



PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

Final Report

January 2023



Local Planning Authority/ies	Wirral Council
Date Report Submitted	Final Report 31 st January 2023

Executive Summary

Region	North West
LA Rural-Urban Classification Category	Urban
Project summary	Focussing on two local authority masterplan projects, the aim of the project was to build on experiences of current on-line consultation tools and expand on success with using a digital 3D model and 3D visualisation to leverage a public engagement process to achieve a greater uptake than traditional methods. By doing this an additional aim was also to extend the reach to a more representative age and socio economic demographic than previous consultation processes.
Funding allocated	£92,950
Supplier(s) Appointed	Digital Urban Place, HLP Architects, BDP Architects.
Consultation Topic	Masterplan Development Options
Consultation Outcomes	Please refer to Section 3
Consultation dates	In person school events to develop VR experience July 2022 Digital / Comms Campaign: October - November 2022 In Person VR events: 14 th & 15 th October 2022 Consultation Period: 14 th October to 25 th November

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1.0 Project Summary

The Council's bid to the PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2 focused on the opportunity to increase numbers and to reach a broader demographic, particularly younger groups through enhanced digital engagement for New Brighton and Seacombe masterplan projects. The project utilised 3D models and visualisation to showcase the work in a visual and interactive style. An engagement programme using a variety of approaches was utilised. This included:

- Working with young people in schools
- A questionnaire
- Virtual Reality Events
- Stakeholder, community outreach and Business Events

	Amount Bid	Amount Spent
<i>Extension of Bang the Table Services</i>	<i>£11,000</i>	£70,200 Digital Urban
<i>3D Model Development and software licensing</i>	<i>£15,000</i>	
<i>Specialist immersive experience engagement activities</i>	<i>£28,500</i>	
<i>Project Management</i>	<i>£8,000</i>	
<i>10% Contingency</i>	<i>£8,450</i>	
<i>Promotion, Marketing and Event Staging</i>	<i>£9,500</i>	£10,750 Wirral MBC
<i>Masterplanning Team Inputs</i>	<i>£12,500</i>	£12,000 HLP and BDP
TOTAL	£92,950	£92,950

2.0 Lessons Learned

As part of developing guidance for best practice, we want to understand the lessons learned at each stage of your project. We know that these project stages might look different for different projects so feel free to edit the table to reflect your particular experience. Please provide as much detail as possible as these insights will be integral to developing national best practice guidance. Where applicable, please share links or attachments to supplementary evidence such as a copy of your business case, supplier briefs etc. These can be included in the appendices at the end of the report.

Project stage or milestone	Approach - what process was undertaken?	Lessons Learned
Getting started: Developing the business case/gaining organisational buy-in to apply for Round 2 funding.	Wirral Council had identified a need for innovative public engagement on masterplans, which formed the basis of the bid for Proptech funding. The application team was formed from the Head of Regeneration Strategy, Head of Intelligence with support from the Planning, Regeneration and Intelligence Service and inputs from 3D model provider Digital Urban Place. Evidence was available from previous consultations to assist in outcome setting.	Assumptions were made in the initial programme at point of bid based on understanding of masterplan progress and consultation timeframes. School holiday periods being within the project time period impacted on consultation timing and staff availability. Bang the Table were approached at the outset at a strategic level re APIs. The bid would have benefitted from technical team involvement.
Procurement: developing supplier brief and project budget	Wirral Council utilised experience of Digital Urban to assist in defining the initial scope and budget for the project. The scope and budget was refined at project inception stage.	Past experience and knowledge from Digital Urban allowed a budget to be developed with higher degree of confidence. Flexibility and rescoping was still required to define task leads between the Council, Digital Urban and architects.

