Wirral Waters

An update for Cabinet Members and Councillors at Wirral Council

July 2018

We would like to take this opportunity to provide a summary on progress at Wirral Waters and our plans for housing delivery, to assist and inform your consideration of local planning issues.

If you would prefer a more detailed personal briefing at any time, please feel free to contact me directly.

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Housing at Wirral Waters

Peel Land and Property is acutely aware that meeting the housing needs of current and future populations is a critical issue facing communities nationally, regionally and locally.

Locally we recognise the role Wirral Waters can play in the delivery of any local housing strategy and the importance of brownfield developments in reducing the pressure to build new homes on Wirral’s green spaces.

Peel Land and Property and our partners remain absolutely committed to house building on the Wirral Waters site.

A unique project

With both Enterprise Zone status and Housing Zone status Wirral Waters is unique in the UK. No other project has both designations. This is a recognition by Government of the assistance and support the area needs.

In light of the UK’s housing shortage, Housing Zones themselves are designed to accelerate housing delivery and are governed by Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. With this support and with additional, and crucial, support from Wirral Council - Peel and its partners have been developing the tools to enable delivery of residential units consented at Wirral Waters. These tools are needed to address the very real issue of market failure.

A mixture of high density, sustainable residential homes for a wide variety of incomes, people and family types will of course help to relieve pressure on Wirral’s green belt.

Peel has a long, successful and ongoing track record of delivering transformational regeneration projects working in partnership with Local Authorities across the UK. These include major scale regeneration projects working in partnership with Local Authorities across the UK. These include major scale regeneration projects such as Glasgow Harbour, Chatham Waters, Gloucester Quays and of course Salford Quays. From this experience we know that the ultimate target of 13,000 units can only be delivered with true and honest collaboration and genuine partnership working with the public sector. This involves a ‘whole place’ approach to regeneration including the planning and delivery in the wider underpinning infrastructure.

Creating the right environment

During the past five years, Peel has been undertaking a huge amount of activity behind the scenes. We have carried out millions of pounds worth of remediation work covering circa 60 acres of brownfield land, demolishing over 20 acres of derelict buildings, installing new energy infrastructure and drainage and starting the process of improving the environment with over 1,500 newly-planted trees.

Due to Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone designation, the Wirral Waters Investment Fund has now been set up. This is a significant joint initiative between the Council and Peel. It is a cyclical fund worth £48m designed to assist in addressing those hurdles to delivery and to underpin projects that create new jobs and rates income back to the Council.
Three housing projects moving forward – creating market confidence

March 2018 saw the announcement of three major housing projects set to bring over 1,000 new homes to Wirral Waters.

The three schemes will mark the first housing projects at Wirral Waters. However, they represent only the start.

They include the first ever joint venture between Peel and Urban Splash, two of the North West’s leading developers. The £60m development will comprise of 347 modular homes in the Northbank neighbourhood of Wirral Waters.

In addition, Peel announced a partnership with award-winning care provider, Belong Villages. This collaboration will bring a state of the art dementia care village to Wirral Waters, comprising 34 one and two-bedroom apartments, which will be available to rent or buy; plus, six dementia households where 24-hour support is provided for up to 12 residents in each. This is equivalent to 109 new homes. The project will include a range of amenities, including bistro, gym and hair salon and will employ around 150 people. The formal planning application was submitted to Wirral Council in April.

Finally, Wirral Waters One (the Legacy Foundation project), a £90m scheme for 500 apartments, was rubber-stamped by the Cabinet of Wirral Council in February.

We are currently in the final legal steps with Wirral Council in ensuring this catalytic project moves forward. This project also includes a £100,000 investment for community activities by The Legacy Foundation.

Together we must get this vital project committed as it will create much needed market confidence and pave the way for a flow of other housing projects in the medium term. Peel submitted a detailed planning application for the project in May.

These projects themselves are underpinned by the Housing Infrastructure Funding – jointly submitted by Peel and the Council.

These first three projects are essential in creating much needed market confidence in an area that has seen decades of underinvestment and continued market failure.
The long-term projections; collaboration and the underpinning infrastructure

Over and above general market conditions, the medium-term delivery trajectory of housing at Wirral Waters will depend on several factors including:

- **Investment in transport infrastructure**: the more investment in appropriate and scalable public transport, cycling provision and safer pedestrian connectivity, the less space needs to be given over to car parking. Thus, with higher density; more homes can be created reducing the impact on the greenbelt.

- **Environmental improvements and place making**: investment in the surrounding environment, including green spaces, street trees, public realm and better landscaping, will create a more compelling and desirable place to live and invest.

- **Energy and technology infrastructure**: creating future places is increasingly dependent on the availability of sufficient sustainable energy and high-speed connectivity.

As with most developments on brownfield sites, there is a direct link between the pace and scale of housing delivery and a coordinated, ‘whole place’ approach to the planning and delivery of the infrastructure that underpins growth. This includes: energy infrastructure, transport, public realm, green infrastructure, as well as skills. Collaboration between the private sector, local authorities and central government is therefore critical to enable this to happen.

Models of delivery trajectory have been illustrated in the various Wirral Waters planning applications including the East Float application and also more recently the Legacy application.

We have outlined to the public sector three potential scenarios of house building delivery rates at Wirral Waters to 2035 i.e. in line with Wirral’s proposed Local Plan period. NB: This is NOT the duration of Wirral Waters which covers a longer period.

