

REPORT TO: Executive Board  
DATE: 19 June 2008  
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Environment  
SUBJECT: The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe the content and purpose of the Strategy and to seek the Board's approval of it to support and evaluate the Mersey Gateway Scheme.

1.2 The report will cover the following:

1. The reason for commissioning the Strategy
2. How the strategy will be used
3. The areas covered by Strategy
4. Outputs and outcomes
5. How the Strategy evolved
6. A summary of the Strategy's proposals
7. Using the Strategy in Council policy documents

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION, it is recommended that

1. **the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy is agreed as a document that demonstrates the potential regeneration opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway Scheme;**
2. **the Strategy is used to support the case for the Mersey Gateway Scheme;**
3. **the Strategy is used by the Council as Local Planning Authority to judge the potential regeneration benefits that may arise from the Mersey Gateway Scheme in consideration of planning applications made to it and in response to consultation from the Department of Transport; and**
4. **authority is given to the Strategic Director Environment, with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal, to make minor amendments as are necessary before publication.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 3.1 Reasons for Commissioning the Strategy

3.2 The adopted vision for the Mersey Gateway Scheme is that it will be 'more than just a bridge' as it will act as a catalyst for urban regeneration and economic development that may not have occurred without it.

- 3.3 The land use changes that will occur as a result of the construction of the new bridge and its approach roads together with the de-linking of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge from the strategic road network offer regeneration opportunities.
- 3.4 Therefore in early 2007 consultants were invited to bid for the task of preparing a regeneration strategy that would create a vision for change in areas affected directly and indirectly by the MG Scheme. This strategy would then inform planning documents and regeneration initiatives prepared by the Council and inspire private companies to invest in these areas.
- 3.5 However, the Regeneration Strategy would have to draw a distinction between regeneration and economic outputs directly associated with the Mersey Gateway Scheme itself and the regeneration benefits attributable to the land use changes that come about as a result of the building of the Scheme.
- 3.6 As a result GVA Grimley, together with their sub-contractor consultants EDAW and Watermans were appointed to prepare the Strategy.
- 3.7 How the Strategy will be Used
- 3.8 The economic impact of the Mersey Gateway Scheme itself (without taking into account the anticipated land use changes) has been the subject of a separate study by consultants Amion (Amion 2008 – Wider Economic Impact Report) The Amion report measures the accessibility benefits of the Mersey Gateway in terms of jobs created, against the construction phase and operational phase of the project across a much wider sub regional area. This is based on evidence that improvements to the strategic highway network will enhance the flow of labour and materials that will enable the growth of important sectors of the economy.
- 3.9 The Regeneration Strategy is a separate study that looks instead at the opportunities for regeneration that will be created as a result of the construction and opening of the new bridge and the de-linking of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge from the strategic highway network. These regeneration opportunities can be divided as follows:
- Direct land use changes, land and businesses lost and gained
  - Direct regeneration opportunities arising from land use and access changes
  - Indirect regeneration opportunities due to changed traffic flows through the Borough and proximity to a new strategic highway link across the sub region
- 3.10 It is clear therefore that the Regeneration Strategy does not deal with the overall economic, and regeneration impact of the MG Scheme and this affects how it will be used as follows:

- To support the case for the MG Scheme by describing and measuring land use changes and regeneration opportunities arising directly and indirectly from the construction and operation of the Scheme.
- To evaluate the benefits that the Scheme will bring to the prosperity and amenity of the localities within the Borough and as a whole

3.11 This information can then be used by the Council, acting as a local planning authority to help judge the various Planning Applications and Transport and Work Act Applications that will together constitute the planning permissions for the MG Scheme.

3.12 Subsequently the Strategy will also be used as evidence at a future public inquiry, likely to be held by the Secretary of State before planning permissions and other powers are granted.

### 3.13 The Areas Covered by the Regeneration Strategy

3.14 The Regeneration Strategy is confined to areas of the Borough that were considered to be the subject of greatest direct and indirect land use effects as a result of the Mersey Gateway and the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

3.15 Five distinct 'impact areas' have been defined that form the basis of the Strategy. The first three were selected on the basis of direct relationships with the MG Scheme.

- Southern Widnes, including West Bank
- Runcorn Old Town
- Astmoor Industrial Estate

3.16 The last two were selected due to indirect impact of the Scheme due to redefined patterns of movement and accessibilities.