<p>Procurement: finding and appointing a supplier(S)</p>	<p>Lead supplier, Digital Urban were already procured by Wirral Council to produce a 3D model of Birkenhead. Bang the Table provide the Council's online consultation portal "Have your Say". Wirral Council had existing contracts in place with architects BDP and HLP for New Brighton and Seacombe Masterplan areas, respectively.</p>	<p>Suppliers were named in the bid which enabled swift appointment utilising contract variations with support from Wirral Council procurement and finance teams. 3D modelling was reliant on input from architects appointed on the masterplan contracts – future projects would need to build the requirements into the specifications at the earliest opportunity.</p>
<p>Onboarding: Proptech suppliers, additional consultants, and internal teams</p>	<p>Following grant award, additional staff from teams within the council including communications, engagement and Wirral Intelligence Service were included within project kick off and regular project team meetings. Separate meetings were held between Digital Urban and masterplan architects to further develop the programme and understand the requirements of the 3D model and masterplan consultations.</p>	<p>The transition from strategic thinking to understanding the technical requirements of the project took longer than anticipated. As a result, briefs to consultants lacked specificity and an agile project management approach was required. Sufficient resource wasn't available to undertake the development work required for integration between the 3D model and Bang the Table.</p>
<p>Campaign Development: developing marketing and engagement strategies. This might also include developing survey questions, platform content, or user research.</p>	<p>A range of engagement approaches were used. The communications strategy was developed through the identification of stakeholders and their appropriate communication mechanism and timing. Work was carried out with local schoolchildren to find out their ideas for the masterplan areas. Children were given a range of tools including maps, modelling equipment including clay and Lego, creative drawing and writing and access to computer generated models. All the work was</p>	<p>Council Communications team worked effectively to set out and deliver a programme of activity. It was important to have flexibility within the programme – the project team adapted their approach to include a number of additional school sessions. It was challenging to ensure consistency with various survey methods e.g. via the Bang the Table platform, VR experience and in paper form. There was however a benefit to using</p>

collected and provided to the architect team and the 3D modelling experts to influence the development of the 3D models.

Two immersive virtual reality experiences were hosted on 14th and 15th October in the Floral Pavilion, New Brighton. Visitors viewed virtual reality (VR) technology to view the 3D model and experience how New Brighton and Seacombe could develop in the future. There was also the opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review materials related to the planning work, ask questions and provide feedback.

Alongside the virtual reality experiences a survey was produced which was run online on the Council's Have you Say website, within the New Brighton immersive experience and with paper copies and Easy Read versions also available. Individual workshops were held with Business stakeholders in New Brighton to ensure they had an opportunity to feedback their thoughts and ideas.

Additional community pop-up events were held in Seacombe.

The promotion was split into 3 periods. Promotion of the VR Experience, promotion of both the VR experience and online surveys and promotion of online surveys post events. Promotion was through the below channels:

- Media release issued and featured in Wirral Globe and The Guide and also

various survey methods which allowed capture of a wider set of data.

Stage of masterplan process – both projects were at concept stage. There was a challenge showing ideas in model that had not been drawn up in detail. Suggest there are benefits to consulting on schemes at more advanced design stage whilst still giving consultees the opportunity to shape proposals.

Underestimation of time and resource required for iterative process to understand capability and requirements of the model.

	<p>featured on Radio Merseyside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic social media shared across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. <p>Paid social media targeted those living in the vicinity of Seacombe and New Brighton and those in Wirral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral View news article • Eventbrite booking page for the VR events, • Staff email – Exec View (for Wirral Council employees) • QR codes used on print material • Feature in Wirral View resident email • Direct email to local groups from regeneration team. (Invited and transported on vintage bus to venue) • Posters displayed in local communities promoting the VR events and the online consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An easy read document of the survey questions was also produced • Media statements issued and featured in Liverpool Echo online, Knowledia, MSN UK and Flipboard 	
<p>Campaign launch and management: working with suppliers to ‘go live’, attending in person / hybrid events, troubleshooting tech issues</p>	<p>The virtual reality immersive experiences and drone footage videos and scripts were developed by Digital Urban through an iterative process with inputs from architects and Council teams. Digital Urban ran the virtual reality experiences including pre event set up and testing, and troubleshooting.</p>	<p>Significant Council resource requirement in arranging events. More capacity would need to be built into the programme for future events. Anticipating the demand for events to manage both online booking and walk in worked</p>

