

Garston  
Masterplan  
Round Table Workshop  
Briefing Note

This briefing note has been produced by URBED to summarise the consultation workshop which took place on Wednesday 13th March 2013.

This work will direct the production of masterplan options for the Garston area.

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# Introduction

URBED were appointed by Liverpool City Council in January 2013 to develop a masterplan for the Garston area.

For this project we teamed up with market development and asset analysts Eye, and transport planners and engineers Fore Consulting.

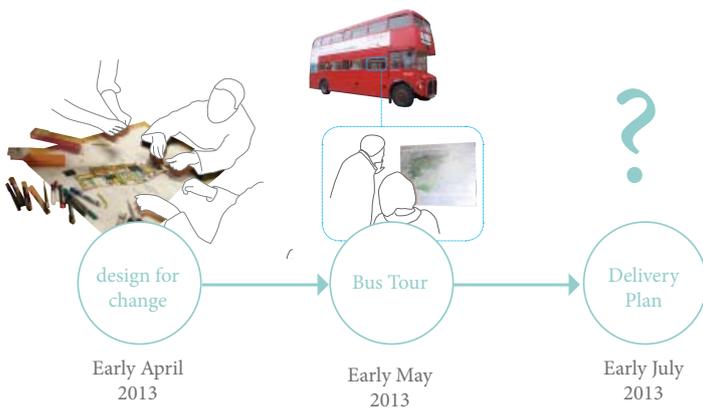
Public Consultation is a key part of all of URBEDs work and for this project we intend to hold three events to direct the development of our masterplan options.

The first event, set out in this briefing note, is the roundtable workshop. This has been designed to engage with local residents, groups, businesses and stakeholders to appreciate their views and aspirations for Garston. The second event will be an interactive workshop in which we will present and discuss the different options for Garston which we have come up with.

The last event will display the final masterplan which will have been produced taking on board comments from previous consultation sessions and steering group meetings.

The timeline for consultation is detailed below:

## Project Timeline



The comments contained within this briefing note are opinions of participants, which were noted down during the round table discussions. They may not reflect the opinion of the whole group but are personal ideas and thoughts in response to the questions asked.

## Workshop Format

The roundtable workshop took place on Wednesday 13th March at Garston Urban Village Hall, situated in Garston under the Bridge.

The event was well attended with 37 participants. There were a range of residents, business owners and local stakeholders participating. The attendees were split into three roundtable groups, each had a facilitator from the team.

The evening was divided into two sessions, the first involved a short introduction to the team from Rob Monaghan and David Rudlin. The groups were given a chance to introduce themselves and discuss the first question on Garston today which involved listing likes and dislikes of the area.

The second stage of the evening consisted of a short presentation by John from URBED on the history of Garston up to the present day. Urban design analysis maps were displayed to reiterate the abundance of empty or disused sites in the area, the deterioration of the high street and the lack of links between Garston village and Under the bridge.

Groups were then asked to discuss the second question on a Future for Garston.

The workshop was rounded up with feedback from each table so that everyone could see what the other groups had been discussing.

## Publicity

The event was advertised through an email campaign which was sent out to 41 contacts provided by the council and URBED.

Posters and leaflets were also distributed along the High Street, at community centres and the NHS treatment centre.

A wordpress blog and twitter account was also set up to advertise the event, and people were encouraged to join the mailing list for further information on future events.

# Participants

## The team

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Liverpool City Council (LCC)

*Andy Wallace*

*Rob Monaghan*

*Neil Coventry*

*Heather Jago*

URBED

*David Rudlin*

*John Sampson*

*Sangeetha Banner*

*Caitlin Rowlands*

## Steering group

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*Stuart Clark - LCC Development Control*

## Participants - Stakeholders; Residents; Groups; Businesses;

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*Rose Rowan - LCC Neighbourhood Team*

*Christina Williams - LCC Neighbourhood Team*

*Tommy Highton - Merseyside Police*

*Jenny Brown - Merseyside Police*

*Roy Lovering - Garston Historic Society*

*Reverend Roland Harvey - St Michael's Church*

*Glyn Thomas - Garston Urban Village Hall*

*Paul Davy - Garston Urban Village Hall*

*Jo Fallon - South Liverpool Homes*

*Kristene Koraski - South Liverpool Homes Group*

*Reverend Andrew Fox - Garston Park Church and Banks Road Methodist Church*

*Franny Williams*

*V. Cole*

*B. Southern*

*Mr and Mrs Cook*

*Martin Conroy*

*Alan Banks*

*Terry Mckenna*

*Colin Gaskarth*

*Mrs S.E. Smith*

*Miss R. Lenton*

*M. Forde*

*Jonny Roberts*

*James Glenon*

*Jean Wharton*

*Ian Mcmillan*

*Gareth Davies*

*Paul Young*

*Roger Brown*

*Mike Carney*

*Margaret Moran*

*Michael Axworthy*

*Julie Van Vuuren*

*Doreen Finnegan*

*N. Speer*

*Nicole P.*



Participants at the roundtable event.

