



Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Delivery Strategy

Halton Borough Council



Final Report

April 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i) The Delivery Strategy addresses the key factors which will affect the implementation of the Masterplan Framework prepared by Taylor Young, together with BE Group and Faber Maunsell.

Delivery Framework Management

- ii) Halton Borough Council should build on the successful delivery of projects to date and continue as the lead in co-ordinating development. The Major Projects Team should assume this responsibility.
- iii) Projects completed have been undertaken by a range of developers, with specific relevant market experience, and this should continue rather than the selection of a single developer for the whole of the Waterfront.
- iv) Partnerships with public funding providers, developers, landowners and businesses should be maintained and developed further.
- v) New and emerging business parks often secure a public sector occupier to anchor the new development. Halton Borough Council should actively seek public sector support through relocation to the Waterfront to act as a catalyst to attract other investors and occupiers.

Phasing

- vi) The average take-up of employment land in Widnes over the past 10 years has been 4.62 ha per annum.
- vii) With over 100 ha identified in the Masterplan Framework, projects need to be prioritised to establish a programme of developments capable of being delivered up to and beyond, 2014.
- viii) Those existing Waterfront schemes that still have significant voids need to be promoted to occupiers. The successful letting and sales of these properties will demonstrate demand and underpin the improvements of future land values.

- ix) Development should continue to spread progressively from the Gateways to encourage a ripple effect across the Waterfront area. The Hive, Aston Land and Easter Park are likely to be the principal developments in the next 5 years.

Land Ownerships and Constraints

- x) Many of the sites are constrained through land ownership issues, contamination and service infrastructure requirements.
- xi) Organisations holding land they intend to develop should be encouraged to do so. Halton Borough Council may consider selective acquisition of sites not matching these criteria, to unlock development, but public sector acquisition on a wide scale is not envisaged.
- xii) A detailed library of information on a site by site basis should be assimilated as a guide to future development.

Public Realm

- xiii) Early delivery of soft leisure and public open space, particularly on land owned by Halton Borough Council, is recommended.
- xiv) A number of recreational uses, whilst requiring further market testing, could bring commercial returns, for example five-a-side football and National BMX Centre.
- xv) Linkages with other aspiration ventures such as the Mersey Regional Park and the Sankey Canal Restoration Society could generate additional investment.

Planning Framework

- xvi) The Masterplan Framework needs to be embraced and supported by Halton Borough Council, and linked to the emerging LDF Core Strategy.
- xvii) Detailed development briefs should be drawn up for individual sites.

Costs and Values

- xviii) The current economic conditions mean few schemes are viable at present, because either bank funding cannot be secured or property values have fallen.

- xix) Viability is also affected by the cost of dealing with the constraints and the quality of the environment.
- xx) The implementation of the Masterplan Framework should be undertaken in a way that will see a progressive improvement in land values whilst minimising new infrastructure costs. This will see the areas around the Gateway developed first and the most contaminated areas last.
- xxi) Historic investment in some sites means that the cost of acquisition at the present time is prohibitive. In particular this applies to key Gateway properties such as The Focus DIY building and the Barkin Centre.
- xxii) Infrastructure and remediation costs are considered to be extensive. No accurate costings have been prepared and further assessment is needed to accurately ascertain these potential costs.

Funding

- xxiii) Schemes will be delivered through a mix of private and public investment. As stated earlier, the Council should actively seek public sector support through a relocation/new proposal to the Waterfront to spur other investments.
- xxiv) Limited funding from existing sources remains and Halton Borough Council must explore and exploit a range of funding sources to help deliver development. The Council needs to be alert to new funding streams as they emerge.
- xxv) The private sector should be engaged through partnership arrangements with the preferred route being different developers selected for their ability and experience in delivering different types of scheme.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Framework Phase 2 sets out a vision and strategic objectives for the development of Widnes Waterfront to 2014 and beyond. Whilst it will in part inform local planning policy and guide development proposals, as they are brought forward, it goes beyond being a document to support development control. The Framework should be the basis to enable Halton Borough Council and its partners actively achieve the regeneration of the Waterfront area.
- 1.2 Key to the success of the Waterfront regeneration is the delivery of the Framework through the physical implementation of the range of projects highlighted. In the current economic climate and with an area where development is challenged by a number of issues including multiple land ownerships, lack of utilities capacity, a need for improved infrastructure and considerable areas of contamination, the Framework has to be delivered by the public sector. This means Halton Borough Council assuming the leading role, working with the private sector to bring forward projects to meet the objectives of The Masterplan Framework. This requires the setting of a Delivery Strategy.
- 1.3 The Delivery Strategy recognises that there are projects capable of being brought forward in the short-term if the economic climate allows. Some require little or no public sector intervention, or are already supported by the public sector. Other projects will require intervention in the foreseeable future unless significant new private sector funding is secured.
- 1.4 The Delivery Strategy addresses the key factors which influence implementation of the Masterplan:
- Delivery Framework Management
 - Phasing
 - Land Ownerships and Constraints
 - Public Realm
 - Planning Framework
 - Costs and Values
 - Funding Considerations

Delivery Framework Management

- 1.5 Since 2002, Halton Borough Council has made great progress in the delivery of a number of key projects, which has seen around 27 ha of land reclaimed, re-used or developed out.
- 1.6 No single body has delivered these projects, but Halton Borough Council, through its Major Projects Team, has been closely involved, both in a guiding role and also actively delivering projects. Each developer involved has been experienced in the specific type of development completed.
- 1.7 These schemes have included those identified in Table 1.

