Liverpool Knowledge Quarter Green Infrastructure

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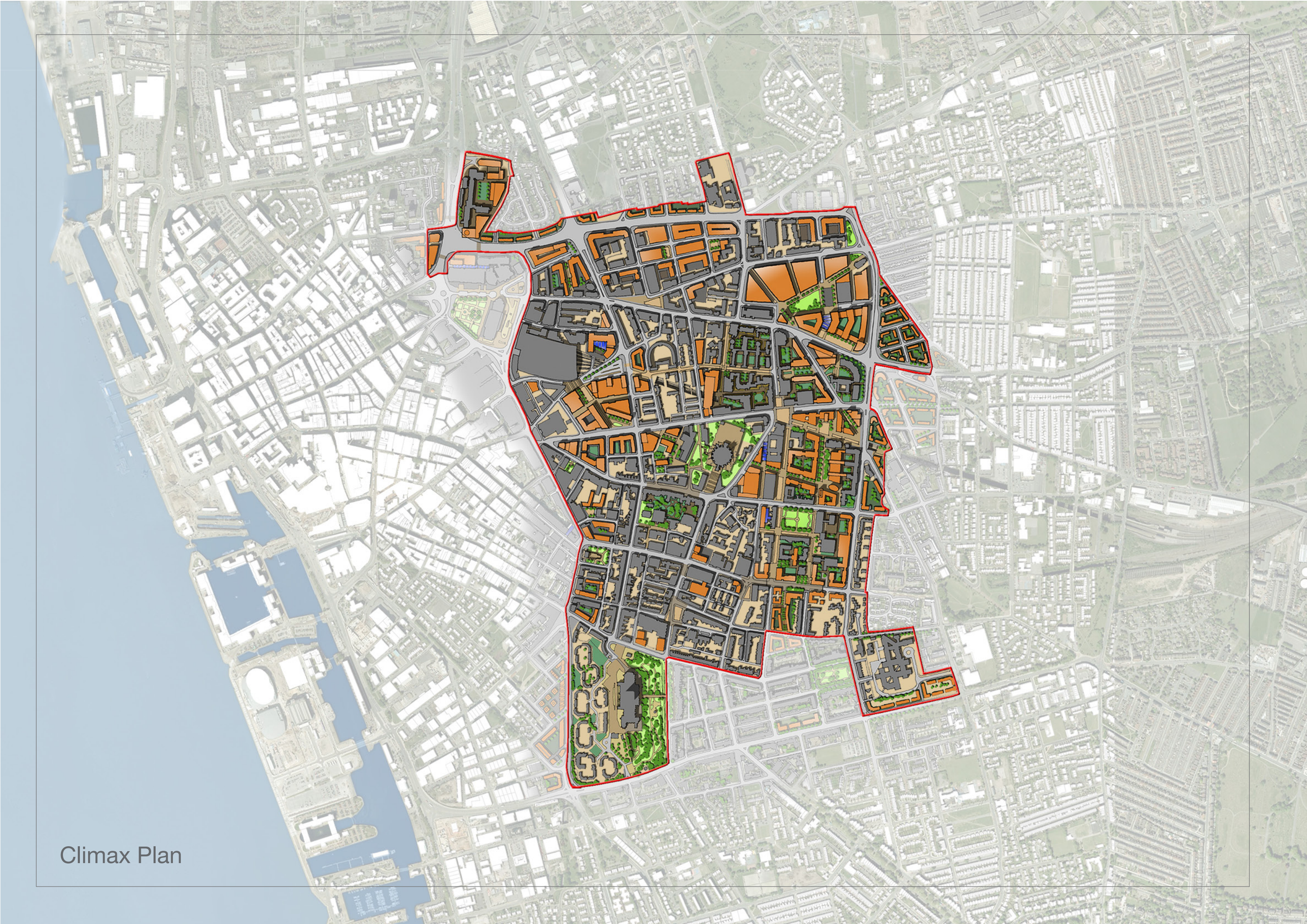
1. Introduction

In this section we set out the context for the Green Infrastructure plan, defining the Knowledge Quarter, the priorities for investment and the brief which has informed development of the plan.



Climax Plan

1.1 Defining the ‘Knowledge Quarter’

Liverpool’s ‘Knowledge Quarter’ defines a unique combination of internationally comparable learning and cultural assets spread across the eastern half of the city centre.