- Halton Lea Shopping Centre
- Rocksavage including Ashville Industrial Estate

### 3.17 Outputs and Outcomes

3.18 The Regeneration Strategy states that the Mersey Gateway provides a real catalyst for change in helping to shape a new future for many of the places influenced by it. This it states will deliver a range of outputs and outcomes some of which that are related to the physical regeneration opportunities, are as follows:

- Create new local employment floorspace for a range of local and new incoming businesses that will strengthen the local economy.
- Enable people from current states of worklessness into new employment
- Enhance access and opportunities for greater vocational training, education and life-long skills development
- Enhance the vitality and viability of the Borough's three town centres

- Develop new leisure destinations and recreational activities that will encourage more active communities leading to wider social benefits including preventative health measures and social inclusion objectives.
- Greater walking, cycling and public transport priorities
- New uses for previously developed land, including contaminated land, for new greenspace, public realm, employment and residential uses.
- Creating new and investing in existing residential areas.
- Deliver a step change in quality public realm, greenspace and environmental and bio diversity quality and fundamentally change perceptions of the place in which to live, work, invest and visit.

### 3.19 How the Regeneration Strategy Evolved

3.20 The Strategy has been based on a comprehensive evidence base summarised in Section 2 and 3 of the Report and compiled in Appendix A to the Report. This contains information on

- Population and Local Economy
- Profile of multiple deprivation
- Historic development
- Constraints on land including contamination
- Character profiles for the 5 'impact areas' describing their problems and opportunities
- The strategic significance of the Mersey Gateway in regional, sub-regional and local policy
- The wider economic and regeneration impacts as measured by the Amion study 2008. (Mersey Gateway Orders and Applications Environmental Impact Assessment – Wider Economic Impacts – Technical Report – Amion Consulting 2008)

3.21 This evidence base led to the identification of problems, issues and opportunities that could be tackled by the regeneration opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway Scheme. This led to the establishment of a vision and objectives that would address these problems, issues and opportunities. These are set out in Section 4 of the Strategy. They are divided between 'Priority Objectives' to set the framework for the Strategy and 'Impact Area Objectives' that specify key objectives in the five impact areas of West Bank, Runcorn Old Town, Astmoor industrial Estate, Halton Lea and Rocksavage and Clifton.

3.22 The next stage was to develop and evaluate alternative options for consideration by the Council's Officer Steering Group and by public consultation. A series of 3 consultation events were held at the Catalyst Museum, Halton Lea and the Brindley between February and March 2008. These options were appraised in terms of their ability to meet the 'Priority Regeneration objectives' (and hence the overarching objectives for the Mersey Gateway), their economic impact and their contribution to sustainability objectives (and the results of the initial Sustainability Appraisal). All options were subject to an iterative development appraisal in order to

assess them in terms of both delivery and affordability. This is all set out in Appendix B of the Strategy –‘The Options Report’.

- 3.23 The outcome of the options generation, consultation and appraisal is the preferred options for each of the Mersey Gateway ‘Impact Areas’. These are described in Section 5 of the Strategy.
- 3.24 The Impact Areas of West Bank, Runcorn Old Town and Astmoor are divided into likely phases of development. The first phase describes the situation during and immediately after the construction of the new bridge and the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The second phases deal with the regeneration opportunities that will arise primarily from the re-configuration of the land pattern in these areas. The third phase adds the later development opportunities that will arise from the increased prosperity and quality of these areas. This will include re-development of outdated and under-used sites and premises that are not directly affected by the Mersey Gateway Scheme works.
- 3.25 Development Appraisal
- 3.26 The preferred options have been subjected to a development appraisal that compares the cost of implementing the options with the value they generate. Where there is a funding gap the report sets out sources of possible public funding subsidies that could be used to pay for infrastructure costs and land remediation works for example, that may be necessary to make development economically viable. This is set out in Section 6 of the Options Report (Appendix B)
- 3.27 Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment.
- 3.28 The Strategy’s options have been assessed in accordance with European and National legislation against sustainability objectives and for their potential impact on European sites of nature conservation importance. The latter Habitat Regulations Assessment is necessary because of the proximity of the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area for migratory birds.
- 3.29 The results of these assessments are set out in Appendix C and D of the Strategy.
- 3.30 Using the Strategy in Council Documents.
- 3.31 An important consideration for the Council will be how the Regeneration Strategy can be taken forward to implement the regeneration opportunities that it contains. This will twofold.
- 3.32 Planning– The Strategy’s development proposals will be adapted and incorporated into the Council’s Local Development Framework, the next generation of plans that will replace the current Halton Unitary Development Plan.