Table 1 – Widnes Waterfront Schemes

Property Scheme	Total Floorspace, sqm and Number of Units	Unit Size Range, sqm
Heron Business Park, Phase I, Tanhouse Lane	4448 11 units	279-743
Heron Business Park, Phase II, Tanhouse Lane	6837 18 units	148-882
Turnstone Business Park, Mulberry Avenue, off Dennis Road	4985 20 units	218-323
Easter Park, Bennetts Lane	22,854 9 units	929-4645
Forward Point, Moss Bank Lane	1547 3 units	438-671
Widnes Trade Park, Dennis Road	4390 7 units (plus B&Q store)	325-2230

Source: BE Group, 2009

- 1.8 Widnes Regeneration Limited (WRL), the joint venture vehicle between Halton Borough Council and St Modwen, has also contributed. To date the extent of the delivery has been the provision of Heron Business Park Phases 1 & 2.
- 1.9 A further phase of development proposed by WRL required a Compulsory Purchase Order. This was halted in 2008 when St Modwen considered the acquisitions and subsequent development financially unfeasible. Similarly, The Hive has been a project promoted by a one off joint venture by St Modwen and Halton Borough Council, but is not yet delivered because of viability. This will now rely on additional funding secured by Halton Borough Council.

- 1.10 Consequently, to successfully deliver phases of projects there needs to be clear and focused leadership. This is seen as the role for Halton Borough Council's Major Projects Team, supported by other Council departments. The Major Projects Team should continue co-ordinating development, liaising with the various public sector bodies, landowners, developers and end users.

Partnerships

- 1.11 The Delivery Strategy requires engaged and committed partnerships at more than one level. Key are the potential partnerships with public funding providers, private sector developers, landowners and established businesses within the Waterfront Masterplan area.
- 1.12 Partnership with these parties is important. Halton Borough Council has a good relationship with the Northwest Development Agency and Housing and Communities Agency. This needs to continue, as both are able to provide funding and be involved in direct purchase and development.
- 1.13 Developers, landowners and occupying companies already come together on a regular basis through the Widnes Waterfront Business Steering Group meeting. This informs and engages with these stakeholders. Continuation of this Steering Group is encouraged.
- 1.14 There is also a need to maintain separate regular dialogue with landowners and developers, to assist in the delivery of development.
- 1.15 The Major Projects Team forms the link between the private sector stakeholders and the various public sector bodies in the funding and approvals process including NWDA, Environment Agency, and the Planning Authority.
- 1.16 To date the development has attracted largely private sector companies as tenants or purchasers. Halton Borough Council should encourage the public sector to consider the Waterfront as a base for activities within the Borough, and should explore whether there is the possibility of a major relocation/new investment. Experience shows that public sector investment at other business parks has acted as a catalyst to successful growth. And if the public is not prepared to demonstrate its belief in the Waterfront product, why should it expect the private sector to?

2.0 PHASING

- 2.1 The Masterplan Framework identifies over 100 ha of land within the Waterfront area that could be brought forward for development in the future. In reality, the area is somewhat smaller as a significant proportion remains as operational land for established businesses. Many may or may not choose to expand or relocate in the future.
- 2.2 Nevertheless, with over 65 ha of land currently vacant this represents a land stock that could satisfy Widnes' employment land needs for at least the next 14 years. As identified in Table 2, Widnes' average annual take-up of employment land has been 4.62 ha over the past decade.

Table 2 – Take-Up of completed employment land 1998-2008 – Halton

Year	1998/9	1999/ 2000	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	Total	Average Annual Take-Up
	Employment Development (ha)											
Runcorn	0.33	13.32	16.65	12.02	10.46	4.05	4.70	14.22	18.80	18.49	113.04	11.30
Widnes	0.80	1.15	6.98	1.58	5.30	6.66	0.99	12.44	4.31	6.10	46.21	4.62
Halton	1.13	14.47	23.63	13.60	15.76	10.71	5.69	26.66	23.11	24.59	159.35	15.92

Source: Halton Borough Council 2008

2.3 The figures represent completed development on all sites in Widnes. Take-up for the Waterfront alone is not provided. The current economic climate has brought speculative development almost to a halt across the North West, and Widnes is no different. For the next three years or so, take-up is envisaged to be significantly reduced, with the exception of development of the 3MG site where major warehouse development associated with the rail freight industry is envisaged. However, this is a specialist area of industry and inclusion of projected figures for 3MG would distort the general forecasted take-up considerably.

2.4 Further developments completed over the past two years still have significant voids as shown in Table 3. The exception is the Trade Park which is now largely occupied.

