



Warrington Waterfront

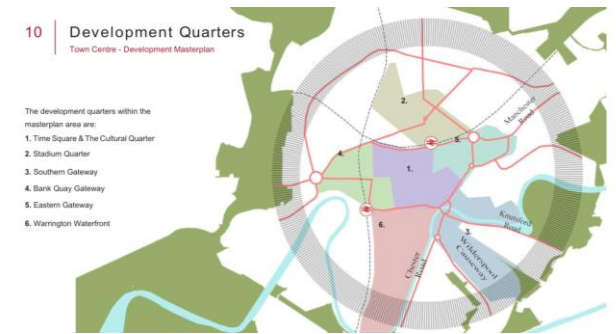
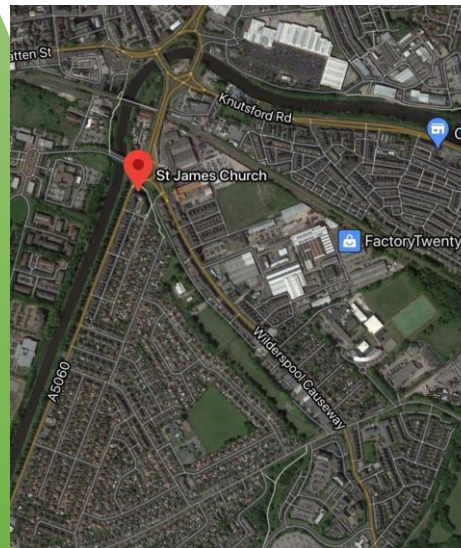
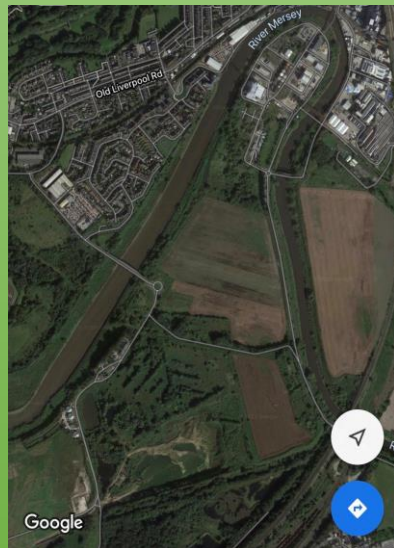
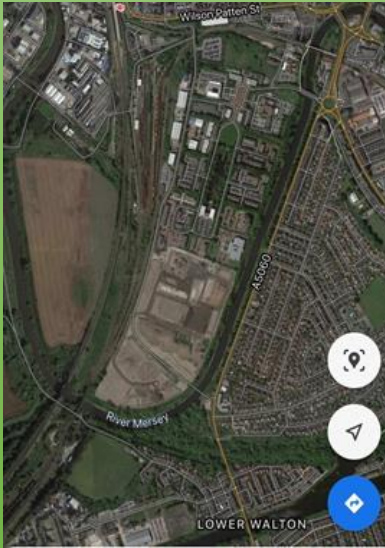


We have an exciting opportunity to develop our built environment in Warrington in a unique, attractive and innovative way. With plans to develop the waterfront and its environs as far as the landscape of Moore Nature Reserve this is a space in which we could create a truly special place to live.

While there is clearly a need to build more housing, what we actually build and where it is located is of equal importance if we want to create a happy, thriving community with a sense of place. For too long developers have built drab, soulless housing estates with identical red brick houses crammed together in such a way that speaks only of maximising profit. And it should not be forgotten that even these homes are often beyond the means of many people. There is frequently little consideration for the aesthetics of the housing that the large developers build; architects are often not instructed and there is insufficient concern that the residents buying these properties may also wish to have green spaces, trees, walkable streets and amenities in their locality too.



development area



The ideas in this brochure are primarily intended to cover Zones 3,4 and 6 shown on page 38 of the Town Centre Masterplan. We have not proposed ideas away from Wilderspool in the direction of Loushers Lane (the southern part of Zone 3) as housing here would be better in keeping with Victorian or Georgian style terraces (for which see Ben Bolgar's work for example) but these ideas may be useful for the northern, waterfront part of Zone 3.

We are fortunate to have so many waterways in Warrington – not only do they form important natural “blue” infrastructure and are attractive features in themselves - they provide us with the opportunities for leisure and serve as a commercial transport system through the centre of our town.

We have perhaps not made enough of the River Mersey thus far - indeed it is easy to forget sometimes that it is there. But plans by Warrington Borough Council and its partners are about to change all that. With the proposed complete regeneration of the waterfront the landscape could be completely reimagined - with homes, retail, social architecture, entertainment and green and business space - that would alter the complexion of the town centre area and be a place of which we can be proud.