	<p>Staging of the event, booking system, health and safety and incentives were managed by Council Teams. Council and architect teams lead post VR experience discussion with stakeholders and Members of the public.</p>	<p>effectively. A future shorter VR experience and more efficient operation could maximise users. Would have been beneficial to build in a period of peer review into programme. The immersive experience received a very positive response. The integration between the 3D model and bang the table could in future make this accessible to more people. The VR experience would have benefitted from one-to-one engagement to capture feedback.</p>
<p>Campaign wrap-up: Closing campaigns, running analysis, agreeing next steps</p>	<p>Following the virtual reality experience the online survey continued to be promoted as detailed above.</p>	
<p>Feedback loops: e.g. developing opportunities for ongoing feedback from the community, following up with people who responded to the consultation, sharing consultation insights with key stakeholders</p>	<p>Post VR experience, pop up community events and business stakeholder events were held. Schools were revisited to share the VR experience developed with the children who supported its development. Wirral Council's Have you say portal has a we asked you said we did section. Consultation reports have been produced. These will be signed off by Members and published with next steps for masterplans.</p>	<p>The data analysis team from Wirral Intelligence Service took part in the events – helped to boost understanding of the context. Could have optimised data capture on the day through a more effective process directly after the VR experience. Could have included more time for focus groups as part of the engagement activity.</p>
<p>Project Management</p>	<p>Project management was shared between the bid manager, and masterplan project managers with project direction from the Head of Regeneration Strategy.</p>	<p>Difficulty of different PMs for each masterplan, overarching PD and bid manager (with no previous involvement) and two architectural firms. Future bid manager should be the</p>

		<p>PM/fully engaged in the project from the start.</p> <p>Challenge in allocating roles when a number of suppliers were involved (the two architects were not sub-contracted by the lead supplier). Difficulty of Council and architect teams having little prior knowledge of 3D model capabilities and input and output required.</p>
Data Capture	<p>To develop consultation materials school children's ideas were captured through maps, clay and Lego, creative drawing, writing and building the 3D computer generated models. Data was captured through game play within the virtual reality immersive experience. Demographics were captured as part of event registration. A survey was produced which was run online on the Council's Have you Say website with paper copies and Easy Read versions also available. Individual workshops were held with Business stakeholders and community pop-up events were held in Seacombe.</p>	<p>There were a couple of glitches with the VR in-built survey largely due to lack of testing. Resource requirement for input of paper surveys needs to be built into programme. Using have Your Say provides a bulk set of information which allows for effective data capture/analysis. Capturing demographics as part of event registration enriched demographic analysis.</p>
Working with Suppliers	<p>Weekly project meetings were held with all suppliers and Council teams with separate task and finish groups as required for each masterplan area.</p>	<p>Suppliers had other commitments therefore it was sometimes difficult for suppliers to meet the necessary deadlines when timescales were altered.</p>

Final Reflections: Where applicable, please also respond to the following questions:

- How did you conduct community outreach (digital and/or in person)? What approach, including timelines, budget, and tools were adopted?

A range of engagement approaches was utilised. The communications strategy was developed through the identification of stakeholders and their appropriate communication mechanism and timing. Work was carried out with local schoolchildren to find out their ideas for the masterplan areas in July 2022. Children were given a range of tools including maps, modelling equipment including clay and Lego, creative drawing and writing and access to computer generated models. All the work was collected and provided to the architect team and the 3D modelling experts to influence the development of the 3D models.

Two immersive virtual reality experiences were hosted on the 14 and 15 of October in the Floral Pavilion, New Brighton. Visitors viewed virtual reality (VR) technology to view the 3D model and experience how New Brighton could develop in the future. There was also the opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review materials related to the planning work, ask questions and provide feedback.

Alongside the virtual reality experiences a survey was produced which was run online on the Council's Have you Say website, within the New Brighton immersive experience and with paper copies and Easy Read versions also available. Individual workshops were held with Business stakeholders in New Brighton to ensure they had an opportunity to feedback their thoughts and ideas. Additional community pop-up events were held in Seacombe. The digital / Comms campaign ran from October - November 2022 with the consultation period running from 14th October to 25th November 2022.

- Looking back at this project, was there additional guidance or support from DLUHC or other stakeholders that would have been helpful to work through these and other stages of delivery?

Regular meetings with DLUHC other round 2 applicants and learning from round 1 were very beneficial. Looking back it could have been beneficial to have access to a technical expert panel to allow a period of peer review to address the difficulty of Council and architect teams having little prior knowledge of 3D model capabilities and input and output required

- What was the primary reason you chose your particular PropTech supplier?

Wirral Council has existing successful partnerships with existing digital 3D model provider Digital Urban and Bang the Table and Digital Urban and recognised the potential for integration and expansion to explore the opportunity to bring masterplan proposals to life in an immersive and engaging way.

- Were there any wider surprises which surfaced through undertaking the project?

A challenge during the project was to create 3D modelling and a VR experience based on masterplans at concept stage. This became a positive as it allowed the project team to utilise the ideas of children and test themes and public acceptance. It provided the Council with an understanding of how the 3D model could be used for consultation at all stages of desi

3.0 Outcomes

From the original bid documents submitted in January 2022, the key objective targets were to achieve 4x multiplier on previous numbers engaged and 4x multiplier on young people compared to the baseline data from the bid.