Table 3 – Current Schemes

Scheme	Floorspace	Number of Units	Occupancy Rate, percent
<i>Offices</i>			
Forward Point	1533	3	0
Turnstone Business Park	4983	20	16
<i>Industrial</i>			
Easter Phase One	9467	4	50
Heron Phase One	4448	11	82
Heron Phase Two (site works not complete)	6837	18	0

Source: BE Group, April 2009

2.5 Developers, and more importantly, their funders are unlikely to commence further speculative development until these voids are reduced. A priority is to support the owners of these properties to ensure the voids are reduced. This will demonstrate that there is demand for both office and industrial space at the Waterfront. It also assists in strengthening land values within the area which is vital when seeking to create viable new schemes.

2.6 It is therefore important to establish a programme for the phasing of development, which will prioritise actions and activities that can be delivered. This applies to both the public realm, infrastructure and development projects. The categories can only be indicative but can be prioritised as follows:

A Projects currently viable or deliverable

- B Projects which can be funded from existing funding streams and which do not face major constraints
- C Projects which cannot be funded at present, but where funding streams can be identified
- D Projects which are highly speculative but become viable in an improving market
- E Projects which are unlikely to be developed and which are highly constrained.

2.7 The principal projects and sites (where no specific project is yet proposed but is considered a development), can be put into these categories. Further, the Masterplan Framework splits the different areas into two phases – those deliverable up to 2014 and those unlikely to be delivered in that time scale. Table 4 categorises the projects against these criteria.

Table 4 – Principal Projects and Sites

Project	Approx. Area, ha	Category Rank with A first	Phase
Easter Park	3.9	A	1
Aston Land	4.5	B	1
The Hive	6.0	B	1
Land at Johnsons Lane	8.0	C	1
Shell Green	4.0	D	1/2
Former Bayer Site	16.0	D	1/2
Gorse Lane North	2.2	D	2
Former Croda site	4.0	D	2
Routledge	5.8	D	2
UK Land Trade Park	1.0	D	1/2
Dennis Road area	5.3	D	2
British Gypsum	1.6	D	1/2
Clark Transport	0.6	D	2
Barkin Centre	1.5	D	2
Tanhouse Lane East - ATS	0.15	D	1/2
Tanhouse Lane East – Gateway Heritage	2.0	D	2
Tanhouse Lane East – Plasmor	3.0	D	2
Former Pilkington Sullivan site	11.9	E	2
<u>Saffil</u>	2.3	E	2
Thermphos	4.3	E	2

Project	Approx. Area, ha	Category Rank with A first	Phase
Muspratts	8.0	E	2

Source: BE Group 2009

- 2.8 Only three projects appear ready to proceed within the foreseeable future, and commencement will depend on market conditions. These are the Hive, Aston Land and Easter Phase Two.
- 2.9 Other sites, particularly those close to the access points into the Waterfront, present opportunities to bring sites forward within the period up to 2014.
- 2.10 There is a logic in promoting the sites around the Gateways as planned progressive development from the outer edge inward. The completion and letting/sale of existing developments and the commencement of new developments fanning out from these Gateways should create a ripple effect which increases confidence in the area and should see, in time, values begin to rise. .
- 2.11 The ability to deliver these sites will depend on a range of factors and constraints which are addressed in the next section.

3.0 LAND OWNERSHIPS AND CONSTRAINTS

- 3.1 The Waterfront comprises a large number of different ownerships. These include owner/occupiers, property investors, developers and Halton Borough Council.
- 3.2 In assessing deliverability there is a need to distinguish between those sites which are in single ownership, where there is a willingness for the owner to bring forward development and those sites where there may be significant constraints to development arising out of either multiple ownership and occupation, or where land owners have unrealistic aspirations for the site.
- 3.3 Halton Borough Council, either through Widnes Regeneration Limited or on its own, has acquired land to bring forward development. Further acquisition remains a possibility, if funding support can be secured. However, widespread acquisition has been tried through the proposed CPO process, but has stalled. It is understood that this approach will not be pursued again as a means of acquiring large areas of land. Rather, selective acquisition may be undertaken as key sites become available, or where a single site is required to unlock development.
- 3.4 Developers holding sites they intend to bring sites forward themselves, should be encouraged to deliver the developments. In some cases sites and buildings are operational and occupied by the owners or leased to other businesses. Whilst in some cases there may be a longer term aspiration to see the land developed, for the foreseeable future it is realistic to assume these sites will continue as operational sites.
- 3.5 Constraints other than land ownership may prevent delivery in the short term and where detailed information is not known, further investigations should be undertaken. Where owners or developers hold information Halton Borough Council should seek to bring this together to create a detailed library of information.
- 3.6 Most sites will require an assessment of transport route provision, and the cumulative impact of traffic should be considered.
- 3.7 An assessment of each Waterfront site has been made, to consider ownership issues and other constraints to development.

Property	Land at Johnsons Lane
Ownership	Halton Borough Council
Development Proposals	Site is identified for B2/B8 uses. Originally earmarked for companies being relocated due to the construction of the Mersey gateway, but now seen as a site for general industrial
Constraints	Estimated remediation and servicing costs £8 million
Delivery Issues	Cost of services infrastructure. These costs should be reviewed to see how the site can be delivered at a lower level, possibly part open storage/lower quality uses.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	A review of the cost of delivery, minimising servicing costs, to be undertaken. Halton Borough Council should then seek funding to deliver the necessary services infrastructure. The site's location means it is unlikely to be a high profile development site and should not compete with Aston Land, Easter, Bayer sites. The area will provide plots for lower quality uses, or businesses seeking self-contained freehold plots.