- 3.33 The Strategic proposals for focusing development in the 'impact areas' where the regeneration effects of the Mersey Gateway Scheme are expected to be felt most strongly should be reflected in the 'spatial vision' of the Core Strategy.
- 3.34 More detailed land use, highway public realm and public transport proposals will be incorporated into 'Supplementary Planning Documents' for Southern Widnes and Runcorn Old Town and perhaps, Astmoor if appropriate.
- 3.35 The sites that will be made available for new housing and employment development can be formally allocated in 'Development Plan Documents' that will provide the future supply of land for houses and jobs to 2021 and beyond.
- 3.36 Regeneration – The Strategy will be an important influence on the Council's future regeneration and economic development policies and could be used to bid for existing and future grant aid from European funds and national and regional agencies.
- 3.37 Local Transport Plan – Transport and Highway Schemes in the Regeneration Strategy may be included within the next LTP and partially funded through it, if necessary.
- 3.38 Sustainable Transport Strategy – This strategy is being prepared by consultants appointed by the Council to inform the overall planning process for the Mersey Gateway Scheme. It will also describe sustainable transport policies and potential schemes that will demonstrate how the Mersey Gateway will enable sustainable transport to be enhanced.
- 3.39 The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Scheme and the Sustainable Transport Strategy will work in tandem to ensure that the regeneration opportunities enable the necessary walking, cycling and public transport links to be integrated into new development and transport routes. This will be particularly important to take advantage of the proposed new bus, cycling and walking routes across the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

#### 4.0 POLICY, RESOURCE AND OTHER ISSUES

- 4.1 The policy issues have been covered in this report. The resource issues have been mentioned briefly in relation to the probable need for gap funding from public sources to reduce some of the development opportunities described in the Strategy.
- 4.2 All indications of the costs of the development opportunities are described in the Options Report Section in Appendix B of the Strategy.

#### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

5.2 The improved quality of the environment, increased population supporting local schools, and increased employment opportunities within the 'impact areas' will all support the life quality and chances of children and young people who live in these areas and the wider Borough.

#### 5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

5.3 The Strategy (para 6.4) plans for a net gain of some 1,180 jobs locally (within Halton) and 3,039 additional jobs across a wider area in terms of multiplier and supply chain effects.

5.4 The Strategy also seeks to retain the existing employment areas wherever possible and practical.

5.5 For learning and skills the Strategy sets out a number of practical examples that will contribute to this priority (para 6.10).

1. Increasing accessibility to Riverside College through new pedestrian and cycle routes.
2. Enhanced accessibility of Runcorn Station through a new hierarchy of sustainable movement will allow education and training facilities to be accessed further a field.
3. Potential to work with Ineos as part of an alternative energy project at Rocksavage and the educational benefits this would bring.

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

#### 5.7 A Healthy Halton

5.8 Paragraph 6.26 of the strategy sets out the following contributions:

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

5.9 The Primary Care Trust has been engaged in the production of the Strategy.

5.10 A Safer Halton

5.11 Paragraph 6.29 of the Strategy states:

'Improvements to the design and planning of streets and spaces, to sensitive design standards and principles, will encourage a greater feeling of well-being and inclusiveness. Mixed use areas will serve to increase vitality and viability and will ensure that there are a greater number of people around at different times of the day.'

5.12 Halton's Urban Renewal

5.13 As the Regeneration Strategy is concerned with urban renewal than the implications for this priority are evident throughout the document.

6.0 Risk Analysis

6.1 A decision by the Executive Board to approve the Strategy in order to support the Mersey Gateway Scheme and to judge it through the development control purposes is in itself low risk.

6.2 However the implementation of the proposals described in the Strategy may require public gap funding and the future availability and quality of this is uncertain at this stage. A full risk assessment may only be necessary when the implementation of some of these regeneration opportunities is brought forward for approval in the future.

7.0 Equality and Diversity Issues

7.1 The consequences of the implementation of the Regeneration Strategy on a variety of social factors is dealt with by the sustainability appraisal in Appendix C

8.0 List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

<u>Document</u>	<u>Place of Inspection</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Mersey Gateway Orders	Planning Division	Andrew Pannell
Environmental Impact Assessment Wider Economic Impacts Technical Report Amion Consulting 2008	Rutland House	