The baseline data was chosen as data from two previous regeneration consultations, the Birkenhead Town Deal, and the New Brighton Master Plan.

The engagement events held were as follows:

- An event was hosted at New Brighton Primary School in July 2022, where local school children were consulted to get their ideas for New Brighton. 30 children were involved.
- Events were held at The Oldershaw School and Riverside Primary School. These young people demonstrated their vision of Seacombe using 3D modelling and drawing. 59 children were involved.
- Two immersive virtual reality experiences were hosted on the 14 and 15 of October in the Floral Pavilion, New Brighton. Visitors viewed virtual reality (VR) technology to experience how New Brighton and Seacombe could develop with the help of customised 3D modelling based on ideas by local young people. Tickets were available in advance via Eventbrite, with 93% of a capacity of 128 booked in advance. There were 22 scans of the QR code to the online Seacombe survey. Walk-ins meant that a total of 186 people attended.
- Two online surveys were hosted on the Wirral “Have Your Say” website.

This invited views from local people on the ideas for New Brighton and Seacombe. 358 people completed the New Brighton Survey online, with 40 paper copies being returned. 140 people completed the Seacombe survey online, 32 completed paper copies, and 6 completed easy read copies. There may be additional paper copies returned to add to the figures at a later date.

Demographics were collected as follows:

- School events – the ages of the participants were collected.
- Engagement event 14-15 October – a spreadsheet was used to collect age range, post code, gender and any disabilities.
- Surveys – the registration process on the “Have your Say” website collects optional demographic data: age range, postcode, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and any disabilities.
- Paper surveys – the paper survey included the same demographic options as the “Have Your Say” website.

Including all forms of engagement, 124 young people (24 and under) were engaged, compared to a total of 4 and 8 for the Birkenhead Town Deal and New Brighton Masterplan engagements respectively. This has achieved the 4x multiplier target.

Including all forms of engagement, the total number of people engaged was 853, compared to a total of 78 and 276 for the Birkenhead Town Deal and New Brighton Masterplan engagements respectively. This is a significant increase on the previous engagements.

Birkenhead Town Deal covered a wide range of subjects so attracted a broader range of people across the Wirral, whereas the New Brighton and Seacombe consultations are focused on regeneration, so it is not valid to compare directly.

Seacombe is an area where it has historically been difficult to encourage people to participate in consultations. In the New Brighton Masterplan project, which was located geographically near to Seacombe, there were only 10 people (3.6%) who engaged with the consultation. In the PropTech consultation there was a total of 151 people (17.9%) from Seacombe engaged.

We received 31,358 impressions and 1,891 engagements over 9 organic social media posts spread across our Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts. Whilst the majority of social media promotion was through sponsored advertising, we used LinkedIn organic posting to target business owners in key sectors: hospitality, health & beauty, leisure & tourism, and retail.

In terms of paid Meta advertising, Facebook and Instagram were used to promote the consultation: 30% to people living in Seacombe, 30% to people living in New Brighton and 60% across the rest of Wirral. The adverts were shown 373,105 times, reaching 81,933 people. There were 7,406 clicks to the consultation – costing an average of 18.6p per person.

In addition, there was paid advertising of the interactive VR session at Floral Pavilion to residents via Facebook and Instagram. These ads were shown 61,284 times, reaching 20,454 people. There were 2,454 clicks to the consultation - costing on average 10p per person.

The VR experience and consultation was also promoted through the council's weekly residents e-newsletter. There were 452 unique click throughs from the newsletter to view details on the VR experience engagement events. There were 714 clicks on the link in council's resident newsletter through to information about the New Brighton consultation and 134 clicks for the Seacombe consultation.

The consultation was pitched to the local media and featured on BBC Radio Merseyside. Two news articles were issued and a reactive media statement which resulted in coverage in Wirral Globe, The Liverpool Echo, The Guide Liverpool, MSN, Birkenhead News, and Flipboard.

4.0 Community Feedback

- **Summary of community consultation:** what was the focus for engagement and what questions were asked? How were these questions decided? Were there any surprises (either in responses and/or who responded)? A different approach was taken for each area. The Council had previously carried out a public consultation on the issues and opportunities for New Brighton therefore survey questions for the PropTech-funded round of engagement were focused on proposals on specific sites. For Seacombe, this represented the first round of consultation therefore questions were intentionally broader and designed to capture feedback on the key issues and opportunities for the area. The questions were designed to ensure that all information collected was relevant and would be used in the design

process. Different types of questions were used to allow people to add in their own thoughts and ideas. The questions were reviewed to ensure that all the questions were written in plain English and accessible to all age groups.