Property	Shell Green off Johnsons Lane
Ownership	Lythgoes Estates Ecocycle Waste Halton Borough Council
Development Proposals	None. The site houses a mix of industrial occupiers, a waste recycling facility and Halton Borough Council's household waste drop off site.
Constraints	Multiple occupation and operational facilities.
Delivery Issues	The area serves a function providing premises for existing occupiers, which is likely to remain unchanged.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	General public realm improvements to landscaping; liaison with businesses.

Property	Former Bayer site, Gorse Lane
Ownership update please	Now acquired by Halton Borough Council/NWDA.
Development Proposals	None at present. The Masterplan proposes B2/B8. The site presents the opportunity to bring forward a significant area for development over the next few years. Halton Borough Council will be preparing a Masterplan for the site.
Constraints	Bayer are currently decommissioning the site, which will be complete in 2010/2011. Work is ongoing to determine the extent of the remediation required. The NWDA will seek to ensure development meets their design on construction standards. There are NWDA funding claw back issues in particular for uses other than B1/B2/B8. Access to the site needs to be addressed.
Delivery Issues	Capacity at Halton Borough Council.
Halton Borough Council	The site for development through remediation, servicing and

Involvement	preparation of a development brief in association with the NWDA. This may be through a joint venture with a selected developer. Halton Borough Council can lead the regeneration of this area of the Waterfront, as has happened in phase 1 at the western end of the Waterfront area.
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Property	Gorse Lane North
Ownership	Delavan Lewis Capital Investments
Development Proposals	None at present. The Masterplan proposes quality offices at the junction, with industrial use retained on the remainder of the site. Delavan are interested in improvements to the site to create a contained corner site. The site is an important gateway and is seen as a catalyst to development on neighbouring sites.
Constraints	Currently in multiple ownership comprising of several operational sites. Funding may be an issue for Delavan.
Delivery Issues	Costs associated with the acquisition of sites create a development plot and the relocation of existing businesses. There are reasonable buildings that could remain long term. The market at present is unlikely to make a B1 scheme viable.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Selective acquisition should be considered if property becomes available, to create a development plot. Alternatively, work with existing owners to prepare a development brief.

Property	Easter Park Phase 2, Bennetts Lane
Ownership	Easter Group
Development Proposals	A second phase of warehouse units
Constraints	None known
Delivery Issues	The performance of Phase 1 with 2 units still unoccupied and the market conditions will dictate delivery of the second phase. Two units remain.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Continued assistance in marketing, planning and other technical assistance.

Property	Former Croda site, Gorse Lane
Ownership	Widnes Regeneration Limited
Development Proposals	None at present. St. Modwen expected the site to be developed under the Widnes Regeneration Vehicle.
Constraints	Access is considered to be unattainable for development without a new route in from Johnson's Lane, although St. Modwen disputes this. This access could be difficult with a levels issue and the position of large chemical lagoons sitting within the site. Cost of services

Delivery Issues	Access needs to be resolved. Halton Borough Council can provide access through their Johnson's Lane site which may be the most cost effective.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	None if St. Modwen successfully service the site. If not Halton Borough Council should make provision for the access to be provided and the site viewed as an extension to their Johnson's Lane site, but with priority given to that land before opening up the Croda site.

Property	Former Pilkington Sullivan site
Ownership	Broadthorn
Development Proposals	In the past the owners have attempted to secure a purchaser and also planning for the site. The Masterplan proposes a mixed use with open space/soft leisure uses. Current discussions are ongoing with planning for the New Earth proposal for a waste recycling facility.
Constraints	Significant contamination, remediation costed at up to £8 million. Access is also an issue as the principal access off Moss Bank Road is controlled by Industrial Chemicals, development associated with the focal point on the river and B2/B8. New Earth are currently considering three options for site access. Services and highways issues.
Delivery Issues	Broadthorn's ability to deliver the site is questionable and to date they have not addressed detailed technical issues. A third party organisation such as New Earth may be able to bring forward a deliverable solution.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Halton Borough Council ideally should seek to acquire the site to ensure future control if funding to deal with contamination and access issues is available. If the New Earth proposal proceeds Halton Borough Council should seek environmental improvements around Tanhouse Lane, to facilitate the objectives of the Masterplan.

Property	Saffil, Moss Bank Road
Ownership	Saffil
Development Proposals	None. Operational site
Constraints	Future development would require site decommissioning.
Delivery Issues	None. Not considered a development site.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Assistance with improvements to public realm.

Property	Land to the west of Tanhouse Lane
Ownership	J. Routledge & Sons
Development Proposals	Resolution by Halton Borough Council to grant consent for 600 residential units plus local retail centre and B1 offices. The Masterplan identifies the site as all residential.

Constraints	Significant contamination to the site. Access just from Tanhouse Lane is not acceptable, and a new route from the link from Earle Road will provide the main access point.
Delivery Issues	Site remediation costs yet to be determined. Access to be completed. Market conditions suggest no current interest as the remediation and land values make the site unviable.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Assistance in identifying the cost of remediation and preparation of a more detailed development brief for the site. Facilitate completion of access route and provision of services infrastructure. Licence is in place from Halton Borough Council to allow road construction

Property	Thermphos
Ownership	Thermphos
Development Proposals	No proposals, the site is an operational plant and the company has not suggested any intention to relocate or close although it could be affected by the Mersey Gateway proposal.
Constraints	Major cost of decommissioning and remediation should plant close. Access at present is poor and would need improving.
Delivery Issues	Cost of relocation is estimated by Thermphos' property consultant at around £40 million, making redevelopment unviable.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	To monitor activities of the company.

