

# News

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## **1.4m sq ft Birkenhead transformation ready for launch as planning approved**

The team behind Wirral Growth Company is celebrating as its ambitious 1.4m sq ft masterplan to bring forward the transformation of Birkenhead town centre has been approved by Wirral Council's planning department.

The new masterplan for the town centre, which was developed following an extensive period of consultation with the Wirral community, will deliver a highly-accessible central business district with new energy-efficient Grade A office buildings set within extensive public realm and green space. Wirral Council will occupy part of the new office space as part of its commitment to improving its carbon footprint and reducing occupancy of costly and inefficient buildings within its estate.

Further phases will see a new replacement market that will blend a vibrant food and beverage hall with a thriving traditional market. This will drive a new daytime and evening economy not seen before in the town, while helping to kick-start the wider regeneration of the Leftbank urban development area with new family homes and apartments.

The central business district is key to unlocking the wider regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, which Wirral Council is progressing through national programmes such as the £25m Future High Streets Fund awarded at the end of last year, and a £45m bid to the Towns Fund scheme. It is anticipated that the government will be making an announcement regarding the outcome of the Towns Fund bid within the next few months.

Wirral Growth Company (WGC) is a 50:50 joint venture between Wirral Council and national urban regenerator, Muse Developments, set up to deliver a long-term vision for regeneration, which will improve homes, lives and communities in key areas across the borough.

Mike Horner, development director at Muse Developments and a director at Wirral Growth Company, said: "Delivering major programmes of regeneration in our towns and cities takes time and requires a meticulous approach from all partners, to make sure we get things right. We're proud to receive consent on our ambitious masterplan and reach the latest milestone in our commitment to repurposing key areas of the Wirral, to drive investment, opportunities and prosperity for all.

"This is a pivotal moment for the partnership as we get ready to start on site in the coming months and realise our collective vision for Birkenhead and the wider Wirral."

Alan Evans, director of regeneration and place at Wirral Council, said: "The significance of this decision can't be understated. This is a crucial time for Birkenhead and the whole Leftbank area of the River Mersey. The central business district will provide a catalyst for the rest of the town centre and extend out into the surrounding neighbourhoods and beyond. We are grateful to our partners at Muse Developments as part of the Wirral Growth Company for their efforts in securing this important part of Birkenhead's future.

"We are currently consulting on the ambitious 20-year vision for the town through the Birkenhead 2040 Framework. This will see the transformation and repopulation of the town with the creation of

a series of new high-quality neighbourhoods, a new urban linear park to complement Birkenhead Park and a world-class mixed-use waterfront. I would urge anyone who hasn't already looked at the plans and had their say to do so."

AHR Architects are masterplanners for the project, with Barton Willmore acting as planning consultants on behalf of the growth company.

Greg Dickson, planning director at Barton Wilmore, said: "The approval of Wirral Growth Company's hybrid planning application is a landmark moment for the future of Birkenhead. The application has been informed by a rigorous three-stage consultation exercise, that provided a deliverable 15-year plan to breathe new life and investment into the town centre. This includes a new commercial heart, alongside residential neighbourhoods and revitalised retail and leisure facilities that have been designed to build on the town's existing assets and draw inspiration from its maritime location."

Following the demolition of Milton Pavements, the first phase of development is anticipated to be on site in the middle of 2021.