



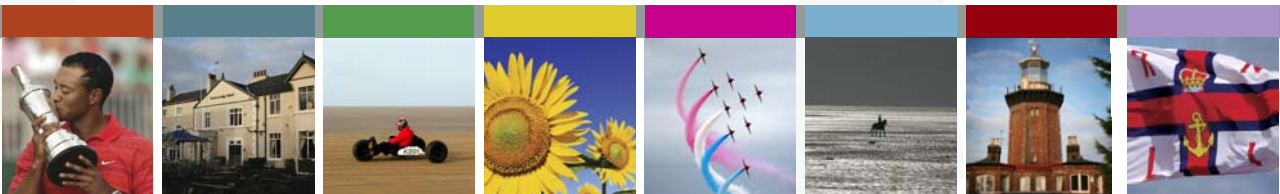
6 Market Street
Hoylake
Wirral CH47 2AE

e-mail: info@hoylakevillage.org.uk

CORE STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL – SPATIAL OPTIONS REPORT

RESPONSE BY HOYLAKE VILLAGE LIFE

03/03/10



“AN OUTSTANDING PLACE TO LIVE AND VISIT”

INTRODUCTION

This response has been prepared by the members of Hoylake Village Life, a community group formed in October 2009 to help to promote and facilitate the regeneration of Hoylake.

The group has reviewed the Core Strategy Spatial Options Report, and while the overall aims, objectives and conclusions set out within the Report are broadly supported, the group is specifically concerned about the proposed reclassification of Hoylake from a Town to a District Centre, and the potential impact this could have on the group's ambitions for Hoylake. The group considers that this aspect of the Report requires further consideration.

This response explains more about:

- i. What Hoylake Village Life is, what it has achieved so far, and what it aims to achieve in the future;
- ii. How the Core Strategy is a critical framework to achieve those aims;
- iii. How the proposal to reclassify Hoylake from a Town to a District Centre could affect the regeneration of Hoylake;
- iv. The potential of Hoylake to expand in the future.

In taking the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework forward, it is hoped that these comments will be taken into consideration. It is also hoped that Hoylake Village Life will be fully engaged throughout the plan-making process.

WHAT IS HOYLAKE VILLAGE LIFE?

Hoylake Village Life is a new community group whose primary aim is the regeneration of Hoylake. The group is made up of 14 volunteers, all either residents of Hoylake, or from local businesses in Hoylake. The group was formed in October 2009 following a public meeting held in Melrose Hall, Hoylake, in September 2009 to discuss the growing number of empty shops in Hoylake, and what could be done to reverse the apparent decline of Market Street.

Each group member offers his or her time on a voluntary basis, and weekly meetings have been held to formalise the group, establish aims and objectives and discuss a way forward. The main aim of Hoylake Village Life is:

To halt the decline of Hoylake's business area, encourage new businesses to move in, restore the village's sense of civic pride and promote its identity locally, nationally and internationally as a multi-faceted visitor destination.

The membership of the group is diverse and includes people of all age groups, and with different specialisms in areas required to help facilitate change, including expertise in urban regeneration, planning, marketing, business, art, design, and more. The group as a whole has ambitious plans for Hoylake's regeneration and will use members' skills, passion and creative energy in partnership with local organisations, community groups and other stakeholders to realise these.

In the short time that Hoylake Village Life has been in existence, the group has already made considerable progress in several key areas, as follows:

1. **Community engagement** – Hoylake Village Life has been engaged with, and is continuing to engage with, the local communities of Hoylake, including:
 - i. Designing, printing and distributing leaflets seeking views from the community about Hoylake, and inviting involvement in the group;