Property	Land at the junction of Gorse Lane
Ownership	Aston Land
Development Proposals	Mixed use with a scheme of small offices and warehousing.
Constraints	No major constraints identified. Development may be constrained by the area's lack of electricity capacity.
Delivery Issues	Development has been delayed because of market conditions. At present the owners do not intend pursuing the offices (which are not viable), but may commence work on the B2/B8 space during 2009 if the economic climate improves.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Assistance with marketing, planning and other technical issues arising from development.

Property	Former Muspratts site, off Earle Road
Ownership	Cheshire Land
Development Proposals	The owners envisage the site as a residential site, and the Masterplan accords with this, although no formal or informal

	proposals have been put forward.
Constraints	Known to be heavily contaminated, but the extent of this has not been quantified. Access currently is via a railway underpass and is not suitable to support any future development. Should Thermphos be redeveloped this could present the opportunity to provide an improved access.
Delivery Issues	Determining level and cost of remediation. Securing a new access to the site across the rail line. Market conditions currently means the site will be unviable. The proximity of the Thermphos plant may affect future marketability.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Support the owners in addressing site issues, and delivering planning.

Property	The Hive
Ownership	Halton Borough Council/St Modwen Developments
Development Proposals	The Hive is proposed as a new leisure park with a mix of entertainment facilities, restaurants and hotel. Planning Permission granted.
Constraints	Funding for the development is the only major constraint to the development commencing.
Delivery Issues	St. Modwen cannot develop without public sector funding which is to be secured by Halton Borough Council. Tenants have been secured for most of the scheme. Question of utilities provision for full development of the site.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Secure funding to ensure development commences. Establish vehicle to facilitate a 'state aid-legal' public sector investment. Liaise with UK Land Estates to seek improvement to the Focus site. This is a key site at the main approach to the Waterfront, and at present is vacant. As it sits alongside The Hive, long term vacancy will detract from the proposed leisure scheme. If St. Modwen do not proceed, review development agreement to see how control of the site can be removed from them. Continue dialogue with utilities providers to secure sufficient capacity to meet development needs.

Property	Trade Park area off Earle Road
Ownership	UK Land Estates
Development Proposals	Currently leased to Focus, and a commercial car wash. No proposals, but the Focus DIY building is vacant and discussions have been held for use by a food retailer. Masterplan proposes a mixed use site, possibly hotel, retail, leisure.
Constraints	Existing lease to Focus DIY, and cost of extinguishing this to create a development site.
Delivery Issues	Planning and market conditions.

Halton Borough Council Involvement	Assist through agreement on future uses within the planning framework and actively encourage UK Land/Focus to find a new occupier for the site.
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Property	Dennis Road area
Ownership	Karalius Bros Monopol Holdings American E-Z storage Suttons Alco Waste Halton Borough Council JS & I Jones Tanhouse Garages
Development Proposals	None at present. Identified in the Masterplan as a mixed use area with B1 offices, employment (B1/B2/B8) and some open space.
Constraints	Operational sites in multiple ownerships and occupation. No detailed review undertaken of contamination or services infrastructure, including highways.
Delivery Issues	Relocation of all occupiers will be costly and only likely to be achieved over a long period.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Selective acquisition to bring together development plots. Preparation of a detailed brief. Completion of the linear park and other site infrastructure.

Property	Barkin Centre
Ownership	BP Pension Trustees
Development Proposals	Currently leased to Plastech and Maltacourt (Subaru) but the site is vacant. No known proposals by the current owners, although it has been marketed for sale recently. Owner's expectations are retail use. The Masterplan shows the area as a mixed use B1/Trade counter.
Constraints	Owner's expectations and the existing lease which expires in 2012.
Delivery Issues	Existing lease Market conditions
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Liaison over future use of the site with current or new owners.

Property	Langtree, Dennis Road
Ownership	Langtree Group
Development Proposals	Langtree were proposing a serviced office development following their Centrix format. This is now on hold.
Constraints	No major constraints identified.

Delivery Issues	Viability in the current market has been cited as the reason for the project being put on hold. Halton Borough Council have assisted with funding,.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Halton Borough Council have assisted in the funding of the acquisition, and should continue to press Langtree to develop or seek an alternative arrangement for delivery, when Langtree's legal option expires.

Property	British Gypsum, Dennis Road
Ownership	British Gypsum,
Development Proposals	None at present. The site is vacant and on the market (offers c. £1 million)
Constraints	The site is regular, self contained and can be redeveloped in isolation. Demolition and site remediation will be required. Services capacity and transport issues will require investigation.
Delivery Issues	If developed in isolation no significant issues. As part of larger site, land assembly will be necessary.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Halton Borough Council have identified the property as a potential for acquisition.