- **Summary of community responses:** what were the key themes and learnings from the consultation?

New Brighton

Questionnaire

402 people responded to this consultation. The online questionnaire was responded to by 358 people and there were 44 paper copies returned.

The most popular option for improving the area around the sailing club for use as a 'outdoor village' was to provide toilets and changing rooms (26.7%). The least popular option was the provision of campervan parking (10.1%) (Question 1).

The most popular option for enhancing The Dips in New Brighton was to use it as a space for events and festivals (25.7%). The least popular option was the provision of an outdoor gym (13.9%) (Question 2).

The most popular option to fully realise the potential of the promenade was to open the views out to sea (20.3%). The least popular option was the provision of an outdoor exercise equipment (10.2%) (Question 3).

When asked what would make respondents 'jump in' to a new lido, the most common response was 'the facilities' (23.0%). Family membership was the least popular response (10.7%) (Question 4).

The most popular thing that people would like to see in a shared space near Union Terrace was free shuttle buses (23.1%). The least popular option was the provision of disabled parking spaces on the promenade (10.3%) (Question 5).

When asked what they would like to see along Marine Promenade, respondent's most popular option was to have leisure activities, like a big climbing wall (23.0%). The provision of new homes with sea views was the least popular option (3.8%). (Question 6).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the suggestion to build new, tall building in New Brighton. When aggregated, the prevalent sentiment was disagreement with this suggestion (44.0%). 29.0% of respondents were 'not sure' and 27.1% were in agreement (Question 7).

When asked to explain their response to the suggestion of new, tall buildings, the most prevalent comments (40.5%) were expressing concern about tall buildings and how they would obstruct views and detract from the feeling of space and open seaside (Question 8).

Respondents were asked how the Victoria Quarter of New Brighton could be made even better, and the most popular option was to encourage more independent shops (24.4%) and 'new homes' (2.5%) was the least popular option (Question 9).

The most prevalent additional ideas, that respondents shared in free-text

comments, about how to improve New Brighton were to:

Encourage independent businesses (7.9%)

Retain and create green spaces (7.3%)

Improve transport links (7.1%) (Question 10).

Virtual Reality Events – Game Play Data

At the Engagement Event at the Floral Pavilion Theatre on 14 and 15 October, the New Brighton Virtual Reality Experience included a version of the survey. Due to the questions being linked to a virtual 3D model experience they were slightly different to the questionnaire questions, so these results have been presented separately.

The most popular option for improving the area around the sailing club for use as a 'outdoor village' was to provide toilets and changing rooms (19.5%). The least popular option was the provision of campervan parking (12.5%). (Question 1).

The most popular option for enhancing The Dips in New Brighton was to use it as a space for events and festivals (22.9%). The least popular option was the provision of an outdoor gym (17.4%). (Question 2).

The most popular option to fully realise the potential of the promenade was to open the views out to sea (18.3). The least popular option was more space to walk and play (8.1%) (Question 3).

When asked what would make participants 'jump in' to a new lido, the most common response was 'the facilities' (26.4%) (Question 4).

The most popular thing that people would like to see in a shared space near Union Terrace was free shuttle buses (29.2%). 6.3% of people said that they would always use their car (Question 5).

When asked what they would like to see along Marine Promenade, participants' most popular option was to have leisure activities, like a big climbing wall (22.6%). More clothes shops was the least popular option (9.5%). (Question 6).

Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the ideas shown within the virtual reality experience. The prevalent sentiment was agreement with (71.8%). 17.7% of participants were 'not sure' and 10.5% were in agreement (Question 7).

It should be noted that, unlike on the online and paper surveys, this question made no reference to new, tall buildings. Therefore, these results cannot be compared directly to the online and paper survey results, which differ considerably.

Participants were asked how the Victoria Quarter of New Brighton could be made even better, and the most popular option was to encourage more independent shops (21.8%) and the least popular option was to build new homes (7.6%) (Question 9).

79.8% of participants stated that they enjoyed the virtual reality experience

and would do it again.