- ii. Giving presentations to key local stakeholders and holding public meetings involving local residents, local businesses, property owners, commercial agents, developers, representatives of the local Council and other community groups;
 - iii. Visiting local businesses in Hoylake to introduce the aims of the group and seek support;
 - iv. Painting an 'Ideas Tree' on the wall of a business in Hoylake to invite the local community to deposit their written ideas for Hoylake on the 'branches' of the tree;
 - v. Creating and publicising an email address for people to submit their ideas electronically;
 - vi. Conducting surveys asking for people's views on the regeneration of Hoylake;
 - vii. Being present at the last West Wirral Area Forum in February 2010 to promote the aims of Hoylake Village Life, seek views, and establish relationships with local stakeholders.
2. **Promotion of Hoylake** – Hoylake Village Life has completed a number of actions to promote Hoylake, including:
- i. The development of a clear brand identity for 'Hoylake Village' for use on any promotional literature, together with a branding plan which includes sub-brands;
 - ii. The design, production and distribution of 'Hoylake Village' branded window stickers, which can now be seen on most of the shop windows along Market Street;
 - iii. The design, production and launch of a promotional website to inform people about events, activities, businesses and community groups in Hoylake, and seek views about the future development of Hoylake. This can be viewed at www.hoylakevillage.org.uk
3. **Project development** – Hoylake Village Life is actively developing a programme of projects to promote Hoylake, encourage community participation, and attract investors and visitors. This programme includes the following initial projects:
- i. **Promotional banners** – a series of high-quality promotional banners have been designed and costed, with funding secured, for installation on lamp-posts along Market Street. The banners will promote key assets of Hoylake, creating a strong, positive message for people arriving at, and travelling through, Hoylake;
 - ii. **Community events** – a programme of local events is being developed which will provide opportunities for the local community and visitors to come together to celebrate the key assets of Hoylake. Ideas being discussed include family beach events, festive family events and street parties. The first event, a Natterjack Toad walk, will be held in May in partnership with Wirral Council's countryside rangers. More walks will follow;
 - iii. **Creative uses for empty shops** – ideas are being developed to find temporary uses and displays for empty shops along Market Street, including the creation of a community information centre, creative arts venue and creative displays of local art in shop windows of empty units. Funding opportunities are currently being explored and discussions being held with property owners, property agents and other local stakeholders.

The above projects are all 'Quick Wins' and can be delivered within the first year of Hoylake Village Life. Other, more ambitious, projects will be developed over a longer period of time through further engagement with local stakeholders, including property owners, local businesses, key stakeholders and public agencies. Some of these ideas are set out further on in this response.

COMMENTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CORE STRATEGY TO HOYLAKE

The Core Strategy will set the framework for future development in Wirral over the next 20 years, and once adopted will form part of the Local Development Framework for the Borough. The Local Development Framework and the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West will form the statutory Development Plan for the Borough, which will be used as the basis for determining planning applications, and help inform funding and investment priorities.

It is critical, therefore, that this framework promotes and facilitates the economic development of Wirral, attracting more private sector investment, more employment opportunities, increasing GVA, and creating thriving, attractive and sustainable centres for the local community, and future generations, to use and enjoy.

Hoylake Village Life considers that the potential of Hoylake is far greater than is currently being realised, and that through a concentrated and co-ordinated effort involving all stakeholders, the regeneration of Hoylake can bring more value to Wirral and the Merseyside sub-region as a greater economic driver for Wirral. Through the exploitation and promotion of its main assets, Hoylake has the potential to be a more attractive place for visitors, businesses, investors and residents.

Hoylake Village Life believes that the value gained could be far greater than the effort required to deliver the changes necessary to boost Hoylake as an economic driver for the Borough. This effort requires planning, co-ordination, leadership and facilitation. However, in the short time that Hoylake Village Life has been in existence, it has made considerable progress in demonstrating that this is a realistic ambition, and that small measures could reap significant rewards.

It is essential, therefore, that the Core Strategy provides the framework to help facilitate the future growth of Hoylake.

COMMENTS ON THE EFFECT OF RECLASSIFICATION FROM A TOWN TO A DISTRICT CENTRE

PPS4 requires the Local Planning Authority to define a hierarchy of centres, and to adopt a proactive and plan-led approach to planning for its town centres. Where a town centre has declined, and a reversal of that decline is not considered to be possible, the Local Planning Authority is advised to consider a reclassification of the centre so as to reflect its revised status in the hierarchy, e.g. through a diversification of uses. Town centre uses are defined as being retail; leisure; offices; and arts, cultural and tourism facilities. Such a diversification could, for example, allow residential development to replace shops.

The Core Strategy proposes a change in classification of Hoylake from a Town to a District Centre. This is based on the Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure, produced for Wirral Council by Roger Tym and Partners (December 2009). Hoylake Village Life considers that such a reclassification would have a profoundly negative and potentially irreversible impact on the future regeneration of Hoylake. The proposed reclassification would mean that any proposals for larger scale developments or for town centre uses defined in the previous paragraph, which would attract significantly more people, would be directed towards the proposed Sub-Regional Centre of Birkenhead, or the proposed Town Centres of West Kirby, Moreton, Heswall and Liscard, rather than Hoylake. Such a change in policy is likely to reduce the level of potential private investment in Hoylake and increase the competitiveness of nearby centres. This could only have a detrimental impact on the future development of Hoylake. The long-term effect of this is likely to shrink the centre of Hoylake, reducing the number of shops and opportunities for town centre uses. The reclassification would allow for a diversification of uses, which could potentially allow shop units to be converted into flats or houses, with shop frontages replaced by domestic facades. This would, of course, reduce footfall further, impacting even more on existing businesses. The profile of Hoylake and its ability to attract visitors would also be greatly affected.