Property	Clark Transport, Cornubia Road
Ownership	Clark Transport
Development Proposals	None at present. Clark Transport need to expand. Halton Borough Council may be able to provide land adjacent to the property. If not and the company relocated, the site could become a development opportunity.
Constraints	The site is constrained by size. Neighbouring uses will affect attraction of a developer if not improved. Access will require improvement. As a former transport yard there may be ground contamination.
Delivery Issues	Availability will depend on occupier's intentions to either remain or relocate.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Assist in the company expansion through provision of additional land.

Property	Tanhouse Lane East
Ownership	ATS Gateway Heritage Ltd Plasmor Ltd Forward Chemicals Suttons Various – Former Clariant
Development Proposals	None at present. The former Clariant site was acquired by Widnes Regeneration Ltd. and released for B2/B8 use. The Masterplan identifies the northern area as mixed use car show room, B1 offices and small industry with the remainder

	B2/B8.
Constraints	The site is in multiple ownership, with much of the area housing operational facilities. Highway issues.
Delivery Issues	Much of the site will remain as existing to service B2/B8 occupiers The Roll-in Motel owned by Gateway Heritage is now vacant and the owners are looking at future options. Development will require possible co-operation with Plasmor who control the current access.
Halton Borough Council Involvement	Preparation of a development brief for the gateway site involving ATS, Gateway Heritage and Plasmor. Possible acquisition.

4.0 PUBLIC REALM

- 4.1 The Masterplan highlights a range of soft leisure and public open space areas, together with a framework of public routes throughout the Waterfront.
- 4.2 These uses, which are outlined in the Masterplan Framework and Landscape Strategy, are proposed to complement the development projects and to fulfil one of the main objectives of the vision by attracting more uses to the Waterfront.
- 4.3 A number of recreational activities have been proposed, some of which could be implemented quickly, whilst others will require further market testing such as the National BMX Centre and a commercial five a side football centre.
- 4.4 As with emerging development sites, the open space and soft leisure uses can be prioritised taking account of ownership and other constraints and funding.
- 4.5 The main projects and proposals are set out in Table 5.

Table 5 – Public Realm Proposals

Project	Location	Ownership/Issues
Linear Park	Runs from Earle Road to Tanhouse Lane along former rail line.	Halton Borough Council Funding in part received from NWDA; further funding required for completion.
Waterfront Destination	Part on Wharf (viewing platform), Part on former Pilkington Sullivan site at end of Tanhouse Lane.	Broadthorn Ltd Landowners aspiration is for a higher value use Could be gifted as part of a wider regeneration of the site.
Greenway	Running along western edge of Waterfront linking to the West Bank Area and Spike Island.	Network Rail/Halton Borough Council & others Ownerships to the west are not known and will need to be ascertained. The TEP Masterplan for Spike Island will dovetail with these proposals. Will be affected by the Mersey Gateway.
Boulevard Route	Running to Earle Road traffic signalled junction, following the Linear Park, and other roads through the Waterfront to Fiddlers Ferry Road.	Halton Borough Council Upgrading of existing routes, some work already done to street lighting/street furniture.
Gateways	Entrances to the Waterfront area at Earle Road., Tanhouse Lane, Gorsey Lane. Possible additional	Various ownerships including Halton Borough Council The proposal is wider than

Project	Location	Ownership/Issues
	entrance within Bayer frontage.	immediate road improvements and will involve landmark buildings on sites at the junctions and Gateway features. Some sites not immediately available.
Progressive Play and Public Art	Various on routes throughout the Waterfront.	Not determined. These areas can be Halton Borough Council land or surplus areas of development land or within highway corridors. Investment will vary depending on the scale of the space and could see early implementation.
National BMX Centre	Not determined but could be at the Waterfront on one of the larger sites.	Not determined, but along with other soft leisure may be on Broadthorn land, or adjacent to The Hive. Not seen as high value, but may generate capital receipts ahead of the other development for land owner. Aspirational project. Market testing with end user required. The Level of activity at this stage is not known and there may be traffic impact issues.
Commercial 5-a-side football	As National BMX Centre.	As National BMX Centre. Developers will pay a commercial price for sites.
5KM Trail	Along the canalside.	Halton Borough Council/Network Rail/Mersey Gateway Investment to provide running surface, lights and exercise equipment.
Youth Activity Park	Not determined but could be at the Waterfront.	Not determined, but along with other soft leisure uses could be on Broadthorn land or adjacent to The Hive.

Source: BE Group 2009

Implementation of Public Realm

- 4.6 With much of the green space and public areas capable of being developed on land already in the ownership of Halton Borough Council, a number of the proposals could be implemented early, subject to planning and funding.
- 4.7 The soft leisure uses have not been fully market tested, although it is known that there is the requirement for the national BMX Centre, and Widnes is under-provided with regard to all-weather football pitches. One operator was contacted – Goals Soccer, but their target area is larger towns and cities. Other operators should be contacted to establish demand.