Virtual Reality Events – Resident and Stakeholder Feedback

Some attendees from the Engagement Events in addition to the VR Experience survey provided verbal feedback. The most prevalent themes were:

- People would like more events, including at the Floral Pavilion and outdoor events at the dips.
- Participants enjoyed the Virtual Reality Experience.
- Parking is still needed.
- Transport links needed to be improved.
- People would like a lido.

Stakeholder Event Feedback

Nine businesspeople attended a business drop in on 9 November 2022, and their main thoughts and ideas were as follows:

Thoughts: some participants thought that the online survey was not relevant for businesses; more information is needed on heat networks; there were concerns that delaying business development could have a negative impact; there were concerns about empty units and derelict land at Marine Point; some businesses would like development in Liscard; and there are also concerns about more building on the promenade and the dips.

Ideas: A bus for Victoria Road; the need to join up neighbourhoods; to ensure the business directory is up to date; the need to include students; a new map in the station; create a plan for redeveloping the lighthouse for when there is funding available; make the Floral Pavilion more affordable for businesses to hire rooms; a land train; and also, affordable youth activities are needed.

Seacombe

Questionnaire

The Seacombe River Corridor Masterplan engagement generated 179 responses, 140 from the online survey, 33 from paper copy and 6 from easy-read versions of the survey.

The types of words most commonly associated with Seacombe relate to “Home” (29.5%). Once categorised, 50% of themes had a positive sentiment, 30% were negative and 20% neutral (Question 1).

When creating a community for everyone, respondents were asked to rank various options in order of importance. People felt that it was most important to change/improve the Promenade, which achieved the highest average rank of 3.64 out of 5, where 5 is ‘most important’ (Question 2).

Amongst the comments about creating a community for everyone, the most prevalent theme was the necessity to improve safety and security (18.2%) (Question 3).

In terms of prioritising what needs to be changed/improved about the Secombe River Corridor Open spaces/parks and play areas were considered most important, with an average rank of 3.64 out of 5 where 5 is 'most important'. (Question 4).

Amongst the comments relating improving standards within the local neighbourhood, the need for clean streets and alleyways was the most prevalent theme (167.7%) (Question 5).

44.2% of respondents thought that the home that they lived in met the current needs and aspirations of their family, and 26.2% thought that it did not. (Question 6).

Amongst the comments from respondents who did not feel that their home met their needs, the most prevalent theme was that homes were damp and require maintenance (26.2%) (Question 7).

'Improving existing housing' was the most popular option to improve housing in Seacombe achieving an average score of 4.53 of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 8).

Amongst the comments about what else could be done to improve housing, the most prevalent theme was that the issue of derelict and run-down properties should be addressed (24.3%) (Question 9).

67.1% of respondents do not think that existing play areas and parks meet the needs of the local community (Question 10).

'Improved security and safety' was the most popular option to improve Open space, parks and play areas within Seacombe River Corridor, achieving an average score of 4.68 of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 11).

The free text comments about improving open spaces also reflected a concern about a security and safety; this was the most prevalent theme amongst the comments (38.3%) (Question 12).

The most common frequency to use the promenade is every day (29.8%), followed by twice weekly (20.5%) and at weekends (20.5%) (Question 13).

More activities along the promenade (24.0% and better separation of pedestrians and cyclists (19.2%) were the top things that people thought would help improve the use and experience of the promenade (Question 14).

Amongst the comments about what else could be done to improve the use and experience of the promenade, the most prevalent theme was that there should be more cafes, bars, restaurants, local shops and attractions along the promenade (19.3%) (Question 15).

Most respondents (76.9%) owned a motor vehicle (question 16).

50.3% of respondents owned a pedal bike (Question 17).

Travelling by foot (34.5%) is the most popular mode of travel around Seacombe and the wider area, followed by using a motor vehicle (car/van/motorbike) 27.5% (Question 18).

'Improved bus services, more routes and greater frequency' was the most popular option to improve travel around Seacombe, achieving an average score of 4.22 of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 19).

Amongst the comments about what else could be done to improve travel around Seacombe, the most prevalent themes were, equally, that there should be more bus routes and evening, night and weekend services, and better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure (20.6% each) (Question 20).

'A better variety of shops and services would make me shop locally' was the most agreed with option regarding shops and services around Seacombe, achieving an average score of 4.43 out of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 21).

Amongst the comments about where people currently shop, and what could be done to improve the experience, the following were prevalent themes:

Liscard/Seacombe/Egremont (40.5%) – where do you currently shop (area)?