Furthermore, the justification for the proposed reclassification is difficult to understand. Although Hoylake does have a number of vacant shop units, there are a number of positive trends which have emerged in recent months. In particular, new shops and businesses have opened up in Market Street in late 2009/early 2010, including a health food shop, therapy centre, café, gym, and two restaurants. In addition, two major new hotels are under

development, including a new boutique hotel and a Holiday Inn, and several more new shops, another new restaurant and a building society are currently in the process of being fitted out. Other big brand names will soon be appearing in Hoylake, including a new restaurant on Kings Gap branded by the world famous Marco Pierre White. This is all in addition to the existing offer along Market Street which includes two thriving supermarkets, a busy and varied evening economy, a growing office sector, and a number of specialist shops and cultural uses. The recent developments and incoming businesses demonstrate that Hoylake is not a lost cause, it is not a centre in irreversible decline, and does have far more to offer. The section below demonstrates how Hoylake could expand further in the future.

COMMENTS ON THE POTENTIAL OF HOYLAKE TO EXPAND IN THE FUTURE

Promoting Hoylake's assets

In the Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure, Roger Tym and Partners conclude that they do not see any prospect of Hoylake expanding its role in the future. Hoylake Village Life considers this to be a particularly harsh and unjustifiable conclusion to have reached, and does not take into account the unique assets of Hoylake which could, with careful management and promotion, attract significant levels of private sector investment and a significant increase in the number of visitors to Hoylake. At present the assets of Hoylake are not being promoted to their maximum potential, and Hoylake Village Life considers that the opportunities for Hoylake to act as an economic driver for Wirral are being lost.

In the short time that Hoylake Village Life has been in existence, it has experienced considerable interest from the local community and amongst local businesses to reverse Hoylake's fortunes. From discussions with local businesses in Hoylake, the consensus is extremely positive in supporting the promotion of Hoylake. The Hoylake Village Life website has had a rapid take-up of advertising from local businesses, and the promotional banners have attracted considerable support in sponsorship. These are only small, first steps, but with further promotional activity and the attraction of further investment, Hoylake could make giant strides forward.

Hoylake Village Life considers that there is a huge potential to improve Hoylake through the attraction of private sector investment by promoting Hoylake as a tourist destination and an attractive place to live. Examples of the assets of Hoylake include:

- Hoylake Beach and the surrounding estuary is a vital site for wildlife, being particularly productive for salt-marsh and mud-dwelling wildlife communities, and an internationally important area for wildfowl and waders.
- Hoylake has a rich and varied heritage, being an important Viking area, a fishing village, a holiday resort, an anchorage point for ships, and the departure point to Ireland for William III and an army of 10,000 men to fight the Battle of the Boyne.
- The British Men's Open Golf tournament was held in 2006 in Hoylake for the first time since 1967. The next tournament is scheduled for 2014, when once again Hoylake will be at the centre of the sporting world's media, with visitors attracted from all over the world, and Hoylake being publicised throughout the world's television networks and newspapers. With a collaborative effort from the local community, local businesses and other key public and private stakeholders, the economic benefits of this can be realised as they have elsewhere. The 2006 Open Golf tournament attracted an estimated 230,000 visitors to Hoylake and brought in around £60m to the local economy.
- To demonstrate the growing international profile of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club, other prestigious golf tournaments are now being attracted to Hoylake including the British Women's Open in 2012, the first time that the Club has hosted this Championship, and the British Boys' Championship in 2013. Other tournaments held in Hoylake include regional and representative events.
- Hoylake is home to the RNLI Lifeboat Station, one of the oldest Lifeboat Station locations in the UK, being present in Hoylake for over 200 years. Visitors are attracted to view the Station, and the adjacent model boating lake. In addition the popular Lifeboat Open Day brings thousands of people to Hoylake from afar every August to see a host of attractions.