- 4.8 No site has been specifically allocated although the land to the western side of the Pilkington Sullivan site is proposed in the Masterplan Framework. The owners Broadthorn Ltd are seeking a higher value use. However, should the planning application be successful there is the opportunity to seek some planning gain as a result of the New Earth requirement to build a waste resource facility, currently being proposed for the eastern part of the site. For example The Masterplan shows open space to the western end of the Pilkington Sullivan site, and a condition for Broadthorn/New Earth to provide this could be imposed as part of the wider landscape and environmental requirements.
- 4.9 Both the BMX use and five-a-side football facility would generate a commercial return whether through a sale or ground lease. This should be attractive to landowners as part as a wider redevelopment.
- 4.10 The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park covers over 70 miles of the coastline in the Mersey area and will involve a wide range of economic regeneration and tourism projects. One of the objectives is concerned with estuary development and management and is seeking to promote country parks, coastal trails and cycleways formal and informal urban parks. Funding has been made available from the NWDA for the Regional Park.
- 4.11 The Sankey Canal Restoration Society (SCARS) is involved in the restoration of the Sankey Valley Canal through Halton, Warrington and St Helens. There are benefits in working with SCARS to enhance and promote the canal which runs alongside the Waterfront area.

5.0 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The current planning framework and the emerging LDF form the basis for the development of the Waterfront area. The Masterplan Framework should inform planning policy and be used as an evidence base where policy needs to be changed or formulated. Clarification is needed as to how the Masterplan links to the LDF Core Strategy and the existing Supplementary Planning Document for the EDZ.
- 5.2 Therefore the Masterplan Framework needs to be embraced and supported by Halton Borough Council if implementation of the elements is to be achieved.
- 5.3 Consideration should be given to encompassing the principles of appropriate development in a further Supplementary Planning Document. This will provide the context for future development by which planning applications can be considered.
- 5.4 The Masterplan framework and any SPD, is designed to be flexible, setting out a vision and objectives and a range of uses across the area. It is not aimed at being prescriptive, but to bring individual sites forward there may be a need to refine the guiding documents into a series of development briefs that will provide more detail in terms of the following:
- Planning policy and context
 - Details of site and its immediate surroundings
 - Issues, constraints, land ownerships and required level of consultation/survey work
 - Description of acceptable/desired uses
 - Design guide in terms of scale, character, materials sustainability, landscape
 - Highways and parking.
- 5.5 The following sites should be considered for the preparation of development briefs.
- Former Bayer site
 - Johnsons Lane/former Croda site
 - Pilkington Sullivan site
 - Routledge/Muspratt site
 - Dennis Road area
 - Tanhouse Lane East.

- 5.6 Consideration should be given at an early stage to off-site highways infrastructure requirements, and additional transport requirements such as public transport provision.

6.0 COSTS AND VALUES

- 6.1 The options process undertaken following the production of the Masterplan baseline, provided a series of end values that might be achieved were the whole of the Waterfront area to be developed out.
- 6.2 These provided a means of comparing the different options, but in reality the likelihood of achieving such values in the short-term is remote. Even schemes that do not face any physical or legal constraints to development are not proceeding at the present time. This is because either bank funding cannot be secured for speculative development (which is a major cause of a halt in construction throughout the UK) or the fall in rents and investment yields now makes new industrial and office development unviable.
- 6.3 Viability will also be affected by the quality of the environment although this should improve over a period of time, as the Waterfront area sees the critical mass of new development increase alongside other environmental improvements.
- 6.4 The implementation of the Masterplan Framework needs to be undertaken in a way that will see a progressive improvement in land values. To achieve this the logical approach is to develop the immediately (or more) accessible areas first. In this way new infrastructure costs can be minimised. This will link and extend existing new developments. Thus, the most contaminated areas would be developed last, when values should be rising.
- 6.5 Each site will present its own challenges in terms of cost of procurement and delivering a viable output. Table 6 sets out where the cost may be required for each site.

Table 6 – Site Costs Assessment

Site	Potential Acquisition Cost	Remediation	Site Infrastructure
Land at Johnsons Lane	No	No	Yes
Shell Green	No	No	No
Former Bayer Site	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gorse Lane North	Yes	Yes	Yes
Easter Park	No	No	No
Former Croda site	No	yes	No
Former Pilkington Sullivan site	Yes	Yes	Yes

Site	Potential Acquisition Cost	Remediation	Site Infrastructure
Saffil	No	No	No
Routledge	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thermphos	No	No	No
Aston Land	No	No	No
Muspratts	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Hive	No	Yes	Yes
UK Land Trade Park	No	No	No
Dennis Road area	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barkin Centre	No	No	No
Tanhouse Lane East	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: BE Group 2009

Acquisition Costs

- 6.6 Costs associated with the acquisition of land and buildings will range widely depending on the scale of property identified for acquisition, the nature of each property, aspirations of the owners and whether relocation of businesses is required.
- 6.7 Estimating global acquisition costs at this stage is unrealistic, and will be dependant on determining all the above factors. As a guide, industrial land may range from £247,000-£370,000 per ha, and existing industrial buildings from £200-£430 per sqm.
- 6.8 To illustrate possible acquisition costs, two key sites have been used to provide examples.