Warrington Borough Council have produced a masterplan for the development of several areas around the town centre – from the central district itself at Bridgefoot / Wilderspool Causeway, across to the Bank Quay area and then beyond that, heading south towards Walton and Moore where the landscape becomes more natural – and there is surely an opportunity to embrace and enhance this in any future development.

The significant feature though is the river itself and much could be made of this when considering what should be built alongside it.

It is noted that the masterplan for Warrington town centre includes an image of the Stockholm waterfront. As with some parts of the UK, there are a number of impressive designs for living in other places with a similar climate to ours, particularly those which build around a waterfront; Malmö, Haarlem, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Utrecht, to name but a few. This is perhaps a good basis from which to consider themes and ideas for the homes, business premises and features of the area. It speaks of history, heritage, water commerce, modern city living – but with a focus on access to green space too.

If we simply quickly build the usual bland, steel, brick or glass block apartments or permit one of the large housing developers to cover the area in the ubiquitous “red box” housing estates for the sake of speed and cost then we will undo the architecturally excellent work already completed at Time Square and Bridge Street in the town centre. This is our opportunity for a reset: to consider how we can carefully develop our town from the central core outwards – with a view to retaining new, attractive, architecture for decades to come. The quick fix is out; sustainability is in.



QUIRKINESS

CHARACTER

Culture

COUNTRYSIDE



- Every development to be architect led
- Focus on sustainability
- Avoid developments that lead to identical styles / repetitive design
 - to this end a mix of developers, including smaller developers and architects could work together to produce a masterplan where the design does not replicate, but does rhyme
- No more red brick boxy houses crammed into a plot of land too small for the size of the home, similarly no more generic, featureless apartment blocks
- Private garden / balcony for every home
- *Mature* street trees and hedges
- No tarmac pavements
- No pink block paving
- No flat roofs on houses unless there is to be a roof garden
- No disproportionately small windows
- Large windows
- Communal green areas stocked with *mature* trees and plants
- Wide variety of building styles and pattern formations - the most attractive towns have developed organically over time - further growth and building needs to mirror that.
- Add ornament and character where possible - mouldings, ironwork, texture, pattern, curves, artistic flourishes, statement plants / living walls, natural materials, quirky street furniture and art
- Respect the style of the surrounding area

“Some believe, that beauty in the environment, and among humans, is necessary for the survival and health of *Homo sapiens*, just as it is among other members of the animal kingdom. Moreover, aesthetic appreciation of beauty is hard-wired into our brains. It is not in “the eye of the beholder,” as we have long been taught.”

- Mark Alan Hewitt, architect, author, historian and lecturer

“We live in a remarkable time in the early 21st century where we can better understand how the human experience functions, including how perception happens. New biometric tools let us track in real time how stressful or soothing new buildings are, and how the body implicitly responds without our conscious awareness to our surroundings. This new science has brought to the fore the fact that though we live in modern times, our bodies remain ancient, and that evolution has pre-set our response to visual stimuli more than most realise.”

– Ann Sussman, researcher and author of “Cognitive Architecture; Designing for how we respond to the Built Environment”

“...Beauty is not therefore a public good for the middle class only. Nor is it, in the usual run of things, even controversial. We underestimate the extent to which, most of the time, we know and agree on what will improve or protect whatever attractiveness there is in our surroundings, and we certainly know what will ruin it. And there is a mandate to act on this knowledge. There should be no shying away from beauty as a political issue. It is as much the job of government to protect ‘Areas of Ordinary, Normal Beauty’ it as it is to protect the cleanliness of the air.”

– Julian Baggini, philosopher and writer

Why we need beauty in our buildings

Beauty in architecture and the built environment can be ornate or simple, but ordinary people are smart: no matter what their circumstances – they know it when they see it.



Town Centre / Centre Park waterfront

Close to the town centre, Wilderspool and Centre Park: this area is proximate to existing buildings of various commercial styles. It provides a waterfront onto the River Mersey but would not necessarily be considered to be a place upon which to locate the “standard traditional” family or individual home in a cul de sac. Not yet ‘suburban’, it retains an urban feel. This area would lend itself to a development with a maritime or “modern fishing village” sensibility, particularly in view of the plans for Port Warrington: townhouses and apartments, dedicated urban allotments, offbeat style local shops, quirky cafes, a small and attractive “village” square, boardwalks and cycle paths, a park. The architectural vision would be a palette of various greys and browns with splashes of bright colour in contrast – maybe in the retail / hospitality architecture and in sculptures and street furniture - and in the green spaces and allotments. And trees. Don’t forget the trees. Homes could be a mix of standard and affordable houses and apartments for individuals, couples, families and seniors, who may like to be within walking distance of the town centre but still have a cohesive community on their doorstep.

The architects, LEVS, based in The Netherlands have exemplified this style with a superb development in Haarlem. Other notable architects in this section include Stride Treglown working with Bloor Homes, Idle Architecture Studio and Sheppard Robson.









Central waterfront area

Here we are moving away south of the town centre in the direction of Walton and Moore – but we're not quite there yet. This area would echo the themes and design frame of the town centre / centre park area but would start to move towards more residential, quiet walking streets and more parkland with houses and apartments having private and communal green space. Notable architects and builders in this section include KCA Architects and Countryside Properties working with BPTW. Again, a mixed demographic would enjoy this location and affordable housing could be created in this style at reasonable cost.





waterfront towards Walton and Moore

We are moving away from townscapes and cityscapes and settling in the area of country parks and Moore Nature Reserve. This area would be perfect for a more rural housing design. The existing architecture in this area is a mixture of mid 20th century, Victorian and farm buildings. The nature and rural feel of the buildings on Eastford Road, Walton adjacent to the site would be a great inspirational base for housing design in this area and which would not look out of context with the nearby nature reserve. In addition there is opportunity to create some fantastic sustainable but unique housing here. It would also be a great place for social housing.



There are a number of developers working with architects who have produced some remarkable work in recent years for homes that are sustainable, well designed and encourage a sense of community. This is key to developing a happy place for people to live. Plenty of outside space, access to nature, communal allotments, kitchen gardens, great views of the countryside and cycle and walking paths all increase our sense of wellbeing. Notable architects and developers in this section include The Living Village Trust, HTA Architects working with Barratt Homes, Stride Treglown working with Bloor Homes and of course, the amazing team at Bedzed. The Living Village Trust has a special place in Our Green Warrington's heart because not only are they beautiful and unique award winning homes, but because of the community involvement The Living Village Trust encourages in the planning and design stages (and TLVT's three bedroomed properties are no less affordable than a standard new build three bedroomed on a housing estate in Warrington!).





Social housing: central waterfront

Housing should not only be beautiful for those who are able to pay privately for it, it should also be beautiful for those in social housing. If we are finally going to “level up” in the twenty first century then ensuring that no matter your social or financial situation you should be given the opportunity to live in a warm, safe and attractive home, with private outdoor areas and easy access to green space.

Some argue that as long as more housing is built and that it is sufficiently fit for purpose then that will do. But this basic provision has been shown not to be enough – the housing estates that were built quickly and cheaply in the post war period have often not only *not* stood the test of time structurally, they have often fostered decline, poor health outcomes and a loss of self esteem. There is no excuse for this in modern society.



Luckily there are many architects working with local councils and housing associations who are changing all of that. You will no doubt be familiar with the award winning Goldsmith Street in Norwich (above) – a fantastic passivhaus development designed by Mickhail Riches and partners. This is what the future of social housing could look like. Also providing some attractive social housing is Hastoe Housing – with a more rural aesthetic and KCA Architects, who worked with Hackney council’s in-house architect, Ken Rorrison to renovate the Kings Crescent estate.

The images below are a mix of social housing - and private housing which could also easily be built as social housing.





waterfront **business and community space**

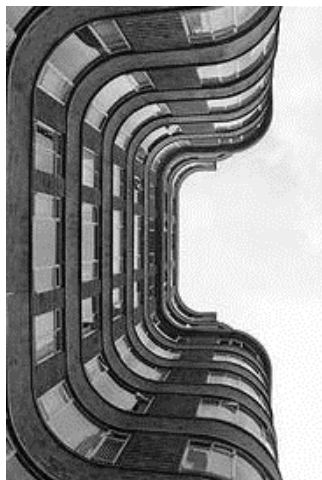
Office / business / community / public buildings and public space in this locality. It may also be possible to renovate existing buildings – which would be great.



waterfront landmarks

Reclaiming the past #1.

After the loss of the art deco landmark that was Mr Smiths / ABC Cinema/ The Ritz Cinema one idea would be to build a “new” landmark building remembering and celebrating the art deco style. There is already a wonderful art deco feel to the new council offices in Time Square – so a new hotel or apartment or even hospitality / retail building echoing this style would not only complement the architecture in Time Square but would also be a nod to the past for people in Warrington.



waterfront pavement and roads

Trackless trams would be a great way to increase public transport use. They're fun, could improve North / South Warrington connectivity and would not require the infrastructure of tramlines and tracks



Reclaiming the past #2.

While not all will have appreciated the aesthetics of the brutalist New Town House, it is of its time and forms part of the historical fabric of Warrington. With plans for its demise - what about turning it into a *literal* part of Warrington's fabric by recycling its concrete for use on roads and pathways on the new waterfront development. This would be a sustainable use of materials and reduce transport costs for 'new' road and pavement surfacing.



Thank you so much for taking the time to read this brochure.

To be frank, it could have been double the length!

We are not architects or masterplanners, we are simply a group of volunteers who love architecture, green space, nature, culture, history and a sense of community - and we simply wish to help create wonderful places for people in Warrington to live.

OUR
GREEN
Warrington