The Knowledge Quarter contains three Universities, two cathedrals, the region’s largest teaching hospital, the School of Tropical Medicine, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and a thriving mix of theatres, restaurants and bars. All this is set within an historic edge of centre residential district that includes streets and squares among the best preserved Georgian townscapes in Britain.

Identified as a regionally important ‘strategic site’ by the North West Development Agency, Liverpool Vision commissioned REGENERIS to undertake a study of the area’s economic impact in 2007. The resulting ‘Knowledge Quarter Prospectus’ confirms the area as an economic powerhouse, driving some 15% of the city’s annual GVA despite only accounting for 1% of its land area.

The Knowledge Quarter enjoys superb strategic connections via the M62, West Coast Mainline, Mersey Tunnels and underground rail system. Major institutions and the private sector are focusing investment programmes worth hundreds of millions of pounds on the area.

Environmentally and socially however, the physical setting is fragmented, its fine qualities compromised by crude planning and highways schemes, poor pedestrian access and an inconsistently managed public realm, compounding a context blighted by some of the worst neighbourhood deprivation in England.

The Framework Plan

Based on detailed site analysis and stakeholder consultation, the ‘Climax Plan’ sets out a long term vision to reconnect the area using an integrated knowledge network of buildings, places and routes.

The classical form of the Georgian city is repaired with contemporary architecture aligned around fine streets and spaces. The knowledge network is configured to encourage easy movement, meeting and interaction, recognised as key to seamless transfer of knowledge capital.

A clear implementation strategy prioritises a list of early and longer term interventions to maintain the regeneration momentum the area now enjoys. Based on this, a programme of public realm improvements is underway, with funding of up to £15m identified over a series of phases. Applicants for planning permission on sites around the area are encouraged to refer to the ‘climax plan’ layout to ensure consistency with the overall vision.

The aim of this Appendix is to build on the Knowledge Quarter Prospectus (Regeneris, 2007) and Urban Design and Public Realm Framework (URBED, 2008) to show how planning for ‘Green Infrastructure’ can further partners’ goals for academic, economic, social and environmental improvement.

In recognition of this potential, Liverpool’s Knowledge Quarter has been selected as a Green Infrastructure case study by Natural Economy Northwest, a partnership between the Northwest Development Agency, Natural England and the SITA Trust.

The seven priorities for investment

URBED’s 2008 Design and Public Realm Framework responds to the seven priorities for physical investment identified in the Knowledge Quarter Prospectus

Priority 1. Tackling key linkages to the City centre core.

To create a strong route from Lime Street Station up Mount Pleasant and Brownlow Hill, complemented with more animated ground floor uses and improvements to the public realm, which enhance pedestrian priority.

Priority 2. Concerted investment in underperforming Brownlow Hill, Mount Pleasant, Hardman Street/Myrtle Street and London Road.

The London Road, Brownlow Hill. Mount Pleasant and the Hardman Street/Myrtle Street quadrants are critical to the development of the knowledge economy in Liverpool. They each need investment in image and identity.

Priority 3. Improving routes within the Knowledge Quarter

Strengthening the quality and legibility of routes within the area, particularly within and across the University of Liverpool campus.

Priority 4. Developing physical linkages with other key assets and neighbouring communities.

Promote a vitality of the urban environment linking the core area to key knowledge assets such as the City Campus on Byrom Street and to adjacent neighbourhoods such as Edge Hill, Kensington and Everton.

Priority 5. Overcoming domination by cars.

At the moment, the car has a largely negative impact on the environment and quality of the Knowledge Quarter. Further vehicle calming, creative solutions to car parking and improvements to public transport, along with better pedestrian links, are all required.

Priority 6. Making memorable spaces, better linked to their surrounding buildings.

Examine the relationship between important buildings and groups of buildings and how they relate to adjacent spaces to create memorable and useable spaces that promote a convivial environment for the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

Priority 7. Promoting awareness of the Knowledge Quarter both nationally and internationally.

It is vital that awareness of the strengths, opportunities and aspirations within the KQ are raised amongst investors and other stakeholders, both in the UK and overseas. We believe that the KQ should play an increasingly prominent role in the ongoing re-positioning of Liverpool and the North West.