Supermarket (69.2%) - where do you currently shop (type of retailer)?

More local shops and market traders (52.8%) – what would improve your shopping experience? (Question 22)

Most respondents (56.1%) travel outside of the Seacombe River Corridor area for employment (Question 23).

43.1% of respondents did not think that additional training would improve their career and job opportunities (Question 24).

'Attracting new businesses to the local area' was the most popular option to improve employment opportunities and training within Seacombe, achieving an average score of 4.59 out of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 25).

Amongst the comments about what else could be done to improve employment opportunities and training within Seacombe, the most prevalent theme was to improve transport links (25.0%) (Question 26).

'Accessing affordable sports and leisure facilities' was the most popular option to support and maintain community health and wellbeing, achieving an average score of 4.61 out of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 27).

Amongst the comments about what else could be done to support and maintain community health and wellbeing, the most prevalent theme was to Encourage healthy eating and growing own food (15.7%) (Question 28).

'Improving and insulating existing homes to reduce energy consumption and bills' was the most popular option how Seacombe River Corridor can contribute to reducing climate change, achieving an average score of 4.59 out of 5, where 5 is 'strongly agree' (Question 29).

The vast majority of respondents (93.4%) believe that we should investigate options for community uses for Wallasey Town Hall (Question 30).

When discussing what other functions Wallasey Town Hall building could be

used for, respondents were asked to rank various options in order of importance. People felt that it was most important to use the building to improve education and training, which achieved the highest average rank of 4.14 out of 5, where 5 is 'most important' (Question 31).

Amongst the comments about what other functions Wallasey Town Hall building could be used for, the most prevalent theme was to use the building as a community hub (17.5%) (Question 32).

Virtual Reality Events – Resident and Stakeholder Feedback

Some attendees from the Engagement Events in addition to the VR Experience survey provided verbal feedback. The most prevalent themes were:

- Participants enjoyed the Virtual Reality Experience.
- People would like more events.
- Some participants said that the Virtual Reality Experience made them feel sick or disorientated.
- Any development must benefit the community.
- There were questions related to the funding sources for regeneration. - Sustainable homes are needed.
- Concerns about litter.

In addition, on the post-it notes left by participants, they said that they would like to see more exciting things along the promenade, a wider variety of shops. Some commented there are currently some areas that people cannot use, and some said that they would like to see a mix of housing and retail.

- **Delivering on feedback:** how has the community feedback shaped the project delivery plans? How has this validated, challenged, evolved key assumptions and potential project outcomes? Key feedback from the New Brighton survey included a concern about the impact of tall buildings and the potential for leisure uses in the Marine Promenade area. As a result, the Council is undertaking additional work to fully assess the impact of tall buildings and is intending to consult on the Marine Promenade Masterplan in Q2 23/24. Overall, public feedback supported the emerging proposals, which has validated work carried out to date. Key feedback from Seacombe included the need to improve facilities on the promenade, the need for improved open spaces, and the desire for a new mix of uses in Wallasey Town Hall. Most importantly was the view that things needed to change within the area. The results of the consultation are being incorporated into the next stage of the masterplan for the Seacombe Rover Corridor

Community testimonials: Below are three anonymous quotes from members of the public.

“I absolutely loved it. I’ve never used VR in that way before, I’ve only used it in a game. It was nice to think about the local area in a way that’s fun”

“It was awesome to see all of the amazing ideas for the future of New Brighton in 3D”

“It’s a different approach to engage with the community”

5.0 Conclusions and Policy Reflections –

- If you could re-start this project what, if anything, would you do differently?

We would commence engagement activity sooner with schools to allow additional focussed sessions with stakeholders. We would also engage with an immersive technology user group, to test different ideas and explore the capabilities of the technology from the outset.

- What longer-term changes, if any, do you expect to make as a result of this pilot?
 - If not, why - what barriers are preventing long term adoption?

The Council is working in partnership with Digital Urban to develop a 3-D model of Wirral. Following the success of the consultation, the Council is actively encouraging the use of the model in all pre-application enquiries for major development. The Council would like to be able to offer a similar (immersive) experience as part of forthcoming consultations on other masterplan areas in Wirral. The main barrier is cost, as the Council’s revenue budget is extremely limited and this type of activity is therefore reliant on external funding.

- What (if any) other stakeholders (outside of those who responded to consultations) do you think should be involved alongside LPAs to support long term adoption of digital planning?