# Session One:

## Garston Today

The first session instigated a debate on participants likes and dislikes in the area. Some participants had a lot to say, they were proud to live in the area but were frustrated to see that the area was not reaping the benefits of previous investment initiatives.

Some reiterated that there was divide between the two communities, Garston Village and Garston under the Bridge. A few participants were unsure about whether the masterplan would cover the whole area.

There was consensus amongst those who were keen to see a wider range of shops on the high street, that the amount of vacant units reduced the appeal of the high street as a shopping destination.

Comments from the first session have been listed below. Suggestions have been separated into three categories, social, economic and physical.

- > Social characteristics include suggestions regarding the local population, well being, perceptions and community.
- > Economic characteristics include suggestions related to shops, employment and the high street economy.
- > Physical characteristics include suggestions related to housing, layouts, open space and transport and pedestrian connections.

### What is good about Garston?

#### Social

- > Good sense of community, close knit community. Some residents have lived here a long time.
- > Good schools.
- > There are new services in the area such as the NHS treatment centre and new Academy.
- > People want to help each other.
- > Popularity as a place to live is improving.

#### Economic

- > Market provides vibrancy
- > There are a range of independent shops.

#### Physical

- > Lots of empty space in the area provides a blank canvas, there is lots of opportunity for development.
- > Available parks and open space
- > New housing is bringing people into the area.

### What are the challenges facing Garston?

#### Social

- > St Mary's Road is depressing as there are so many empty shops.
- > Previous consultation has had poor records in the past, is there any assurance a masterplan will work this time round?
- > There is a lack of cultural development in the area.
- > The area lacks a centre.
- > There is crime on the high street at night.
- > Some of the population have a lack of skills to allow them to work in business parks in the area.
- > There is a lack of communication between people and local politicians, which makes it difficult to get things done.
- > The continual degradation of the high street leaved people feeling frustrated and angry.
- > Crime and anti-social behaviour are a problem in the area, there is a lot of bike theft and disturbance from quad bikes.
- > Police station has no front desk which makes communication an issue.
- > The reputation of Garston under the Bridge is undeserved, it is generally a safe place and the image of this area needs to change.

#### Economic

- > Local businesses are not good employers for the local population. There are small employment opportunities locally, even though there are big businesses nearby.
- > The local shops lack in variety which means the high street is less of a shopping destination.
- > There is a lack of knowledge about what big businesses do in the area.
- > The high street lacks animation.
- > The market is in the wrong place, the old site opposite the Masonic Hall is still vacant.
- > Closing of the Co-op may result in more shops closing down and the high street becoming even more derelict and disconnected in its offer.

## Physical

- > The bypass is a barrier between the different areas of Garston.
- > Parking is a problem on the high street, especially on Market day.
- > There is a problem with the quality of housing stock in the area, some properties are in a poor state of repair and need to be developed/refurbished as soon as possible.
- > There is poor public transport Under the Bridge.



Walton Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool: A high street north of Liverpool City Centre offering a wide variety of independent shops and larger retailers.

## Where is Garston similar to?

- > Walton Road, Kirkdale
- > Lodge Lane, Liverpool
- > Old Swan, Liverpool City Centre
- > Widnes, Cheshire

## What could Garston be like?

- > Lark Lane, Liverpool
- > Woolton Village, Liverpool

## What have these areas got?

- > Image
- > Reputation
- > Small scale
- > Night time economy



Lark Lane, Liverpool: A 'bohemian' high street with a good reputation, offering bars, cafes and restaurants. Some participants mentioned that they would like the high street in Garston to develop a night time economy.

## What will Garston be like in 20 years?

- > Hopefully a better place to live and shop.
- > Provide better facilities for the youth of the area.
- > It should have an improved housing mix.
- > Gas works site, dingle bank and other sites improved and used as open green space.



Allerton Road, Woolton Village, Liverpool: Located north east of Garston, the centre is a conservation area with a mix of restaurants, shops and housing. The area celebrates its historic buildings.

# Session Two: A Future Garston?

The second session encouraged participants to discuss what the future was for Garston and what the role of the high street and port were.

Participants were keen to see Garston thrive, and were optimistic about new housing in the area to fill empty or vacant spaces and create a greater demand for shopping on the high street.

Some participants were interested in seeing the port opened up for public use and utilising one of the under-used docks for leisure uses.

There was a general feeling that participants wanted to see development in the area. It was mentioned that because under-used spaces were closed off, it was unclear what activity was taking place in these areas, or a fear of crime meant locals stayed away, which reduced vibrancy and detracted from the quality of the public realm. People were optimistic about turning these spaces into places they could enjoy, for example creating an ecological park on the site next to the Gas works, and removing the railway sidings to make way for more housing.

Comments from the discussion have been noted below:

## Visions

- > Garston should be a clean, healthy and happy place to live.
- > Garston should celebrate its uniqueness - historic character and heritage.
- > Garston should provide spaces in which you can relax.
- > A voice for Garston needs to be created, there is an issue with communication between the people and local authorities.
- > Young people in Garston need inspiration to change the area.

## Aspirations

### Social

- > Reduce dereliction on the high street.
- > Change the perception of Garston, people should aspire to want to live and stay in the area.
- > Reduce crime on the high street at night.
- > Take advantage of pride in living 'under the bridge'.
- > Garston has a good mix of older people and young families, there is a perceived danger that this will be lost.

### Economic

- > Encourage local entrepreneurs to invest in Garston, create opportunities for unemployed people in Garston.
- > Encourage a night time economy on the high street without adverse impacts of noise and disturbance.
- > Improve shop fronts to encourage businesses to move to the area.

### Physical

- > Improve pedestrian links between the two areas of Garston. Especially from the Garston under the bridge towards the high street.
- > Open up the space next to the gas towers with money from a lottery funding package to turn it into an ecological park.
- > Divert buses to better serve the local area.
- > Move the freight-liner terminal and railway infrastructure open up the space and improve connections. This land could be used for housing.

## What is the role of the high street?

- > The market is a catalyst, the frequency could be increased and there should be more variety and quality produce available. The market could be moved to the former coop site which would allow it to expand, creating a new centre for the village.
- > The high street could be concentrated around the cross roads and vacant shops turned to alternative uses such as housing. Retail incentives could be used to encourage small and independent shops to relocate.
- > Opportunity for a night-time economy in Garston to offer services similar to Lark Lane.
- > A small scale Victorian High Street should be maintained and independent businesses encouraged. There should be less focus on attracting big supermarkets.

## What is the role of the port?

- > The port has no obvious public function, allowing access to the water front but providing development in this area would be a good thing.
- > Port activities could be condensed to the southern docks, so the remaining dock could be opened up to provide leisure uses such as shops/cafes/bars, which could make the area a destination.
- > Discourage 'dirty industrial' land uses in the area and encourage housing and parks in these areas.

# Summary of Findings

Quotations from the consultation:

“We need to improve the image of Garston and attract people to the area”

“The high street is depressing”

“We need to get back that wonderful feeling of all-togetherness”

The workshop was useful in establishing some common themes. These have been detailed in the table below with suggestions to how observations can direct the development of masterplan options:

	Theme	Observation	Next Steps
1	A perception of two different communities.	There was a perception that the Village and Under the Bridge were two very separate communities. Physically there is only one main route into the under the bridge area which makes it feel isolated.	The masterplan needs to re-connect these communities. Both areas need to feel included within regeneration on the high street.
2	A need to improve the high street.	The number of vacant units on St Mary's Road high street and the poor variety of shops needs to be addressed. Vendors on the high street were witnessing a drop in footfall since the closure of the Co-op. Participants felt that vacant and derelict units were degrading the high street, but the Friday market at the east end of the high street was doing well, and should be allowed to grow. Some participants also suggested that parking was an issue on the high street and people often drove out of the area to larger supermarkets as these were more convenient.	The high street is very long for the current size and population of the surrounding area, which is evident in the high proportion of vacant units at 25% compared with the national average of 14%. Vacancy on the high street is also not a recent issue, as problems arose from the development of the Garston and Speke bypass which diverted car traffic and shoppers in the 1960s.  This suggests high street activity needs to be focused in a smaller area. There is also opportunity to increase the frequency of the market and allow it to expand to increase the towns retail offer.  It will be difficult for Garston to compete with larger supermarkets in the area, so instead it could offer a more unique and independent retail offer to attract shoppers.
3	A positive approach to development.	Participants seemed positive about encouraging Garston to grow and provide more housing. Participants were also keen to see under-used industrial sites turned over to new uses such as parks, housing and retail.	There are a large number of under-used, vacant or derelict sites in the area which could be brought forward for development. This provides the potential to improve connections in the area, as developers are asked to contribute towards access infrastructure. An increase in the local population could also produce more demand for shops on the high street.
4	A need to open up spaces for leisure and recreation.	Four participants were involved in preparing a bid to get funding for a ecological park on the site next to the gas works. Participants were keen to see this happen and felt there were lots of spaces in Garston which were closed off, which could be ideal for leisure and recreational spaces.	Some participants suggested there was no spaces in Garston to relax, and a fear of crime deterred others from enjoying the green spaces available. This could be addressed in partnership with the group who are already working towards getting funding for an ecological park in the area.
5	A need to change the image of Garston and make it a destination	Many participants had preconceptions about the population of Garston and problems of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area. Some suggested that people didn't come into the area because it had little to offer, especially in terms of shopping, night time economy and spaces to relax in.	Development of the masterplan needs to look into ways of promoting Garston, and changing peoples perceptions of the different areas. Developing one of the ports as a leisure destination could enhance Garston's offer as well as provide space for new, high quality residential development.