- The national training and development centre for Scottish Power, at Hoylake House, provides high-quality knowledge and expertise for staff around the UK working in the energy sector.
- Hoylake Sailing School is a major training centre for the Royal Yachting Association, and offers training and expertise in sailing and power cruising to businesses and organisations across the world. The Sailing School is particularly active and involved with high profile events including the Liverpool Boat Show, and helps to showcase Hoylake and Wirral around the world.
- Hoylake is one of the top venues in Britain for Sand Yachting and Parakarting and hosts major international championships, such as the European Sand Yacht Championships. These sports may not be particularly well known in the UK, but they have large followings across the world, and could potentially bring more visitors to Hoylake through more promotional activity and improved facilities. In addition, the Sailing and Sand Yachting clubs are thriving local facilities.
- Hoylake also has strong cultural and sporting links, with several famous bands, musicians and performers that have Hoylake links including, for example, John and Cynthia Lennon, Morecambe and Wise, Glenda Jackson, Jan Ravens, Daniel Craig, Chris Boardman, and modern pop groups such as The Coral.
- A particular cultural attraction in Hoylake is the strong Beatles connection. John and Cynthia Lennon lived together in Hoylake, Brian Epstein owned a furniture shop in Hoylake, and the Beatles performed in Hoylake. There is huge potential therefore in attracting international tourists, as part of a package involving Liverpool, through guided walks, plaques, signage, etc.
- Hoylake has a thriving, vibrant and diverse evening economy, with many bars, restaurants and traditional pubs. People come to Hoylake from around Wirral, and this helps to create a positive image for visitors as well as being a sustainable source of income for local businesses and property owners. It is acknowledged that there may be anti-social issues associated with the evening economy, which tend to be exaggerated in Hoylake, but these can be effectively managed,
- Hoylake is well connected to Liverpool, being less than half an hour away by train. Liverpool is a growing international city, with a rapidly developing City Centre. New attractions in Liverpool include Liverpool One, the Arena and Convention Centre, new office developments and a thriving night-time economy. These must be promoted as key assets for Hoylake, both in attracting people from Liverpool to Hoylake as an alternative and complementary place to visit for tourists, and in attracting people who work in Liverpool to live in Hoylake.

The above assets are not reflected in Roger Tym's report, but they are all unique and integral to Hoylake's regeneration. Collectively, Hoylake Village Life and other stakeholders will promote Hoylake's assets and attract more business and investment into Hoylake. The potential is there, but it needs to be encouraged and developed in a co-ordinated way with all local stakeholders. Hoylake Village Life is committed to help make this happen. However, the adoption of planning policies that restrict private sector investment and encourage town centre uses elsewhere could jeopardise Hoylake's potential.

Strengthening the retail offering of Hoylake

Hoylake Village Life acknowledges that there are a number of vacant shop units along Market Street, and the need to address this problem is the original reason for the formation of the group. However, the consultations that Hoylake Village Life has undertaken so far reveal underlying reasons behind this problem, which could be challenged and addressed, including:

1. A tendency for prospective retail occupiers to be diverted away from Hoylake towards other centres, particularly West Kirby. There is a perceived greater risk of letting property to retailers in Hoylake due to their chances of survival in a location with a lack of footfall and high number of vacancies. However, non-retail uses, e.g. financial and professional services, may be more attractive to some agents and property owners as they have greater covenant strength due to their ability to survive without reliance on footfall, and the benefits of a growing cluster of these uses in Hoylake. Agents have confirmed that there has been interest from retailers in coming to Hoylake. Any diversion away to other centres would

inevitably affect the potential growth of the retail offer and keep footfall at a low scale. Hoylake Village Life believes that this trend can be reversed, through a targeted and co-ordinated approach, involving Hoylake Village Life, business support agencies, property owners and their agents, to attract retailers and promote Hoylake as an attractive retail destination.

2. A tendency for the local community to shop elsewhere. There are a number of factors, not exclusive to Hoylake, which are attracting shoppers away from existing centres. These are recognised in the Core Strategy and include a growing trend across Wirral for people to shop using the internet and through catalogues. In terms of convenience shopping, people are being attracted to large out-of-centre supermarkets in the Borough and in terms of comparison shopping to retail destinations outside the Borough, most notably Liverpool One and Cheshire Oaks. The number of vacancies in Hoylake exacerbates the situation, with more people being deterred from shopping on Market Street due to the weaker retail offer. However, Hoylake Village Life believes that this trend can be reversed with a concentrated and co-ordinated effort led by Hoylake Village Life, in partnership with other local stakeholders, to encourage more people from within the local community to shop in Hoylake.