Gorse Lane North

Site 1	
Devalan Ltd	
Floor area:	3440 sqm (37,000 sqft)
Estimated value:	£1.1 million
Site 2	
Cheshire House	
Floor area:	2300 sqm (25,000 sqft)
Estimated value	£2.2 million
Estimated acquisition cost	£3.3 million
Site area	2.17 ha
Land value	£1.52 million/ha (£615,000/acre)

Barkin Centre

Building 1	
Offices	
Floor area:	140 sqm (1500 sqft)
Estimated value:	£110,000
Building 2	
Car Showroom – floor area	570 sqm (6100 sqft)
Estimated value	£500,000
Building 3	
Plastech Warehouse – floor area	5760 sqm (62,000 sqft)
Estimated value	£2.1 million
Estimated acquisition cost	£2.71 million
Site area	1.5 ha
Land value	£1.8 million/ha (£728,000/acre)

Infrastructure Costs

- 6.9 To inform the Delivery Strategy, Faber Maunsell has estimated the total cost of providing new highways, site remediation and electricity substation provision to be in the region of £86.5 million. These figures are based on very broad estimates. In particular, the element for remediation costs is based on a rate/m² for the area and not on an accurate knowledge of each site. Therefore the costs should be treated with caution.
- 6.10 Highways accounted for £4.5 million, based on a boulevard link from Earle Road to Tanhouse Lane North; a highway link running from Earle Road to Tanhouse Lane South, and a greenway link connecting to West Bank. There is also the need to consider the cost of other transport improvements such as bus services.
- 6.11 The final preferred option also saw a possible new extension to form a new link with Fiddlers Ferry Road and a continuation of this link to open up further development land. There is also a proposed pedestrian link to Naylor Road, and improvements along the St. Helens Canal as part of the 5km trail.
- 6.12 Further revision and refinement of the highways costs need to be undertaken to provide more detailed costs for each element.
- 6.13 The remediation cost of £80 million assumes the treatment of 1 million sqm, with the assumption that the land is in a condition similar to the Pilkington Sullivan site. Whilst

this may apply to the Muspratt and Routledge sites, contamination will vary across the sites and each needs to be assessed individually.

- 6.14 The electricity costs assumes the provision of two new primary substations, reflecting the already identified need to improve power capacity.

7.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Delivery of the Masterplan Framework depends on a mix of public sector funding and private sector investment.
- 7.2 The private sector will drive those schemes that are financially viable now, or where there is potential to drive up land values through higher value uses. Beyond these, public sector intervention will be required.
- 7.3 Much of the funding available to Halton Borough Council for Phase One has now ended. Currently funding is available from the sources identified in Table 7.
- 7.4 In addition, Halton Borough Council should investigate further funding sources including new streams that may emerge for example from the Homes and Communities Agency and the NHS possibly through the local PCTS.

Table 7 – Potential Funding Sources

Source	Amount £	Activity
Working Neighbourhoods Fund/European EDZ Programme	2.5 million	Remediation and infrastructure provision
ERDF	Possible match funding to WNF	Support to individual sites
Mid Mersey Growth Point	1.33 million	Access road to be matched by developer contribution
NWDA Single Programme	Unknown	Land acquisition e.g. Bayer. Remediation costs.
Mersey Regional Park	Unknown	Promotion of Estuary tourism projects
HCA	Unknown	Emerging funding for neighbourhood renewal
NHS		Various funds linked to health and neighbourhood renewal

Source: BE Group 2009

- 7.5 This funding is limited to supporting a small number of projects. Therefore Halton needs to identify and secure funding for a range of capital works and projects with the main costs being:
- Site acquisition
 - Site remediation
 - Capital infrastructure works
 - Road and footways infrastructure

- Public realm and public open space.

7.6 The Masterplan Framework should be used as the basis for discussions with funding partners such as NWDA, HCA.

7.7 Private sector funding may be secured in a number of ways and Halton has experience of engaging with the private sector on various projects to date. Experience of these partnership arrangements will no doubt influence future relationships. These include:

Single private sector partner leading development process.

Pros	One organisation to plan, co-ordinate and fund development. Non viable projects should be cross-subsidised by higher value developments. Halton Borough Council can control development through agreements on draw down of land and performance targets.
Cons	Halton Borough Council tied to one organisation which if it does not perform could delay projects. Partner may select and promote higher value projects to the detriment of others.

Halton Borough Council leading development process, with selected developers for each scheme.

Pros	Halton Borough Council can drive the development process through site preparation. Developers will be selected with appropriate experience and ability to fund for each project. A mix of developers will be introduced and projects could be run in tandem. Halton Borough Council can control development through building agreements. Schemes can be driven by public sector investment, which may include a public sector end use, and this is considered vital in the current economic climate.
Cons	Halton Borough Council will have to undertake and fund site acquisition preparatory works and infrastructure, which may delay commencements of the scheme. If similar schemes are being promoted developers may be put off by competition.

Halton Borough Council undertake preparatory works, and leave acquisition and development of site to the private sector.

Pros	Halton Borough Council will not need to acquire and fund site preparation. Halton Borough Council can co-ordinate phasing of development through the phasing of infrastructure works.
Cons	Market led, and in a poor market, delivery will not happen. No selection of developer, which could compromise quality and ability to develop. Land could be acquired and banked in strategic locations with no commitment to develop in line with the Masterplan Framework.

7.8 The ability to fund acquisitions and site preparation will influence whether Halton Borough Council drives development or leaves the development of sites to the private sector. Following the experience of Widnes Regeneration Ltd, a single partner is unlikely to be the preferred option.