- The first ‘low’ projection involves the minimum investment we consider achievable by the private sector - delivering on its own. This results in a forecast of around 2,900 homes being built across the site during the Plan period.
- The second ‘medium’ projection involves some additional investment and change in the wider area and results in a forecast of around 4,650 homes being built across the site during the Plan period.
- The third ‘higher’ projection involves optimal investment in the area and a full commitment from all stakeholders and a forecast of around 6,450 completed new homes by 2035.

These projection rates exceed the 1,100 homes currently assumed by Wirral Council to be deliverable at Wirral Waters to 2035.

Home building at Wirral Waters will of course continue to accelerate beyond the Local Plan period, with the ultimate target of over 13,000 homes achievable at Wirral Waters.
A lot more than Housing

Wirral Waters is the biggest regeneration project in the UK. It is a mixed use, high density, and highly sustainable development. It is ‘place led’ but ‘jobs driven’.

Delivery has started and over the next three years, more than £200m is expected to be invested across a range of mixed use projects clustered at Northbank, Four Bridges and MEA Park.

This pipeline of activity follows the years of intense activity behind the scenes as listed above. These projects will create jobs, training and skills opportunities as well as the housing detailed over the coming years.

Award winning Wirral Met College

September 2015 saw the completion of the award-winning Wirral Met College Construction faculty, which was developed by Peel and was the first new building in Wirral Waters. The college campus is circa 38,000 sq ft with construction courses aligned to Wirral Waters and focused on the Built Environment. The design of the building secured a RIBA Regional Award, a RIBA National Award, a Civic Trust National Award and a Wirral Society Award for Excellence.

Tower Wharf and The Contact Company

In November 2015, Tower Wharf, a 48,000 sq ft office project developed for the Contact Company and built by Longmeadow Estates, was completed. This project is located in the Enterprise Zone and is significant as it helped in the creation of the Wirral Waters Investment Fund.

2018 / 2019

2018 / 2019 is set to be a busy year with a raft of projects moving forward and reaching significant milestones. While detailed planning consent and funding arrangements for some individual schemes still need finalising, Peel are confident about collaborative delivery of this next phase of the development.

The scheme is supported by a robust funding model including different funding strands for example STEP, ESIF, SIF and SUD as well as the transformational Wirral Waters Investment Fund.

If these pots of funding are not secured for Birkenhead, they will go elsewhere – and this area needs this level of investment. They also lever in more private sector financial support and help create delivery momentum.
Improving the environment

Among the next improvements Wirral residents will see is an improved environment on Tower Road and Dock Road through new public realm work. Funding totalling over £3m is now supporting improvement works along Tower Road aimed at improving the environment, prioritising cycling and pedestrian provision and better transport infrastructure. Some associated works have already taken place in front of the new College and along Dock Road.

This will change the complexion of the area where activity is taking place within Wirral Waters, making it more user-friendly for cyclists and pedestrians, raising the quality bar and providing similar environmental benefits to other major European cities thus helping to ensure that Wirral Waters becomes a sustainable place to live and work.

No 1 Tower Rd South – Grade ‘A’ office space

In March 2018 Peel formally submitted a planning application to Wirral Council for a new office scheme, No1 Tower Rd South, which will provide 30,000 sq ft of Grade ‘A’ quality office space aimed at the small and medium sized businesses. The ground floor will include an incubator facility and co-working space for Birkenhead’s entrepreneurial sector, while the two upper floors will feature high quality office accommodation in six suites overlooking Liverpool’s waterfront. A SIF bid is running and work with Wirral Council in facilitating delivery is ongoing.

An international centre of excellence

A £20m Maritime Knowledge Hub is set to open in 2020 in a collaboration between Mersey Maritime, Liverpool John Moores University, Wirral Council and Peel Land and Property. The Hub will ultimately include office space for maritime organisations, serviced business start-up space and support, an offshore survival centre and marine simulation centre, and teaching space.

Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram is backing offshore tidal and other energy infrastructure on an ambitious scale. Having visited the site in February 2018, he sees the Maritime Knowledge Hub part of this vision. “Clusters of vocational training, academic excellence and industry are crucial to developing our key growth sectors. This international centre of excellence at Wirral Waters will help drive the development of the city region’s marine and maritime sector and will support our ambition to be self-reliant on renewable energy by 2050. It is further evidence that we are aligning our economic, industrial and skills strategies in a way to deliver a step-change in growth and prosperity,” he said.

In May 2018 award-winning firms, Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects in Denmark, and Ellis Williams Architects in Liverpool, were chosen to design the Maritime Knowledge Hub.
Amenity and Arts Hub

In June 2018 a formal planning application was submitted to Wirral Council to build a waterside amenity café, restaurant, studio and arts space to support new and existing communities at Wirral Waters. The £3.5m development will provide local amenities and will comprise a dockside restaurant and bistro, small independent retail units, artists’ studios, a gallery, managed workspace and even a large public events space.

More to come...

Over the course of the coming months further progress will be announced including MEA Park, a waterside manufacturing, logistics and distribution campus that will support the maritime, energy and automotive sectors, a Skills Factory and a Modular Development Centre – all designed to attract businesses in key industrial sectors and create jobs in the area.