As more people use the internet and catalogues for shopping, and are attracted to areas that require the use of a car, then communities in existing centres must be more imaginative and creative in how they use their local centres. The local community, local businesses, property owners and other local stakeholders can help to make Hoylake a thriving, exciting and animated place to be, creating experiences and positive memories. Such an approach is supported by the Government's initiatives to create stronger town centres, and engender civic pride and social cohesion. Ideas being promoted and facilitated by Hoylake Village Life include:

- A targeted marketing campaign to raise awareness amongst the local community of the impact on Hoylake of shopping elsewhere; and promote the benefits of shopping in local shops, including better value, more attentive and personal service, no or reduced transport costs, a reduced carbon footprint, and a greater leisure experience with shopping potentially combined with events and visits to other uses such as cafes, restaurants and bars, and facilities such as the local library;
- Organising more events and initiatives to attract more people to shop in Hoylake, including food and drink festivals, a market, community events, street performers, live music, comedy, dance and street art;
- Environmental enhancements, using promotional material such as banners, signage, flower arrangements, lighting and more. The local community is already making great progress in improving the environment, with local initiatives such as Hoylake and Meols in Bloom;
- Creative uses for empty shops, such as temporary art galleries, artistic window displays, temporary creative workshops;
- Addressing other issues that currently affect the shopping experience, including for example, a perceived lack of car parking (or lack of signage towards existing car parks);
- Organising complementary leisure activities, such as guided walks.

CONCLUSION

This response reflects Hoylake Village Life's current position in relation to the issues raised by the Core Strategy Options Report. Hoylake Village Life has made considerable progress in a relatively short period of time, and there is no doubt that more projects and ideas will emerge over time to help regenerate Hoylake.

There is plenty of work to be done to attract more investment and visitors into Hoylake. The forthcoming golf events, including The Open in 2014, will be major attractors, and it is essential that local stakeholders make a concentrated effort to realise the benefits that such events can bring. It is also vitally important to maximize the sporting tourism potential between the major golf events.

Hoylake Village Life will continue to work hard to engage with the local community and stakeholders, to create the right conditions to facilitate continued and sustainable growth in Hoylake. It is hoped that this response demonstrates that Hoylake Village Life can be considered to be suitable stakeholders, and has demonstrated that there are wider issues and considerations than referred to in the report by Roger Tym and Partners. It is essential that the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework recognises the potential of Hoylake and sets a framework to facilitate its growth.

Hoylake Village Life considers that this framework, and the future regeneration of Hoylake, is dependent on Hoylake's retained status as a Town Centre.

The group therefore considers that this aspect of the Report requires further consideration.

Mr E Boulton
Chair
Hoylake Village Life

APPENDIX

DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE CORE STRATEGY SPATIAL OPTIONS REPORT

2.232 refers to the tourism attractions in Settlement 6 (West Kirby/Hoylake), and includes mention of draws such as Ashton Park in West Kirby. If local attractions such as Ashton Park are mentioned in terms of tourism, then why not the new Hoylake Lifeboat Centre (a major maritime institution), which attracts visitors to walk inside the centre and view the lifeboat, and the new model boating lake which is also a growing attraction for visitors.

Other major tourist attractions are not mentioned in the Core Strategy, and are highlighted elsewhere in this response, including the Sandy Yachting and Parakarting, 2014 Open Golf, 2012 Women's Open and 2013 British Boys Championship.

6.138 The Core Strategy relies on the Wirral Town Centres and Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 Evidence Base. In relation to the 'Leisure, Evening and Night time Economy', the Core Strategy refers to Moreton, Liscard and Bromborough as being locally popular for restaurants. Hoylake also has a strong restaurant offer in comparison to these centres, and its omission fails to highlight one of Wirral and Hoylake's assets. This summary is used unfairly as a justification to reclassify Hoylake downwards in the hierarchy of centres (6.140).

6.138 The Core Strategy refers to West Kirby, Wallasey and Heswall as popular locations for pubs and bars, in addition to Liverpool and Birkenhead. Again, Hoylake has a strong pub and bar offer in comparison to these centres, and its omission fails to highlight one of Wirral and Hoylake's assets. This summary is used unfairly as a justification to reclassify Hoylake downwards in the hierarchy of centres (6.140)

END