

**Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education Scrutiny Committee 15 January 2013**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Progress Report on Regeneration of the Borough's Local and Principal Town Centres**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Scrutiny Committee on progress in the regeneration of the Borough's Local and Principal centres.

**Background**

2. This Committee has considered a number of reports in recent years on the progress of regeneration in the Borough's Centres and on the activity of the regeneration company New Heritage Regeneration Ltd. Most recently, the Committee considered a report on Local Centres in January 2012 and on Principal Centres in October 2009.

**Strategic Context**

3. Government policy is committed to protecting/sustaining town centres. The central objective being to promote their vitality and viability by planning for the growth of existing centres and enhancing them by promoting them as a focus for development. This "town centres first" approach is enshrined all guidance and reflected in a range of regional, sub-regional and local strategies and policies.
4. Town Centres play a critical role in delivering the vision and strategic aims laid out in the Economic Strategy and Council Plan. There are a significant number of long term regeneration projects in the Town Centres and this report is intended to bring members up to date with progress.

**New Heritage Regeneration Ltd.**

5. At its meeting on the 7th September 2009 the Committee received an update on the activities of the Borough arms length company, New Heritage Regeneration Ltd. Therefore it is not proposed to cover their role and activity in detail in this report other than to confirm the Company's role in delivering regeneration activity across the Borough, with a special focus on the four principal town centres and in particular at present focussing on Dudley and Brierley Hill.

## **Current Regeneration initiatives and Achievements**

### **Brierley Hill**

6. Brierley Hill has seen difficult times over the past 30 years with the decline and disappearance of its traditional manufacturing industries such as the Round Oak Steel works and Marsh and Baxter and structural changes in retailing behaviour in the economy. However the town is on the verge of an exciting new future, the evidence of which is beginning to appear.
7. In January 2008, Brierley Hill was designated as the new strategic town centre for the Black Country. This was one of the decisions published in the Phase One Revision to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and which has since been reinforced through the adoption of the Black Country Core Strategy (which sets out the future long term plans for the transformation of the Black Country). This will enable plans to go ahead for more shops, leisure facilities, offices and housing all to be built in such a way to link Merry Hill, the Waterfront and Brierley Hill High Street together as one Centre.

### **Brierley Hill Action Area Plan (AAP)**

8. The Council began work on the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan (AAP) in August 2006 as part of its Local Development Framework. The AAP sets the planning framework for the area, including Brierley Hill High Street, the Merry Hill shopping centre and the Waterfront business park and is the basis by which planning decisions are made within the area. The plan contains a vision, a series of objectives on how this vision will be reached, and allocates sites within the boundary for specific uses. Furthermore, it shows how the growth and regeneration of the town centre is to be phased and implemented by stakeholders and partners. The plan was adopted by the Council in August 2011

### **Brierley Hill Local Enterprise Zone**

9. In mid 2011, as part of the Government's invitation to the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to submit an Enterprise Zone proposal, the Council submitted proposals for the Brierley Hill Waterfront and Harts Hill area within a wider Black Country 'String of Pearls' package. However, following advice from the Department for Business Innovation and skills and the Department for Communities and Local Government, the South Black Country elements of the package (Waterfront/Harts Hill and West Bromwich) were excluded, and the subsequently approved Black Country Enterprise Zone was focused around sites in Darlaston and Wolverhampton.
10. Notwithstanding its exclusion from the final Black Country Enterprise Zone submission, Waterfront and Harts Hill provide a major opportunity for the Borough, the Black Country and indeed the Region. At the Waterfront, there is some 750,000 sq ft of high quality office accommodation, approximately 40% of which is currently vacant. If fully occupied this space would host up to 4,600 new jobs. Furthermore, in addition to confirming Brierley Hill as a new Strategic Centre for the Black Country, the Black Country Joint Core Strategy provides the planning framework for an

additional 1 million sq ft of office space within the area, with the scope to create over 6,000 new jobs

11. Cabinet on the 14th March 2012 gave approval to the principle of a Local Enterprise Zone in Brierley Hill. Significant progress has been made since then on the development of how such an Enterprise Zone might work and on consulting with major property owners to establish their willingness to support such an initiative. Subject to the approval of Cabinet in early 2013, in broad terms, the Zone is proposed to operate on the basis of a business rate reduction for new occupiers over a 2 year period with the 'loss' to the business rate account shared equally by the Council and the property owner

### **The Crossways Centre**

12. The Crossways Centre project is intended to develop a £7m new building close to the proposed site of the new public square (Brierley Place) in the town centre and new link way to Merry Hill. It will bring a new spiritual, community and economic facility to the heart of Brierley Hill town centre; meet the needs of residents; and provide the potential to engage with those visiting the town. Although the driving force of the project is its Christian spiritual dimension, it would be a non-denominational centre serving the local community and those visiting the area to shop or work.
13. A Project Manager has been appointed to develop and implement a business plan and funding strategy and following the engagement of the Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services, Jephson Housing Association has been identified as a potential partner.
14. Work on this project is currently focussed on contact with other potential housing partners; confirming the availability of the preferred development site and firming up the project's business plan including developing a consultation strategy.

### **Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership**

15. Following the cessation of the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership, the continuing need for a stakeholder forum in the town has been addressed by a new Partnership which was launched in July 2009 and has held a number of meetings since. The Partnership consists of a network of local and sub regional community groups, business groups, public sector bodies and other relevant organisations which will work together in the best interests of the town centre.

## **DUDLEY**

### **Dudley Town Centre Area Development Framework (ADF)**

16. The Dudley ADF was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in December 2005 and identified 9 opportunity areas for development and presents a vision, development strategy and illustrative development framework to guide residents, businesses, developers, investors and the Council in shaping the future of the town centre.

## **Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)**

17. The THI is a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant giving programme to assist the repair and regeneration of the historic environment within conservation areas in towns and cities. Its aims include:
  - to use built heritage as a stimulant for economic regeneration;
  - to contribute to the sustainability of local economies ;and
  - to support the communities that live and work in each project area
18. Following the withdrawal of Advantage West Midlands funding for the project, a revised funding package has been assembled using Heritage Lottery, European Regional Development, English Heritage and Council match funding.
19. The THI continues to progress well with the Baylies Hall and 168 High Street projects both complete and Charlton House, 270-272 Castle Street, 210 Wolverhampton Street and Holloway Chambers/Elizabeth House progressing on site. Tenders have been returned for the former Co-op building and Finch House and are currently being assessed prior to grant offers being made. Other projects which are progressing well towards formal applications for funding are Fountain Arcade, The Albion, 59 – 60 Tower Street, and Carvers Café. Given the momentum which has been built up in relation to the programme initial discussions have taken place with representatives of the Heritage Lottery fund with regards to the prospect of a second phase THI.

## **Castle Hill**

20. As a consequence of the Council terminating the Castle Hill development agreement with St Modwen Developments in February 2009, the opportunity has been taken for a revitalised development of this site, with work now commenced on site.
21. Significant works on site include the Archives Project and new Tipton Road access, and the iconic Zoo Chair Lift has been restored and brought back into use. The refurbishment of the new offices for the Zoological Gardens is complete and they are now occupied.
22. Whereas the Council has been successful in securing of £4.5m ERDF funding for the infrastructure required to deliver the leisure based hub at the Castle Hill site, a number of elements of the required infrastructure are ineligible for ERDF support. The major element of this is the car park. As a result a successful bid of £600,000 has been made to the LEP managed 'Growing Places Fund'.
23. A planning application is currently in preparation for this major infrastructure project, for which work is expected to commence in Summer 2013
24. A planning application has been submitted for the demolition of the former Gala Bingo. Whilst demolition is one option, the Council is also considering a proposal from the Friends of Dudley Hippodrome, a group which has been established with the aim of restoring the building to its former use.

## **Dudley College**

25. Work on the first 2 phases of the College's Town Centre development programme were completed earlier this year. Phases 1 and 2 consist of a 1,800 sq m Sixth Form Centre on the Priory Place site, and a 7,500 sq m Vocational Centre on the Tower Street West site, known as the Evolve building. These first phases represent a capital investment of approximately £30m. Total student numbers relocated to the town centre amount to approximately 1,500, with staff numbers increasing by a further 250. These relocations are releasing land elsewhere, mainly for housing, with the first of these schemes having started on site this month at Castle View. The scheme will deliver approximately 100 homes, mainly family accommodation adjacent to the town centre.
26. A submission was made by the College and the University of Aston for £9m of government funding towards a University Technical College to be constructed on land adjacent to the 6th Form Centre. Unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful, however, the College has subsequently submitted a further bid to Government and a Planning Application for a Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Technology which will provide courses for 1,200 students and represent a further investment of £7m.

## **Town Centre Foodstores**

27. 3 planning applications have been submitted for major foodstores in the Town Centre; 2 on the Cavendish House site and surrounding land and the third on the Falcon House site adjacent to King Street. All applications are currently going through the statutory planning process; each of the 3 proposals includes significant tracts of DMBC land, and CPO powers are likely to be required for each.

## **Town Centre Public Realm/Market Place project**

- 28.2 rounds of extensive public consultation have been carried out on this major £6m project which proposes to provide a high quality space in the heart of the Town Centre. Feedback from the 788 survey forms received showed clear support for all of the key components of the scheme such as the removal of the toilet block, relocation of the Duncan Edwards Statue, bringing the Fountain back into use, and a more open and accessible layout for the market itself. The second round exercise confirmed strong support for other key elements of the project including, the extension of the scheme, additional car parking, a lighting strategy, and exclusion of traffic. Concerns were expressed by Market Traders in relation to the future layout of stalls and following the receipt of a petition, ongoing discussions have taken place with the market traders to identify a layout acceptable to traders
29. Following Outline ERDF funding approval in July 2011 a full bid was submitted in early January 2012, with a provisional date for approval being given as 2nd March. However, due to a decision of the Local Management Committee in January to de-commit funds from all of the packages across the West Midlands, the appraisal of the project was put on hold and the Council's work on progressing the proposals was suspended pending clarity on the future of the scheme.

30. A Call for Outline Applications has subsequently been made under the current West Midlands ERDF Programme 2007 to 2013 and a revised Outline funding bid was submitted at end of November 2012. The Outline bid was approved in December 2012 and the Council has been invited to submit a full application and this is due to be made in February 2013, with work due to start on site in June 2013. A planning application for those parts of the proposals requiring planning permission was submitted in December 2012.

## **HALESOWEN**

### **Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP)**

31. Progress is being made towards adoption of the Halesowen Area Action Plan. The final consultation stage (called publication stage) on the plan has now closed and the plans along with any issues raised will be sent to the Secretary of State so that an Independent Inspector can consider the plans, their contents, any representations made on the plans and if required hold an Inquiry into these issues.

## **STOURBRIDGE**

### **Stourbridge Area Action Plan (AAP)**

32. Progress is being made towards adoption of the Stourbridge Area Action Plan. The final consultation stage (called publication stage) on the plan has now closed and the plans along with any issues raised will be sent to the Secretary of State so that an Independent Inspector can consider the plans, their contents, any representations made on the plans and if required hold an Inquiry into these issues.

## **Crown Centre**

33. Work has commenced on the demolition of the former Crown Centre and the Bell Street Car Park and on the construction of a new centre comprising

- A 5,500 sq m Tesco foodstore
- 280 sq m associated small retail units
- 550 sq m Offices
- 1,500 sq m New Mall (including Food Court)
- a new 543 space car park

34. The development also includes associated landscape improvements, access, servicing, highway works, footpaths, cycleways and public realm improvements. The development, which represents the single largest development in the town centre in recent times is due to complete in late 2013 and is anticipated to bring a number of benefits including

- 460 new jobs
- Improved car parking facilities
- Public realm improvements including an enhanced town square;
- Improvements to the setting of listed buildings and the High Street Stourbridge Conservation Area

- Stronger pedestrian and cycle linkages;
- An active frontage to the ring road;
- Junction improvements to the road network;

### **Local and District Centres**

35. The local and district centres as defined in the Black Country Joint Core Strategy are as follows;

#### **District Centres**

- Kingswinford
- Lye
- Sedgley

#### **Local Centres**

- Amblecote
- Cradley/Windmill Hill
- Gornal Wood
- Netherton
- Pensnett
- Quarry Bank
- Roseville
- Shell Corner
- The Stag
- Upper Gornal
- Wall Heath
- Wollaston
- Wordsley
- Hawne
- Oldswinford

36. The hierarchy of all centres in the Borough was originally defined in the Council's Unitary Development Plan, and has been subsequently reviewed by the Black Country Joint Core Strategy (JCS) leading to the new designation of Hawne and Oldswinford as local centres. The detail in terms of boundaries to these centres will be set out in the Borough's emerging Development Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) which is scheduled for adoption early 2015.

37. The DPD will not provide as much detail as the current regeneration strategies for the local centres. Therefore it is likely that further work will need to be undertaken in the form of investment /delivery strategies that provide this type of detail.

38. The JCS includes a number of 'Regeneration Corridors' which are a network of development opportunities covering areas of regeneration need & opportunity which lie outside of the 4 Principal Centres identified in the JCS (Dudley, Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Halesowen). Regeneration opportunities for these Principal Centres

are covered by adopted or proposed Area Action Plans. Those Regeneration Corridors that lie within the Borough, as shown on Appendix A to this report, are as follows;

- Corridor 10 Pensnett to Kingswinford
- Corridor 11a Dudley Town Centre to Brierley Hill
- Corridor 11b Brierley Hill to Stourbridge
- Corridor 13 Jewellery Line: Rowley Regis to Stourbridge Junction
- Corridor 14 Coombswood to Halesowen
- Corridor 16 Dudley Town Centre to Coseley

39. Regard has been given to the content of Local Centres Regeneration Plans/Strategies in the development of the strategic policies set out in the JCS, and this consistency will be maintained in the preparation of a Delivery Plan for the DPD

### **Local and District Centres Review**

40. The first Local and District Centres Review, approved by Cabinet in September 2006, analysed the borough's 16 local and district centres and identified the 5 that would become the Council's priorities for regeneration over the following 3 years. This Review highlighted the centres most in need of regeneration by evaluating the performance of each against some basic criteria. The criteria used were vacancy levels, retail representation in the protected frontages, diversity of uses and traffic congestion.

41. The priority centres identified as a result of the Review were: - Shell Corner, Lye, Cradley, Pensnett and Quarry Bank. For each of these priority centres, the intention was for Regeneration Strategies/Plans to be developed to encourage and guide investment and renewal in these areas. The Regeneration Strategy/Plan is a non-statutory document and is developed within the framework of current planning policy (the approved Unitary Development Plan) but not included within the Council's Local Development Scheme. As such, it provides a responsive and flexible mechanism to identify priorities for action, funding, and a means of engaging with landowners and potential developers

42. Substantial progress has been made in developing Regeneration Strategies for these priority local and district centres. The Lye District Centre Action Plan was approved in 2004 and Regeneration Strategies/Plans have been developed for Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre (approved in February 2008); Shell Corner Local Centre (approved in December 2008) and Pensnett (approved in July 2009)

43. The District and Local Centres Review was updated and approved by Cabinet on the 3rd September 2009. The Review again identified the district and local centres that will become the priorities for regeneration over the subsequent 3 years and a further two centres at Netherton and Wordsley have been added to the priority list.

44. The DPD will deal with reviewing centre boundaries, protected frontages, site allocations and retail policies specific to local and district centres. It will also address some issues relating each specific local and district centre, however delivery actions

and activity will need to be addressed by individual centre delivery/investment strategies.

## **Update on delivering the actions contained in current Plans/Strategies.**

### **Cradley/Windmill Hill**

45. An outline planning permission has been approved for the 118-122 Windmill Hill (subject to Section 106 agreement) for mixed use development on this site which has been an eyesore for some time. The development has however stalled as the developer has been unable to reach agreement with landowners over purchase of the properties required for the scheme and the Council has met with the developer on a number of occasions in order to try and assist in finding a solution.
46. Officers are currently assisting representatives from the Providence Methodist church with their aspirations to redevelop the site for residential use incorporating a replacement church facility.
47. Proposals have been prepared on improvements to car parks, footpaths, open spaces and on the potential for public art to celebrate the history of the area and a public consultation is currently underway on these proposals.
48. