provide some variation in visibility.


11.5.83 The visibility of the Site, existing structures and the dock edge are also illustrated on **Figures 11.6 and 11.7**.

#### Landmark Elements and Skyline Appraisal

11.5.84 In order to assess the visual interest of the study area and the context of the two adjoining conurbations, it is important to have an understanding of the current skyline and the landmark elements that are associated. The location and visibility of landmark elements is a crucial part of determining strategic and local view corridors, as well as reinforcing legibility and 'sense of place' in our urban and rural environments.

11.5.85 The principal landmark elements and skyline features associated with both the Wirral and Liverpool study areas include (see **Figures 11.8 and 11.9**):

- Bidston Hill Observatory (Grade II Listed);
- Bidston Hill Windmill;
- Wallasey Town Hall;
- East Float Grain Warehouses (Grade II Listed);
- Twelve Quays Pumphouse and Hydraulic Tower;
- Hamilton Square Station;
- Wirral Museum (Grade II Listed);
- St. Mary's Tower, Birkenhead Priory (Grade I and Grade II\* Listed);
- Cammell Laird Shipyard;
- Tobacco Warehouse, Stanley Dock (Grade II Listed);

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- The Three Graces – The Royal Liver Building (Grade I Listed), Cunard Building (Grade II\* Listed), Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Building (Grade II\* Listed);
  - The Albert Dock (Grade I Listed);
  - Radio City Tower / St. John’s Beacon;
  - Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (Grade II\* Listed);
  - Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (Grade I Listed);
  - Tunnel Ventilation Building – Wirral (Grade II Listed);
  - Tunnel Ventilation Building – Liverpool (Grade II Listed);
  - Unity Building;
  - Beetham’s West Tower;
  - City Lofts;
  - Alexandra Tower; and
  - One Park West.

11.5.86 The importance of the landmark elements listed above is obviously influenced by level of visibility, condition, historic status and statutory protection (with many features listed or associated with the Liverpool World Heritage Site). The principal landmarks and associated sensitivity are illustrated on Figure 11.10.

11.5.87 At this stage it is easy to see that the majority of the landmark elements are associated with the Liverpool conurbation. The visibility of such features is accentuated because the inter-relationship of topography and built form, both individually and in aggregation, provides a considerable degree of visual prominence in the wider landscape. Their contribution is an important part of the urban morphology, current visual context and distinct character of Liverpool.

11.5.88 The rapid development of the Liverpool skyline is in stark contrast to the poorly defined skyline of the Wirral.

#### Designated Strategic Views

11.5.89 Once the visual assets of a major conurbation have been determined, it is commonplace for Local Planning Authorities to manage ‘strategic views’ or to produce supplementary planning guidance (SPG) to deal with ‘skylines, views and tall buildings’.

11.5.90 A strategic view is defined as ‘the line of sight from a particular point to an important landmark or skyline’. Most emergent guidance considers that a strategic view should seek to frame a local icon to the exclusion of all else in the town/city; and, that any strategic view should provide a visual link to the heart of a town/city from surrounding environs. Other examples of strategic view criteria focus upon a skyline as a whole, rather than individual landmarks which make a view distinctive.

11.5.91 The current views available towards the Liverpool skyline do not focus on one landmark element alone but rather link together a series of features and visual events to create a distinctive panorama across the River Mersey. This is reflected within the SPG produced for the North West Regional Assembly (Entec, 2003)<sup>3</sup>, which deals specifically with the ‘Strategic Views along the River Mersey’.

#### Strategic Views along the River Mersey – North West Regional Assembly/Entec, 2003

11.5.92 The origin of the strategic views research dates back to 1999 when the Government Office for the North West published a paper outlining the need for studies to inform the review process for Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) in the North West. Proposal 7 within the paper established the need to examine what, if any, strategic views of regional importance exist within the Mersey Estuary and inland from Manchester to Liverpool Bay.

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<sup>3</sup> Strategic Views along the River Mersey, North West Regional Assembly and Entec UK Ltd, 2003



11.5.93 In November 2002 Entec were commissioned to undertake a further study to determine a selection of strategic views. The Mersey Corridor study area was defined by taking a 2.5km offset north and south of the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal. The offset distance reflected the fact that few individual buildings are clearly discernible beyond this distance and haze, which is especially prevalent over the estuary, tends to prevent the identification of all but the most prominent features. It was considered that this width of area allowed for the consideration of views into, across and out of the Mersey Valley that incorporate both the lower lying areas and the more elevated areas as the topography generally rises. The boundaries were then adjusted so that they reflected features such as roads and railway lines which were recognisable on the ground and in a small number of locations the offset distance was extended to incorporate obvious strategic viewpoints.

11.5.94 Following the completion of the research, the North West Regional Assembly sought to translate the findings into an appropriate policy approach for inclusion within the RPG for the North West. Following a final consultation process, the 28 strategic views identified were refined as many were considered not to be of regional significance. The refined list included 12 viewpoint locations:

- Strategic View 1 – Liverpool Waterfront and Seaforth Docks (from the Magazine Promenade, Wallasey);
- Strategic View 2 - Liverpool Waterfront and Seaforth Docks (from Wallasey Town Hall);
- Strategic View 3 – Liverpool Waterfront (from Woodside Ferry Terminal);
- Strategic View 4 – Liverpool City Centre and Manchester Ship Canal (from Eastham Country Park);
- Strategic View 5 – Manchester Ship Canal and the Mersey Estuary (from Frodsham Hill);
- Strategic View 6 – Runcorn Silver Jubilee Bridge and Spike Island (from Wigg Island, near Runcorn);
- Strategic View 7 – Runcorn Silver Jubilee Bridge and the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge (from Pickerings Pasture, near Widnes);
- Strategic View 8 – Lowry Lifting Footbridge views westwards and eastwards (from the Lowry Lifting Footbridge);
- Strategic View 9 – Lowry Lifting Footbridge and Imperial War Museum North (from the Quays Theatre, Lowry Centre, Salford Quays);
- Strategic View 10 - Liverpool Waterfront and City Centre (from Everton Park, Liverpool);
- Strategic View 11 – Birkenhead Waterfront and Liverpool Pier Head (from Albert Dock near Canning Half Tide Dock, Liverpool); and
- Strategic View 12 – Royal Liver Building / Liverpool Pier Head and Birkenhead Waterfront (from Princes Dock, Liverpool).

11.5.95 The strategic views have been reviewed by Waterman to determine which are applicable to the Site area. A number of the strategic views are relevant; however, the angle and orientation of the view has had to be altered to accommodate the wider study area. Some of the original 28 strategic views identified are also considered to be relevant, as the focus of the views relate to the Liverpool conurbation and World Heritage Site rather than the Mersey corridor. Where appropriate the Entec strategic views are referenced in the text.

#### Visual - Receptors of Change and Sensitivity

11.5.96 The main receptors likely to experience visual change arising from the Proposed Development have been identified below and classified according to their sensitivity (strategic, local and distant). The location of the thirteen viewpoints are illustrated on **Figure 11.11** and corresponding Figures **11.12 to 11.24**.

#### Strategic Views

11.5.97 The following strategic viewpoints have been identified following a review of the earlier Entec studies and consultation with the Wirral MBC:

- Woodside Ferry Terminal: Associated Ferry Building is Grade II Listed (**see Figure 11.16**) – (Entec Strategic View 3, but orientation extended for this baseline appraisal). Views from the pedestrian concourse of the ferry terminal take in a significant length of the Liverpool skyline. Part of Birkenhead skyline is also visible including notable buildings such as Hamilton Square Station. The study area and surrounds is largely screened by Woodside Business Park;
- Albert Dock: World Heritage Site/Grade I and II Listed Buildings/Mersey Waterfront Regional Park/National Cycle Network (**see Figure 11.21**) – (Entec Strategic View 11). A popular, bustling location at any time of year associated with riverside walks and the nearby marina. The wide riverside paths provide open views of the Wirral waterfront taking in Rock Park, Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead, Seacombe, Liscard and New Brighton; and
- Princess Dock/Cruise Liner Terminal (**see Figure 11.22**) – (Entec Strategic View 12). A public promenade, office environment and tourist arrival destination with open panoramic views towards the Wirral waterfront.

11.5.98 Of the strategic views excluded from the final Entec study this baseline will include the following because of its panoramic nature and relevance to the wider study area:

- Bidston Hill: Area of Special Landscape Value (**see Figure 11.17**) – The summit of the hill provides 360° views encompassing north Wales to the south-west, the Wirral peninsular (to the north and west) and Liverpool and Birkenhead to the north-east.

#### Local Views

11.5.99 In addition to the identification of relevant strategic views, Waterman has identified seven other important local views that require assessment. The views have been selected to further acknowledge the availability of local panoramas, vistas, prominent landmark elements and designated land. The local views do not focus upon the Mersey Corridor (unlike the Strategic Views), but encompass the visual setting of the Site itself. The local visual receptors selected at this stage include (**see Figure 11.11** and corresponding Figures **11.12 to 11.24**):

- Bidston Moss – **see Figure 11.18**. The community woodland/Local Nature Reserve area offers a network of informal footpaths and nearby cycle routes cross over the former landfill site giving views across the Site, Birkenhead and towards Liverpool;
- Birkenhead Park – **see Figures 11.15 and 11.24** (Conservation Area which possesses Grade I status within the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens). The park provides a sense of space and seclusion within the urban sprawl of Birkenhead. Depending on the position, the surrounding park vegetation screens some external features, and views beyond the park boundaries are limited to the adjacent Georgian terraces and houses;
- Hamilton Square – **see Figures 11.14 and 11.23** (Conservation Area) in the heart of William Laird's Birkenhead. The square is impressive and contains the largest number of Grade I Listed Buildings in a square outside London. Access is restricted for vehicles resulting in an attractive open area to the front of the museum (the former Birkenhead Town Hall). Georgian town houses surround the square punctuated only by the tower of the museum. The roofline and stylised geometry of the buildings results in a harmonious space with rhythm and natural flow to its boundaries. Apart from in the corner position, the view is not particularly interrupted by features from outside the square resulting in a largely complete and prospect;
- Liverpool Anglican Cathedral entrance – **see Figure 11.19** (Conservation Area/Grade I Listed/World Heritage Site Buffer). The northern entrance to the Cathedral, which is most commonly used by everyday visitors, permits glimpsed views of the skyline of Liverpool Pier Head and across to the East Float of Birkenhead docks. The Hydraulic Tower and Grain Warehouses can be identified as features on the skyline;
- Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral – **see Figure 11.20** (Grade II\* Listed Building). From the public entrance podium located to the south of the Cathedral, glimpsed views are available across the Liverpool skyline



towards the distant rising ground associated with Bidston Hill. The Site and Grain Warehouses are obscured by built form;

- Egerton Bridge Seating Area – see Figure 11.12 (Bascule Bridge and Public Museum). To the north of the bridge and adjacent to Egerton Dock is a public promenade and seating area. The Dock is in close proximity to the Wirral Metropolitan College (12 Quays Campus) and the Egerton House Business Centre. Open views are available across Tower Wharf towards the Site, with the Pumphouse/Hydraulic Tower and the Grain Warehouses visible; and,
- Duke Street Viewing Area – see Figure 11.13 (Bascule Bridge). The public viewing area/car park adjacent to the Duke Street Bridge provides an open view east across the Site and water, the Grain Warehouses and the Liverpool skyline beyond. The Hydraulic Tower and the Anglican Cathedral are prominent components of the view.

#### Distant Views

11.5.100 As part of the baseline assessment process, distant viewpoints have also been identified. Although relevant in relation to the scale of the study area, the distance between these receptors and the Site area and the inter-visibility available suggests that detailed consideration and assessment is not necessary. It is acknowledged that, subject to favourable weather conditions, the study area does have the potential to be visible over considerable distances due to the openness of the Wirral peninsular.

11.5.101 The distant visual receptors considered but not assessed include:

- Everton Hill;
- Eastham Country Park;
- Thurstaston Hill;
- Winter Hill/Pennine foothills; and
- North Wales coastline and Snowdonia National Park.

#### Ecology


11.5.102 An extended Phase I habitat survey of the Site was undertaken by WSP Environmental Ltd in August 2009. The survey were undertaken in accordance with standard methodology (Nature Conservancy Council, 1990), whereby all habitats were surveyed and recorded onto a base plan and any habitats that were considered to be of potential interest to nature conservation, flora and fauna were recorded through the use of Target Notes (TN), which provide a précis of habitat composition with respect to the floral species noted and their relative abundance (JNCC, 2003). By combining these two elements, it is possible to identify and evaluate the ecological value of the Site and its surroundings in order to determine the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the ecology of the Site and also identify opportunities for improvement.

11.5.103 The ecological baseline of the Site has been summarised below. The Extended Phase I habitat survey is within **Appendix 2.5**.

11.5.104 The Site comprises previously developed land, and supports a mosaic of self-seeded and opportunistic species dominated by a robust and stress-tolerant grass sward with opportunistic ruderal species throughout. Along the northern boundary with Dock Road several discrete stands of the invasive Japanese knotweed have also been identified.

11.5.105 Areas of the Site which have been subject to limited disturbance within recent years have developed to extensive and dense scrub supporting self-seeded buddleja (*Buddleja davidii*) and birch (*Betula* sp.). This is most evident along the southern boundary of the Site where a former railway line has developed into a continuous band of scrub, with occasional areas of bare ground supporting patchy grassland and ephemeral species. Habitats are assessed as being of only 'site' value for nature conservation.

11.5.106 Much of the Site is dominated by areas of hardstanding with both active and disused buildings. Buildings within the Site are considered, on the whole, to be of limited value for species of conservation concern due to their exposed location and limited connectivity to foraging and commuting habitats. Where



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access was possible, buildings were considered to be a good state of repair with the exception of the former Hydraulic Tower which was considered to offer good opportunities for roosting bats. Recommendations relating to bats have been outlined within **Appendix 2.5**.

## 11.6 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

11.6.1 A summary of the potential landscape/townscape and visual effects identified at different stages in the life cycle of the Development follows below using the methodology outlined previously. This section should be read in conjunction with the Significance Impact Matrices (**Tables 11.0 and 11.1**), Photoviewpoints 1-13 (**Figures 11.12 to 11.24**) and Photomontages 1-13 (**Figures 11.25 to 11.37**). The effects may be reduced through outline mitigation measures to provide a final 'residual effect' for the Proposed Development. The impacts associated with the Site Preparation, Earthworks and Construction phase have been summarised in **Tables 11.2 and 11.3**. Operational effects of the Development are summarised in **Tables 11.4 and 11.5**.

### Site Preparation, Earthworks and Construction

11.6.2 The Proposed Development will result in temporary changes in the townscape and visual amenity arising from demolition and construction activities. Although temporary, these activities can be a source of significant disruption and visual intrusion and hence appropriate measures are required to avoid and reduce these impacts.

11.6.3 The principal components of the demolition and construction phase likely to affect the townscape and visual amenity include the following:

- Site clearance and removal of necessary debris;
- Excavation works;
- Stockpile and material storage areas;
- Fixed and mobile construction plant including tower cranes;
- Site compound(s), utilities and protective hoardings;
- Site access points;
- Road and footway construction;
- Building construction; and
- Lighting of construction works.

### Townscape Character

11.6.4 Predicted temporary townscape character effects include change in the character of the area from derelict Dockside to construction site, with potential visual disturbance and construction of higher buildings on the skyline. Indirect effects will include increase in construction traffic, particularly in TCA2.

11.6.5 The principal effects upon the townscape receptors identified are summarised below and listed in **Table 11.2**.

11.6.6 The linear nature of TCA1: River Mersey Corridor provides a transitory view towards the Site. In closer proximity, the predicted effects of the temporary construction works is likely to be **moderate adverse**, before the implementation of mitigation measures. To the north and south of the development Site, the effects are considered to be **negligible** as the construction activities will be less visible and consistent with some of the existing dock loading activities.

11.6.7 TCA2: Dock System/Wider River Valley includes the Site itself so will inevitably experience a significant change in character as a result of the construction works. But given the low sensitivity of the wider character area it is only categorised as **minor adverse**.



11.6.8 The vegetated enclosure of TCA3: Structured Parkland/Birkenhead Park will provide little opportunity to be influenced by the Site construction activities; however, tall cranes will be visible on the skyline. The effect is therefore considered as being **moderate adverse**.

11.6.9 Given the high (local) sensitivity of TCA4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor, the predicted effects of the Site construction work from the more elevated areas are considered to be **moderate/minor adverse**.

11.6.10 TCA5, TCA6, TCA7, TCA8, TCA9 and TCA10 are unlikely to experience any significant negative effects due to their current condition and/or their separation and distance from the Site. As such, impacts during construction are considered to be **negligible** before mitigation.

11.6.11 Due to the designation of much of the Liverpool waterfront to the east of the Mersey corridor being a World Heritage Site, the International sensitivity is likely to result in a **moderate adverse** impact after mitigation measures. This is lessened from Moderate/High adverse as a result of the distance between the designated character area and the Site itself.

11.6.12 The effect of the construction activities on the Hamilton Square conservation area are considered as being **moderate adverse**, given the National sensitivity of the townscape feature and the likely presence of construction plant on the distant skyline.

11.6.13 The close proximity of the Grade II listed Grain Warehouses to the Site and associated construction activities are likely to result in **high/moderate adverse** effects prior to the implementation of mitigation measures. The townscape feature does however have a secure boundary and public realm buffer to protect it from direct construction activities.

11.6.14 The effect on the character of other valued townscape features (Wirral Waterfront, Bidston Moss and Bidston Hill) will be **minor adverse** or **negligible**, given the separation of the features from the Site and the unlikely influence of construction activities. However, the effect of construction infrastructure upon the Wirral skyline could be considered as **moderate/minor adverse**.

#### Visual Amenity

11.6.15 Predicted temporary visual effects include open and partial views of construction works and partial views of higher-level construction works, including potential visual disturbance from cranes on the skyline.

11.6.16 The principal effects upon the visual receptors identified are summarised below and listed in **Table 11.3**.

11.6.17 The views in close proximity to the Site from Photoviewpoint 1 (**Figure 11.12**) and Photoviewpoint 2 (**Figure 11.13**) will experience a medium magnitude of change, with clearly visible construction works resulting in **moderate/minor adverse** effects.


11.6.18 The availability of glimpsed skyline views from Hamilton Square conservation area (see Photoviewpoint 3 – **Figure 11.14** and Photoviewpoint 12 – **Figure 11.23**) will result in a **moderate/minor** adverse effect upon these important viewpoints. Tower cranes are likely to be visible throughout the construction process, creating some visual disturbance on the skyline.

11.6.19 Photoviewpoint 6 from Bidston Hill (see **Figure 11.17**) and Photoviewpoint 7 from Bidston Moss (see **Figure 11.18**) are both distant, open views towards the Site. Whilst construction activities are likely to be visible on the skyline, the low magnitude of change results in a **moderate/minor adverse** effect.

11.6.20 Despite the distance of Photoviewpoint 8 and Photoviewpoint 9 (**Figures 11.19 and 11.20**) from the Site the predicted effect is **moderate adverse** upon the views from the Anglican and Metropolitan Cathedral, given their medium/high sensitivity.

11.6.21 The panoramic views across the River Mersey towards the Site from Albert Dock (Photoviewpoint 10 – **Figure 11.21**) and Princess Dock (Photoviewpoint 11 – **Figure 11.22**) are likely to experience a medium magnitude of change as a result of the phased construction activities. Given the distance between these visual receptors and the Site and the prominence of the proposed works, the effect is predicted as being **moderate adverse**.

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11.6.22 Views from Birkenhead Park conservation area (see Photoviewpoint 4 – **Figure 11.15** and Photoviewpoint 13 – **Figure 11.24**) will experience some change in amenity as a result of the construction activities on Site. The effect of tower cranes and building construction upon these visual receptors is therefore considered to be **moderate to minor adverse**. From Woodside Ferry Terminal (see Photoviewpoint 5 – **Figure 11.16**), the inter-visibility with the Site is further restricted, thus the effects would be lessened to **negligible**.

#### Operational Phase

11.6.23 The operational impacts are considered to be those in existence upon completion of the Proposed Development. For the purposes of this assessment, a series of fixed parameter plans have been produced for the 'East Float City Structure' and a series of urban quarters identified, as set out in detail within **Chapter 4 – Consideration of Alternatives and Description of the Proposed Development** and summarised below..

11.6.24 The East Float neighbourhood is divided into the following urban quarters and three waterbodies:

- **SkyCity and the Point (SC)**: a prestigious tall building cluster offering world class residential and commercial accommodation. The 'visual spine' of East Float with a central civic park and bars, restaurants and boutique retail animating the public realm;
- **Marina View and Four Bridges (MV)**: a mixed use civic, educational and commercial led quarter strengthening connections to the civic and commercial neighbourhoods of Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Town Centre;
- **Vittoria Studios (VS)**: a diverse residential and creative industries environment, with opportunities for arts and events. A more relaxed and distinct offer to complement SkyCity, with a lower scale building and public realm typology providing a sensitive transition to the south; and,
- **Northbank West (NBW)**: a residential-led quarter with commercial, leisure and health uses offering a bespoke living environment with access to the water's edge, and a short walk away from other quarters and facilities. An appropriate building scale capable of enclosing East Float to the south, with local bars, shops and restaurants focused to the eastern and western extents.

11.6.25 The three waterbodies include:


- Vittoria Dock;
- Point and Vittoria Pool; and
- The Float.

#### *Assessment Parameters*

11.6.26 The parameter plans outline spatial elements which are fixed and other spatial elements which may vary as the scheme design progresses through detailed reserved matters submissions. The parameter plans provide a range of heights to allow flexibility in the range of future building zones; however, the maximum height and massing parameters are provided to give certainty that the worst case effects of the scheme proposals are assessed.

11.6.27 For the purposes of assessing townscape and visual effects, a 3D model has been utilised to represent the maximum building envelope scenario. Through the provision of verified photomontages, the effects of the worst case parameters for each development quarter can be viewed from principal receptor locations. In addition to this, the height and massing of an **indicative masterplan** has been illustrated as 'a likely case scenario'. The reason for this is that in terms of massing, assessing the maximum parameter envelope only is likely to result in effects that are worse case than those considered likely. The consented proposals for Northbank East are also illustrated to aid cumulative assessment.

11.6.28 The assessment considerations set out below relate only to the maximum parameters information provided by the scheme architects and not the layout or massing of the illustrative masterplan.



11.6.29 The impact of the Proposed Development will persist during the operational life of the proposed Development with some decrease of adverse impacts over time due to the mitigation measures and receptor adjustments due to the 'bedding down' of the Development within the townscape. The effects can therefore be assumed to be permanent and largely irreversible. The principal aspects of the proposals that are likely to have a permanent effect on the townscape character, townscape features and visual amenity are summarised for each of the scheme quarters below.

#### SkyCity and the Point

- Tall building cluster consisting of residential and commercial uses within two linear parcels. A massing 'spiral concept' steps up in height from a maximum of 42 metres in the east (south SkyCity) to a maximum height of 126 metres at the western turning point. The maximum eastern height culminates at 226 metres (north SkyCity);
- The provision of new public realm facilities and associated open spaces such as the SkyCity Park, Wetlands, Terraces and Boardwalk;
- The Point, which is envisaged as a striking landmark building with pedestrian connection to Four Bridges;
- Highways alterations and Site access; and
- Introduction of a new source of light into night views.

#### Marina View and Four Bridges

- A civic, educational and commercial development cluster located to the south and east of Vittoria Pool and associated marina. This will form a consistent development mass associated with Marina View will run parallel to the central Civic Avenue, respecting the scale of adjacent buildings and permitting vistas through (a maximum of 52 metres). The eastern extent defines the corner of the masterplan, therefore more significant height will be used to create a landmark building, with a maximum height of 120 metres.
- In relation to Four Bridges, the northern extent will respect the mass and existing building lines of the Hydraulic Tower (a maximum height of 16 metres); whilst to the south the buildings will be set back to enable waterside access (a maximum height of 24 metres). Subtle variations in building height are suggested to animate the skyline;
- The provision of new public realm facilities, marina access and public spaces such as Egerton Square and Marina Square;
- Highways alterations and the creation of new vistas from City Boulevard; and
- Introduction of a new source of light into night views.

#### Vittoria Studios

- A linear residential and creative industry parcel that sits parallel to Vittoria Dock, south of SkyCity. The massing parameters are formed by a consistent 37.5 metres to the south of Vittoria Dock; however, the western parameter blocks step-up from 48.5 metres to 77 metres to emphasise the entrance to SkyCity;
- The provision of new public realm facilities such as Vittoria Bridge with its raised pool and the improved pedestrian circulation routes associated with Duke Boulevard, Vittoria Way, Duke Square and Livingstone Street;
- Introduction of new south-north vistas from City Boulevard;
- Floating pontoons within Vittoria Dock; and
- Introduction of a new source of light into night views.

#### Northbank West

- Three residential/commercial development parcels, two of which are located on the existing dock wharf and one set upon land reclaimed from the Float. The massing is generally one of a smaller scale buildings towards the water's edge (a maximum height of 21 metres) and larger buildings to the northern



side of the Boulevard (a maximum height of 77 metres – dropping to 70 metres adjacent to the listed Grain Warehouses;

- The western extent defines the corner of the masterplan and approach to East Float, therefore more significant height will be used to create a feature building adjacent to Duke Street, with a maximum height of 87.5 metres;
- The incorporation of an esplanade feature and a boardwalk to the water's edge;
- A new north-south visual connection along Oakdale Road; and
- Introduction of a new source of light into night views.

11.6.30 As set out above, the building parameters across East Float will be of varying heights. The highest element within the Proposed Development will be SkyCity, with a maximum of 226 metres.

11.6.31 For the purpose of this assessment, it has been assumed that any landscape planting will be in place prior to the opening of the Development. This is a reasonable assumption.

#### Townscape Character

11.6.32 The predicted effects of the completed Development on the townscape character is provided in Table 11.4 and summarised below. All effects are likely to be permanent in nature, lasting for the duration of the operation of the Development.

#### Liverpool World Heritage Site

11.6.33 The Site is located outside the WHS buffer zone and outside of the area established by Liverpool City Council, supported by Wirral Council, for the Management Plan and draft Supplementary Planning Document. Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that the implementation of the Proposed Development has the potential to have an in-direct effect upon the character relationship of the WHS and Birkenhead; however, the distance of the proposals beyond the designated WHS buffer and the extent to which the WHS has already been influenced by more immediate redevelopment would mean that the overall effect upon setting is negligible. The placement of series of more significant architectural quarters on East Float, including a tall building cluster, will assist in balancing the architectural approach of the Mersey corridor, yet the character of the adjoining townscapes will remain different in terms of historic components, aesthetics and surrounding urban context.

11.6.34 As a townscape receptor of International sensitivity, the WHS will experience a Low magnitude of change, given the separation of the receptor by the River Mersey corridor. However, the improved interface between the Site and the WHS, as well as the upgrading of the Birkenhead Docks when viewed from Liverpool will result in a **Moderate beneficial** effect, particularly as it will balance the already consented Northbank East proposals.

#### Hamilton Square

11.6.35 The character of the Square is dominated by the enclosing attributes of the Georgian terraces and the architectural elegance of the former Birkenhead Town Hall. The formal design of the central space and the starkness of the memorial plaza is softened by the maturing ornamental planting that surrounds the space, whilst the movement of traffic and street junctions permit some influence of the surrounding land uses. Whilst this townscape feature and heritage asset is obviously susceptible to a change in character as a result of the Proposed Development, the setting will remain largely intact and the inward focus and strength of the built containment will reduce any influence that the new skyline components may deliver.

11.6.36 The influence and alteration to the townscape setting of Hamilton Square Conservation Area is considered to be of **moderate adverse** significance, given the National sensitivity of the feature; however, this will reduce overtime as a result of receptor adjustment. The effect upon the setting of the northern portion of the Square is likely to be **negligible** given the lack of visibility of the proposed scheme.

#### Birkenhead Park/TCA3: Structured Parkland



11.6.37 The landscape setting and parkland character of Birkenhead Park is unique in relation to the surrounding urban context. The Park is already influenced by the surrounding residential terraces, and much of the amenity recreational spaces and sporting facilities are inward looking and/or enclosed by the structured mature tree planting. The more open areas of the Park, such as the Night Pasture and adjacent sports pitches do have a character that is connected with the urban features of Park Road East and the distant inter-visibility with the Liverpool skyline. The implementation of the Proposed Development will result in the placement of new urban features upon the skyline of the Park; however, the majority of the public spaces will remain unaffected in terms of quality and setting. Much like the inter-visibility of expanding Liverpool skyline, views of the development from the Park will demonstrate the changing character and economic prosperity associated with Birkenhead Docks.

11.6.38 As a townscape receptor of National sensitivity, the Park will experience a Low magnitude of change, given the separation of the receptor, the retained amenity value and the extent of intervening vegetation. The development will result in a **moderate adverse** effect in relation to more sensitive 'outward looking' areas of the Park, which is likely to reduce overtime as a result of receptor adjustment. From the eastern extent of the park (and the non-designed recreational pitches), the effect is considered to be **negligible**.

#### *Townscape Character Areas*

11.6.39 As described in the baseline text, the character of the existing Site (TCA1: Dock System/Wider River Valley) is not considered to be of high value in townscape character terms due to its generally derelict state. The Proposed Development will see the replacement and improvement of the Site condition, improving the connectivity of the dock environment and resulting in a completely new townscape character. The proposed quality and massing of the Proposed Development will bring additional coherency to the dockside, and upgrade the current disparate mix of land use.

11.6.40 The Development scale and height will also improve the legibility of the Site, and its position on the Mersey Estuary. The setting of the adjacent heritage assets (including the Grain Warehouses and the Hydraulic Tower) will be altered, but the massing parameters of Northbank West and Four Bridges has been designed to respect the scale of these features.


11.6.41 Northbank West will step down from a maximum height of 76.3 metres to a minimum height of 34.3 metres, with an appropriate offset and public/vehicular access between the development and the western facade of the Grain Warehouses. In relation to the Hydraulic Tower, the Four Bridges parameters have been designed to respect the current building line and the alignment of the dock wall. The building height has also been limited to ensure that the Tower remains as a prominent skyline feature. Given the current condition of TCA2 and the fragmented character of the docks, the Proposed Development will result in a **minor beneficial** effect.

11.6.42 Adjacent to the eastern limits of the Site, the effects upon TCA1: River Mersey Corridor is also considered to be **moderate beneficial**. The setting and character of the Mersey will be influenced by a more dynamic skyline and iconic landmark buildings that mark the positioning of the Birkenhead Docks in association with the more dominant character of the Liverpool skyline.

11.6.43 The effects of the Development upon TCA4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor and Bidston Moss Community Woodland will be subject to a low magnitude of change, given the distance of the townscape receptor from the Site and the open/recreational nature of the TCA. The influence of the Proposed Development parameters and associated investment in the dock environment will result in a **minor beneficial** effect.

11.6.44 The Development scale, height and the improved legibility of the Site is also likely to have an effect on the views from Bidston Hill (Area of Special Landscape Value), whilst the character and immediate setting will remain largely unchanged. The upgraded quality and prominence of the Site will improve the linkage of the Liverpool and Birkenhead townscape units, and the evident investment and re-positioning of the docks as a distinct townscape feature will result in a **moderate beneficial** effect overall.

11.6.45 For the structured industry to the south (TCA5) and the fragmented industry to the north (TCA6), the general improvement in condition of the adjoining Site will result in a positive influence upon their



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respective settings and perceived character. The design of a suitable parameter mass for both Northbank West and Vittoria Studios/Marina View will ensure that that the dock environment remains distinctive from the adjacent industry, but improved legibility and inter-visibility across access boulevards will result in a **minor beneficial** effect.

11.6.46 The segregation of the remaining Townscape Character Areas from the Site (including TCA7/TCA8/TCA9/TCA10 and the easterly facing Wirral Waterfront), will result in very little change in character and **negligible** effects.

#### Visual Amenity

11.6.47 The following section considers the visual effects of the Development from the thirteen representative viewpoints within the surrounding environment. It should be read in conjunction with **Figure 11.11**, Photomontages 1-13 (see **Figures 11.25 to 11.37**) and **Table 11.5**.

#### Strategic Viewpoints

11.6.48 The designated strategic viewpoints affected by the Proposed Development will be those closest to the Site and those with open panoramic views, chiefly:

- Bidston Hill (Photomontage 6 – **Figure 11.30**);
- Albert Dock (Photomontage 10 – **Figure 11.34**); and,
- Princess Dock (Photomontage 11 – **Figure 11.35**).

11.6.49 The view from Photoviewpoint 6 (Bidston Hill) illustrates the prominence of the Proposed Development upon both the Wirral and Liverpool skyline. The varied maximum heights of each quarter appear well balanced; with the proposed landmark elements associated with Northbank West (87.5 metres in height) and Marina View (120 metres in height) framing the central spiral of SkyCity. The mass of the Proposed Development will restrict views towards the Liverpool World Heritage Site, obscuring ‘The Three Graces’ and the Anglican Cathedral, but views towards the Metropolitan Cathedral will be retained. There will be a Medium magnitude of change because of the distance between the receptor and the Site, and the effect is considered to be **moderate/minor beneficial**. The view will be an indication of the improved prosperity of Birkenhead and the Proposed Development parameters respect the scale of the docks, and re-addressing the visual balance between the Liverpool and Birkenhead conurbations. It must also be remembered that prospect of Liverpool from Bidston Hill is not from a single location and a number of other sequential views are available.

11.6.50 From both Photoviewpoint 10 (Albert Dock) and Photoviewpoint 11 (Princess Dock), the Proposed Development will appear as a prominent architectural ‘statement’ on the Wirral waterfront. The design of the individual quarters will ensure that the scheme encloses the dock environment and ‘steps-up’ to the central SkyCity focal point (which reaches a maximum height of 226 metres). The visual connection to the Grain Warehouses and the Hydraulic Tower is retained. The improved legibility of the Site and the quality of the architecture is considered to result in a **moderate/minor beneficial** effect.

#### Local Viewpoints

11.6.51 Secondary viewpoints are those where the effects of the Proposed Development are lessened due to distance and the actual visibility of the Site. These have been assessed as:

- Egerton Bridge (Photomontage 1 – **Figure 11.25**);
- Duke Street Viewing Area (Photomontage 2 – **Figure 11.26**);
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area (Photomontage 3 – **Figure 11.27** and Photomontage 12 – **Figure 11.36**);
- Birkenhead Park (Photomontage 4 – **Figure 11.28** and Photomontage 13 – **Figure 11.37**);
- Bidston Moss Community Woodland (Photomontage 7 – **Figure 11.31**);
- Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (Photomontage 8 – **Figure 11.32**); and

■ Metropolitan Cathedral (Photomontage 9 – **Figure 11.33**).

11.6.52 The view from Photoviewpoint 1 (Egerton Bridge) will experience a medium magnitude of change, with the appearance of the prominent Proposed Development on the former dock footprint. The parameters of the Four Bridges quarter (with a maximum height of 24 metres) will enable views towards the Grade II listed Hydraulic Tower to be retained. The spiral design of SkyCity ‘steps-up’ appropriately towards the centre of the view, and sits comfortably in association with the consented Northbank East scheme. The enclosing nature of the Vittoria Studios quarter also assists in channelling views from Egerton Bridge across Egerton Square to Vittoria Pool. Again, the improved legibility of the dock environment and the variety of the built skyline is considered to result in a **minor beneficial** effect.

11.6.53 From Photoviewpoint 2 (Duke Street Viewing Area), the scale and proximity of the proposed Northbank West landmark building (which reaches a maximum parameter height of 87.5 metres), limits views east across the Float. Photomontage 2 (See **Figure 11.26**), has not placed the indicative scheme block within the view, as the proximity to the camera would prevent all visibility of the Northbank West boardwalk/wetland proposals. From the proposed boardwalk, the Grain Warehouses will become the focus of the view, framed respectively by the eastern limits of Northbank West (with a parameter height of 70 metres) and the consented Northbank East scheme. There will be a high magnitude of change because of the close distance between the receptor and the proposed Development. The overall effect is considered to be **moderate adverse** given the loss of the viewpoint; however, the creation of a new view corridor towards the framed Grain Warehouses is considered as a **moderate beneficial** effect.

11.6.54 In relation to Photoviewpoints 3 and 12 (Hamilton Square Conservation Area), a large extent of the lower development parameters will be obscured by the existing Georgian terraces that enclose the Square. The increasing height of the northerly SkyCity quarter (from 126 metres to 226 metres) will break the skyline as will the landmark plot associated with Marina View (120 metres); however, the extent of the effect is reduced by the tight clustering of the proposals and the off-set of the scheme from the Square. The overall effect upon the visual amenity of the Square is considered to be **moderate/minor adverse**. There will be some receptor adjustment over time, and the improved visual connection between Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Docks is likely result in a shift to a neutral effect. It should also be noted that the visibility of the Proposed Development becomes increasingly restricted from the centre of the Square (travelling north), as a result of the strong architectural containment. Therefore, a portion of the Square can be considered as experiencing **negligible** effects.

11.6.55 For the assessment of the visual effects from Photoviewpoints 4 and 13 (Birkenhead Park), it is evident that the development parameters of the SkyCity quarter are dramatic, with the creation of additional skyline features; however, the principal of distant development influencing the skyline has already been explored as part of the consented Northbank East scheme. As noted previously, many of the designed spaces within the park are inward looking and/or contained by dense ornamental planting and associated tree belts. From the most sensitive designed spaces within the park where views are available, it is envisaged that the effect of the Proposed Development would be **moderate adverse**. In relation to the more open (non-designed) areas of the Park, such as the open sports pitches to the east, the parameters of the Marina View quarter sit appropriately against the current buildings along Park Road East. The effect is considered **negligible** from such locations, and the visibility of the SkyCity cluster mirrors the memorable characteristics of Central Park (New York City), which was famously modelled on Birkenhead Park.

11.6.56 The view from Photoviewpoint 7 (Bidston Moss Community Woodland) will result in a **moderate/minor beneficial** effect, given the improved prominence and legibility of the dock environment. The containment created by the Northbank West parameters (a maximum of 21 metres to 87.5 metres), still permits views to the central SkyCity spiral and the Liverpool waterfront landmarks are still clearly visible to the north east.

11.6.57 From Photoviewpoint 8 (Liverpool Anglican Cathedral), the predominantly featureless Wirral skyline is now identified by the new Proposed Development, particularly the SkyCity spiral. The Proposed Development will compliment the more isolated Northbank East scheme; the combined scale of which improves the legibility of the Birkenhead Docks and prides a new focal point for the viewer. The effect is

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considered as being **moderate/minor beneficial**, given the distance between the visual receptor and the Site.

11.6.58 Similar to Photoviewpoint 8, Photoviewpoint 9 (Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral) illustrates how the SkyCity and Marina View quarters provides an improved inter-visibility between Liverpool and the Birkenhead Docks, with the skyline features aiding orientation and providing an important visual reference to the improving economic prosperity of the Site. The effect is considered to be **moderate/minor beneficial**.

11.6.59 Analysis of the view from Photoviewpoint 5 determined that the Proposed Development would not be clearly distinguishable. As a result, the effects were considered **negligible**.

#### *Positive Contributions towards Long-term Biodiversity Gain*

11.6.60 The Proposed Development represents long-term biodiversity gain from the existing ecological baseline which comprises both semi-formal and formal habitats within the public realm. Habitats enhancement measures are summarised within the individual Quarters, as appropriate.

11.6.61 The SkyCity wetlands, will offer species-rich wetland habitats to the water's edge with raised boardwalks permitting pedestrian access. The central spine of SkyCity will be parkland which offer transitional habitats to formal open parkland habitats.

11.6.62 Northbank West will also include the provision of wetland habitats most notably on land reclaimed from the existing Site.

11.6.63 The sensitivity of the existing baseline to change is low and the magnitude of change prior to mitigation is assessed as being high. It is considered therefore that there is likely to be a direct, permanent long-term effect on biodiversity of **moderate positive** significance prior to the implementation of site-specific mitigation measures which are detailed below.

## 11.7 MITIGATION MEASURES

11.7.1 Outline mitigation measures have been considered as an iterative part of design evolution and employed throughout all stages of planning the scheme from planning strategies to suggested design treatments. This section describes how the temporary and permanent effects on both townscape character and visual amenity can be mitigated. Mitigation takes the form of avoidance and reduction of adverse effects.

### Site Preparation, Earthworks and Construction Phase

11.7.2 Mitigation measures for the Site Preparation, Earthworks and Construction Phase will include erection of hoardings to limit views of lower level construction activities; minimising construction activity and storage within the vicinity of views from road corridors; carefully selecting and managing haulage routes and limiting the presence of cranes and other higher level activities to necessary works only.

11.7.3 The phasing of the construction and careful placement of tower cranes will also ensure that the disturbance to the local skyline is minimised.

11.7.4 The adoption of a code of construction practices will ensure efficient and effective working practices on Site. Locations of site welfare facilities and materials should be informed by the impact they have visually on the street scene and also the loss of privacy that may occur in adjacent buildings as a result of their positioning.

### Operational Phase

11.7.5 The design of the buildings and layout has included mitigation measures to reduce the effects of the scheme and to provide compensation and enhancement to the area as discussed below.

#### *Avoidance Measures*

11.7.6 During the evolution of the design response, a strategy of impact avoidance was adopted by the design team and integrated into the early stages of design development as follows:



- The building heights and scale are designed to be complementary to adjacent structures and the dock environment; and
- The building design utilises the existing dock layout, with the inclusion of necessary off-set from the adjacent Grain Warehouses and the Hydraulic Tower.

#### *Reduction Measures*

11.7.7 Where townscape and visual effects could not be avoided, an outline mitigation strategy has been developed to reduce the significance of the townscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development and enhance the existing townscape features within the area. This strategy will be incorporated into the various stages of the design process and will be refined at the detailed design state. These measures are likely to include:

- Sensitive design of the facades to reduce the impact of the new buildings upon the historic environment, but the incorporation of façade colour and texture to distinguish it from other dockside buildings;
- Careful design of features being introduced including appropriate materials for street furniture that relate to the built context of the area, and tree planting to enhance outdoor spaces as appropriate; and
- Careful design of buildings to create a dramatic development profile and a varied skyline, which should help to reduce the perceived mass of the building blocks.

#### *Compensation and Enhancement*

11.7.8 Where effects can be neither avoided nor reduced, compensation and enhancement measures are proposed. The following outline proposals will contribute to the townscape and visual enhancement of the area:

- New pedestrianised zones and landscaped boulevards, providing active development frontages and new areas of public realm will help to increase the vitality of the area and access to the water's edge;
- The Proposed Development is designed to create distinctive landmarks that aid local orientation and are seen as a benefit to the local townscape; and
- Implementation of the scheme can contribute to a wider economic regeneration of the local townscape.


#### *Ecological Mitigation*

11.7.9 Subject to detailed design, the Proposed Development offers significant potential to contribute towards long-term biodiversity gain through the creation of more structurally complex habitats which exploit the existing environment and permit the development of locally important habitats.

11.7.10 In addition to the possibility of freshwater wetland mosaics, the scheme also offers opportunities to include brackish (saline) habitats which could be exploited to maximise biodiversity gain. Most notably the provision of inter-tidal habitats using salt-tolerant species should also be considered. This is most appropriate within areas of reclaimed land, where shallow marginal habitats could be developed into species-rich saltmarsh or shingle bed habitats. The provision of these habitats would present a gradual transition from freshwater to brackish habitats which would, in turn, offer greater opportunities for widespread and commonly occurring species as well as creating more naturalised habitats in the long-term.

11.7.11 It is anticipated that the Proposed Development will represent a significant increase in pedestrian and vehicle movement around the Float. As these habitats offer opportunities for wildfowl the provision of buffer habitats, which provide areas of limited disturbance should also be considered. These areas would create tranquil and sheltered areas for wildfowl including grebe, cormorants and ducks which currently forage within East Float.

11.7.12 Where practicable the provision of green or brown biodiversity roofs would further enhance the long-term ecological baseline of the Site, of particular value to invertebrates and ground nesting birds.



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11.7.13 Finally the Proposed Development should consider the adoption of a site-wide Ecological Management Plan which will ensure that the biodiversity potential of semi-natural habitats within the Site is maximised.

## 11.8 RESIDUAL EFFECTS

11.8.1 This assessment of the severity of the effects will depend on the degree to which the proposal and mitigation measures:

- Complement, respect and fit into the existing scale and pattern of the townscape context;
- Enable enhancement and restoration of the Birkenhead Docks character and the visual amenity of the area; and
- Affect medium and short local views in addition to the visual context of receptors.

11.8.2 The effects have been assessed under the assumption that the outline mitigation measures described above are implemented.

### Site Preparation, Earthworks and Construction

11.8.3 Predicted **adverse** effects on the surrounding TCA's and visual receptors are set out below and contained in **Tables 11.2** and **11.3**.

### Townscape Character

11.8.4 The relevant **adverse** temporary effects can be summarised as:

- TCA 1: River Mersey Corridor – **Moderate/Minor adverse**;
- TCA 2: Dock System/Wider River Valley – **Minor adverse**;
- TCA 3: Structured Parkland – **Minor adverse**;
- TCA 4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor – **Minor adverse**;
- Liverpool World Heritage Site – **Minor adverse**;
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area – **Minor adverse**;
- Grain Warehouses – **Moderate/Minor adverse**;
- Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value – **Minor adverse**; and,
- Wirral Skyline and Birkenhead Docks – **Minor adverse**.

### Visual Amenity

11.8.5 The relevant **adverse** temporary effects can be summarised as:

- Bidston Hill – **Minor adverse**;
- Albert Dock – **Moderate/Minor adverse**;
- Princess Dock – **Moderate/Minor adverse**;
- Egerton Bridge – **Minor adverse**;
- Duke Street Viewing Area – **Minor adverse**;
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area – **Minor adverse**;
- Birkenhead Park – **Minor adverse**;
- Bidston Moss Community Woodland – **Minor adverse**;
- Liverpool Anglican Cathedral – **Moderate/Minor adverse**; and
- Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral – **Moderate/Minor adverse**.



## Operational Phase

11.8.6 Predicted **adverse** effects on the surrounding TCA's and visual receptors are set out below and contained in **Tables 11.4** and **11.5**.

### Townscape Character

11.8.7 The relevant **Adverse** operational effects can be summarised as :

- TCA3: Structured Parkland – **Neutral to Minor adverse**; and
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area – **Neutral to Minor adverse**.

### Visual Amenity

11.8.8 The relevant **adverse** operational effects can be summarised as follows:

- Duke Street Viewing Area – **Minor adverse**;
- Hamilton Square Conservation Area – **Minor adverse (Neutral from certain locations)**; and
- Birkenhead Park – **Moderate/Minor adverse (Neutral from certain locations)**.

### *Positive Contributions towards Long-term Biodiversity Gain*

11.8.9 It is considered that the Proposed Development has the potential to offer long-term major positive habitat enhancements including the provision of new species-rich and structurally diverse habitats and green infrastructure that affords greater opportunities in terms of habitat diversity and widespread and protected species assemblages.

11.8.10 The sensitivity of the existing baseline to change is low and the magnitude of change prior to mitigation is assessed as being high. It is considered therefore that the scheme, is likely to result in a direct, permanent long-term effect on biodiversity of up to **major positive** significance following the implementation of site-specific mitigation measures.

### Monitoring and Follow Up

11.8.11 A selection of additional views will be considered and assessed in a supplementary document as follow-up to this ES Chapter. The views will be agreed with English Heritage in response to a meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009.


### Cumulative Impacts

11.8.12 As part of the preparation of this assessment and in consideration of the likely effects, the consented Northbank East scheme layout and massing has been acknowledged and integrated into the specific impact descriptions for the purposes of considering relevant cumulative effects. The consented Northbank East scheme has also been included within the illustrative photomontages to aid the assessment process.

## 11.9 SUMMARY

11.9.1 The townscape and visual assessment has involved a study of the existing townscape/landscape character, identification of viewpoints in relation to the Proposed Development. The sensitivity of each character/visual receptor has then been assessed to determine the likely effects of the Proposed Development.

11.9.2 The existing character of the Site is influenced by the largely derelict and fragmented nature of the dock environment, with some important heritage features remaining in the form of the Grade II Listed Grain Warehouses and the Hydraulic Tower. The most important views towards the Site (Strategic Views) have been categorised by the North West Regional Assembly and Entec, are those from the Liverpool Waterfront/World Heritage Site (Albert Dock and Princess Dock) and Bidston Hill (Area of Special Landscape Value). Other important local views have been assessed, including those from Hamilton Square (Conservation Area containing the greatest cluster of Grade I listed buildings outside Oxford) and Birkenhead Park (Grade I listed on the English Heritage Register, designed by Sir Joseph Paxton).



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11.9.3 The assessment of the likely effects has predicted that the temporary construction activities will have a moderate-minor adverse effect upon the visual amenity and townscape character of the area; however, visual disturbance will be minimised through the phased placement of tower cranes. For the completed development, the key effects will relate to the placement of a tall building cluster on the former East Float wharf, which will result in changes to the skyline from a number of locations. Those receptors identified as experiencing minor adverse effects, include Hamilton Square, Birkenhead Park and the Duke Street Viewing Area. Whilst adverse effects are predicted, these effects will be related to specific locations, with many parts of both Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Park experiencing little or no change in character or visual amenity. The Proposed Development will also create new viewpoint opportunities and assist in framing the retained heritage features.

11.9.4 The introduction of a varied and iconic skyline will assist in creating a new arrival gateway on the River Mersey. This strong architectural statement will also act as an indication of the improving prosperity of the Birkenhead and the former scale of the Docks.

11.9.5 The principles of development have been assessed at this outline stage, but as detailed applications are prepared and the scheme proposals move forward, additional mitigation will be considered. Mitigation will include sensitive facade treatment and the use of appropriate materials to reflect the dock environment. The final positions of buildings and new public open spaces will also ensure dramatic skyline profiles are created and access to the water's edge is improved.

11.9.6 Habitats within the Site were assessed as being widespread and commonly occurring supporting species and habitats mosaics consistent with unmanaged brownfield sites. Habitats on-site were considered to offer limited opportunities for protected species in recognition of the limited connectivity.

11.9.7 The proposed landscape strategy represents a long-term positive contribution to biodiversity of moderate significance. The proposed scheme is compliant with PPS9, representing long-term enhancements to biodiversity including the possible provision of species-rich and structurally diverse green infrastructure and green roofs, which will all contribute to long-term biodiversity gain. In addition, the Proposed Development commits to protecting, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and designated sites in accordance with the relevant policies within the RSS and UDP.

## 11.10 REFERENCES

Reference 1: The Countryside Agency - *Character Area 59 – Wirral*.

Reference 2: DEGW (for the Greater London Authority)(August 2002) - *London's Skyline, views and High Buildings*.

Reference 3: North West Regional Assembly and Entec UK Ltd (2003) - *Strategic Views along the River Mersey*.



11.11 SUPPORTING TABLES

**TABLE 11.0: SIGNIFICANCE MATRIX FOR EFFECTS ON TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AND FEATURES**

Townscape impacts are changes in the fabric, character and quality of the townscape as a result of development. Townscape Impact Assessment is therefore concerned with:

- Direct impact on specific townscape elements
- Subtle effects on townscape character and distinctiveness
- Impact on acknowledged special interests or values

(For guidance only, professional interpretation of individual impacts required)

Sensitivity of Townscape Character and Townscape Features lies along a continuum depending on the items importance - from international to low local importance - with overlap between each defined category. The sensitivity of these depends upon the level of existing designation and on the inherent quality and condition of the townscape character and individual features

Nature of Impact	International	National	County	High (Local)	Moderate (Local)	Low (Local)
	Internationally designated feature or townscape character, susceptible to relatively small changes	Nationally designated feature or townscape of particularly distinctive character, susceptible to relatively small changes	County designated feature or townscape reasonably tolerant of changes	A townscape or feature designated as being of District / Borough value with characteristics reasonably tolerant of changes	Locally valued components or townscape reasonably tolerant of changes	A non designated townscape character or feature, the nature of which is potentially tolerant of substantial change
Very High <i>A complete contrast with the surrounding townscape pattern of the townscape</i>	Very High	Very High High	High	High Moderate	Moderate	Moderate Minor
High <i>A significant deterioration (or improvement) in townscape character or loss of features over an extensive area</i>	Very High High	High	High Moderate	Moderate	Moderate Minor	Minor
Medium <i>A noticeable deterioration (or improvement) in townscape character and loss of key elements</i>	High	High Moderate	Moderate	Moderate Minor	Minor	Minor Negligible
Low <i>A barely perceptible deterioration (or improvement) to elements or character</i>	High Moderate	Moderate	Moderate Minor	Minor	Minor Negligible	Negligible
No change <i>No observable change to any townscape elements or character</i>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Nature Of Impact (After construction and maturation of mitigatory measures).

**Adverse**

- Substantial (Very High - High) : Total permanent loss or major alteration to key elements/features of the townscape. Introduction of elements totally uncharacteristic of the surrounding townscapes.
- Moderate : Substantial permanent loss or alteration to one or more key elements/townscape. Introduction of elements that are perceived but may not be substantially uncharacteristic with the surrounding townscape.
- Minor (Minor or Negligible) : Minor permanent/temporary loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features of the townscape. Introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic with the surrounding townscape and may provide positive enhancement.

Neutral : Would cause a change in the townscape but this does not harm or bring significant benefits to the townscape.

**Beneficial**

- Substantial (Very High - High) : Fit very well with scale, form and pattern. Potential through measures to restore townscape characteristics, further policy objectives.
- Moderate : Fit well with scale, form and pattern. Incorporate measures to blend with surroundings. Maintain or enhance existing character.
- Minor (Minor or Negligible) : Complement scale, form and pattern of the townscape. Maintain existing character.

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**TABLE 11.1: SIGNIFICANCE MATRIX FOR VISUAL EFFECTS**

*(For guidance only; professional interpretation of individual impacts required)*

*Sensitivity of Viewers ( receptors ) lies along a continuum from very high to negligible, depending on where the view is from ( the status of that place ) and the activities of the viewer at that location*

	<b>Very High</b> <i>Including viewers within internationally designated landscapes (National Parks, AONBs, the setting of a scheduled Ancient Monument or Grade I listed buildings) and views from residential properties.</i>	<b>High</b> <i>Including viewers using pedestrian streets, regional designated landscapes or the setting of Grade II* listed buildings. Tourists.</i>	<b>Medium</b> <i>Including views from people engaged in outdoor sports or recreation, including people within cars and those driving on local roads.</i>	<b>Low</b> <i>People using major transport corridors.</i>	<b>Negligible</b> <i>Including people working inside for business and industry.</i>
<b>Very High</b> <i>Proposals are highly visible obscuring (or creating) valued views into and across the area.</i>	Very High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
<b>High</b> <i>Changes are evident and would significantly impact (or improve) views of the area.</i>	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Minor
<b>Moderate</b> <i>A noticeable deterioration (or improvement) in the view.</i>	High	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Minor
<b>Low</b> <i>A barely perceptible change in view.</i>	Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
<b>Negligible</b> <i>No discernible change in the view.</i>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

*Magnitude of Effect lies along a continuum from very high to no change, with an one step between each defined category. This will depend on the amount of a view affected, the number of viewers affected and the duration of the effect.*

Nature of the Impact (After construction and maturation of the mitigatory measures).

**Adverse**

- **Substantial (Very High - High)** : The proposals are highly visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views both into and across the area.
- **Moderate** : The proposals are visually intrusive and will adversely impact on views of the townscape.
- **Minor (Minor or Negligible)** : The visual intrusion which can be mitigated for without an impact on the character of views of the townscape.

**Neutral** : Would cause a change in the views but this does not harm or bring significant benefits to the views.

**Beneficial**

- **Substantial (Very High - High)** : A significant improvement in the view. 'Sense of place' restored.
- **Moderate** : A noticeable improvement in the view.
- **Minor (Minor or Negligible)** : Where the scheme would result in a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view.

**Table 11.2: Summary of effects on townscape character and features during the construction phase of the Development. All effects identified are likely to occur until construction activities have ceased.**

Townscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
<b>TCA 1: River Mersey Corridor</b>	County	Medium (adjacent to the Site)	Moderate adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice.	Moderate/Minor adverse
<b>TCA 2: Dock System/Wider River Valley</b>	Low (local)	High (adjacent to the Site)	Minor adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice.	Minor adverse
<b>TCA 3: Structured Parkland/Birkenhead Park</b>	National	Low	Moderate adverse	Phasing of construction and reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
<b>TCA 4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor</b>	High (local)	Medium	Moderate/Minor adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
<b>TCA 5: Structured Industry</b>	Low (local)	Medium	Negligible	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and reduced number of static cranes.	Neutral
<b>TCA 6: Fragmented Industry</b>	Low (local)	Medium	Negligible	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice.	Neutral
<b>TCA 7: Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood</b>	Moderate (local)	No Change	Negligible	No specific measures	Neutral
<b>TCA 8: Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs</b>	Moderate (local)	No Change	Negligible	No specific measures	Neutral



Townscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
<b>TCA 9: Northern Neighbourhoods</b>	Low (local)	Low	Negligible adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice.	Neutral
<b>TCA 10: Southern Neighbourhoods</b>	Low (local)	No Change	Negligible	No specific measures.	Neutral
<b>Liverpool World Heritage Site</b>	International	Low	Moderate adverse	Phasing of construction and reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
<b>Hamilton Square Conservation Area</b>	National	Low	Moderate adverse	Phasing of construction and reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
<b>Flaybrick Hill Cemetery Conservation Area</b>	National	No Change	Negligible	No specific measures.	Neutral
<b>Bidston Village Conservation Area</b>	National	No Change	Negligible	No specific measures.	Neutral
<b>Grain Warehouses (East Float) Listed Buildings</b>	National	Medium	High/Moderate adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice.	Moderate/Minor adverse
<b>Wirral Waterfront</b>	County	Low	Minor adverse	Phasing of construction and reduced number of static cranes.	Neutral
<b>Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value</b>	County	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse	Phasing of construction and reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
<b>Bidston Moss Local Nature Reserve</b>	High (local)	Low	Minor adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice.	Neutral
<b>Wirral Skyline and Birkenhead Docks</b>	Low (local)	Very High	Moderate/Minor adverse	Phasing of construction and reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse

**Table 11.3 Summary of effects on visual amenity during the construction phase of the Development. All effects identified are likely to occur until construction activities have ceased.**

View Number	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
1	Medium	Medium	Moderate/Minor adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
2	Medium	Medium	Moderate/Minor adverse	Hoarding around Site boundary, construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
3	Medium/High	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
4	Medium/High	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
5	Low/Medium	No Change	Negligible	No specific measures	Neutral
6	Medium	Medium	Moderate/Minor adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
7	Medium	Medium	Moderate/Minor adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
8	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Moderate/Minor adverse
9	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Moderate/Minor adverse



View Number	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
10	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Moderate/Minor adverse
11	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Moderate/Minor adverse
12	Medium/High	Low	Moderate / Minor adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse
13	Medium/High	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse	Construction phasing and implementation of Code of Construction Practice. Reduced number of static cranes.	Minor adverse

**Table 11.4: Summary of effects on townscape character and features during the operational phase of the Development. All effects identified are likely to be permanent throughout the operation life of the Development.**

Townscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
<b>TCA 1: River Mersey Corridor</b>	County	Medium (adjacent to the Site)	Moderate beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design and improvement of the public realm.	Moderate beneficial
<b>TCA 2: Dock System/Wider River Valley</b>	Low (local)	Medium (adjacent to the Site)	Minor beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design and improvement of the public realm.	Minor beneficial
<b>TCA 3: Structured Parkland/Birkenhead Park</b>	National	Low	Negligible - Moderate adverse	Variation of building heights/façade treatment at detail design stage.	Neutral - Minor adverse with receptor adjustment over time
<b>TCA 4: Landscape Edge/M53 Corridor</b>	High (local)	Low	Minor beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design.	Minor beneficial
<b>TCA 5: Structured Industry</b>	Low (local)	Medium	Minor beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design and improvement of the public realm.	Minor beneficial
<b>TCA 6: Fragmented Industry</b>	Low (local)	Medium	Minor beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design and improvement of the public realm.	Minor beneficial
<b>TCA 7: Laird Town Plan Residential Neighbourhood</b>	Moderate (local)	Low	Minor beneficial/negligible	None required	Neutral
<b>TCA 8: Birkenhead Town and Waterside Environs</b>	Moderate (local)	Low	Negligible	None required	Neutral



Townscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
<b>TCA 9: Northern Neighbourhoods</b>	Low (local)	Low	Negligible	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design and improvement of the public realm.	Negligible
<b>TCA 10: Southern Neighbourhoods</b>	Low (local)	No Change	Negligible	None required.	Neutral
<b>Liverpool World Heritage Site</b>	International	Low	Moderate beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade treatment at detail design stage/variation of building heights.	Moderate beneficial
<b>Hamilton Square Conservation Area</b>	National	Low	Negligible – Moderate adverse	Variation to building heights/façade treatment at detail design stage.	Neutral - Minor adverse with receptor adjustment over time
<b>Flaybrick Hill Cemetery Conservation Area</b>	National	No Change	Negligible	None required.	Neutral
<b>Bidston Village Conservation Area</b>	National	No Change	Negligible	None required.	Neutral
<b>Grain Warehouses (East Float) Listed Buildings</b>	National	Medium	Moderate beneficial	Consistency of masterplan with existing scale of the dock/façade design and improvement of the public realm.	Moderate beneficial
<b>Wirral Waterfront</b>	County	No Change	Negligible	None required.	Neutral
<b>Bidston Hill Area of Special Landscape Value</b>	County	Low	Moderate beneficial	Variation to building heights/façade treatment at detail design stage.	Moderate beneficial
<b>Bidston Moss Local Nature Reserve</b>	High (local)	Low	Minor beneficial	Variation to building heights/façade treatment at detail design stage.	Minor beneficial



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Townscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures	Residual Impact
<b>Wirral skyline and Birkenhead Docks</b>	Low (local)	Very High	Moderate/Minor beneficial	Variation to building heights/Sensitive façade design and materials selection.	Moderate/Minor beneficial

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**Table 11.5: Summary of effects on 13 representative viewpoints within the surrounding environment during the operation of the Development. All effects identified are likely to be permanent throughout the operation life of the Development.**

View Number	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Impact Significance	Mitigation/Enhancement Measures	Residual Impact
1	Medium	Medium	Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection/improved public realm. Views of the Hydraulic Tower retained.	Minor beneficial
2	Medium	High	Moderate adverse (Moderate beneficial for new views created)	New views permitted from the proposed boardwalk/improved public realm.	Minor adverse with receptor adjustment over time. (Moderate beneficial for new views created)
3	Medium/High	Low	Moderate / Minor adverse (Negligible for central-northern extent of the Square)	Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Minor adverse/Negligible as a result of receptor adjustment over time. (Neutral for central-northern extent of the Square)
4	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Negligible for some areas)	Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor adverse with receptor adjustment over time. (Neutral for some areas)
5	Low/Medium	Low	Negligible	None required.	Neutral
6	Medium	Medium	Moderate/Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor beneficial



7	Medium	Medium	Moderate/Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor beneficial
8	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate/Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor beneficial
9	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate/Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor beneficial
10	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate/Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor beneficial
11	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate/Minor beneficial	The overall scale of the Development has been derived from the aspiration to compliment the surrounding built form and Dock context.  Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor beneficial
12	Medium/High	Low	Moderate/Minor adverse (Negligible for central-northern extent of the Square)	Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Minor adverse/Negligible as a result of receptor adjustment over time. (Neutral for central-northern extent of the Square)



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13	Medium/High	Medium	Moderate adverse (Negligible for some areas)	Sensitive façade design and materials selection at detailed design stage.	Moderate/Minor adverse with receptor adjustment over time. (Neutral for some areas)
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