It would be beneficial if architects and developers could routinely utilise the Council’s 3-D model as part of pre-application enquiries. It would be helpful if statutory consultees such as Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency worked alongside local authorities to explore how the use of digital planning could support decision-making.

- Policy reflections:
 - Did any existing planning policies limit your ability to achieve your goals for this project?

The Council’s Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2022. At the time of the Proptech preparatory work and engagement sessions, the Local Plan was in draft form and a number of the emerging ideas were not in accordance with the draft plan policies. This presented a challenge over how we could illustrate the young people’s ideas without showing proposals that did not comply with the relevant planning policies.

- Are there any policies (national and local) you’d like to see changed in the future? If so, how?

It would be helpful if the planning legislative and policy framework strengthened requirements for the adoption of digital planning tools, including an ability for the Council to require submission of digital models for pre app and applications for major development, and how this could be supported via developer contributions.

- Where do you think further guidance is required, either for local authorities and the wider PropTech sector?

It would be helpful if guidance could be provided on the capability of technology, which could be in the form of a digital technology advisory group. This would help to define the scope of the project more accurately from the outset and would act as a critical friend.

- How could DLUHC better support LPAs in the future with the further adoption of digital citizen engagement tools, best practice guidance, or other support?

DLUHC could provide advice on the type of technology available, supported by a range of funding opportunities for local authorities.

- If additional funding was available - what do you think future PropTech Fund rounds should focus on delivering / achieving?

Future rounds should explore:

- how the design quality of buildings and spaces can be improved through the use of 3D modelling in the Development Management system in a comprehensive manner. At the same allowing improved accessibility and understanding of the design of major projects by neighbours, the general public and members including those on the planning committee.
- We would like to explore whether using digital platforms at pre-planning and planning stage (where designs are more detailed) provides a different response.
- explore how digital technology can be applied to improve the quality and efficiency of access to up to date information on planned infrastructure provision related to new developments for developers, other utility providers and members of the public.
- compatibility/integration of different technology platforms, in addition to exploring how to improve the accessibility of digital planning tools. This could include reaching out to seldom heard groups and exploring how to present spatial ideas through a range of media. We would also like to explore whether more people engage in projects at the delivery stage than at concept stage. One of the challenges with the PropTech Round 2 programme has been incorporating high-level conceptual ideas into the 3D model.

Please use this space to include any quotes from your team about your project. Don't forget to attribute the quote so it is clear whose perspective you are sharing (e.g. 'project team member or 'supplier' etc).

Simon Mabey from lead supplier Digital Urban, said "*The DLUHC-funded project*

provided an opportunity to trial a new approach to public consultation, with the aim of extending the demographic of people who would typically get involved, using a more entertaining form of public consultation – “an interactive immersive VR experience” The results were hugely rewarding for everyone involved. This type of project requires a lot of team working and we were grateful for the bravery of the LA to go with it. The atmosphere created at the public event was a great end to a brilliant team effort.” -

Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee chair, Cllr Tony Jones, said: *“This was an exciting opportunity to use a completely different approach through virtual reality headsets to help people visualise how New Brighton and Seacombe could look. Those taking part could be completely immersed in the designs, and get a sense of the opportunities change could bring - and all based on ideas from local youngsters. Perhaps most importantly this project has also allowed us to engage with people would not usually want to get involved in a regeneration consultation, including attracting a younger section of the local population, to get the chance to have a say on the future the place they will hopefully be growing up and living in for many years to come.”*

Keith Keeley, Head of Regeneration Strategy said: *What this project has confirmed to me is that the use of virtual reality will increasingly become a key engagement tool to improve the involvement and understanding of major regeneration and development proposals for local communities. We need to take advantage of the fast changing technology to improve the involvement of communities and other stakeholders in the planning process with the aim of improving the quality and liveability of new buildings and spaces.*

6.0 Additional reflections and feedback for DLUHC (optional) *This is a space for you to provide any additional reflections or feedback for the DLUHC team that you prefer not to be published publicly.*

7.0 Appendices (delete this section if not applicable)

You might want to share additional materials relevant to your project that you have not shared within the body of the report. If so, please add them here as appendices. Particular materials we would like to see, if available, are: ●

Appendix A Funding Application

- Appendix B Project Plan
- Appendix C Communications Plan
- Appendix D Communication Materials
- Appendix E Social Media Posts
- Appendix F Photographs from school and VR events
- Appendix G New Brighton and Seacombe Consultation Reports ● Appendix H PR Campaign Achievements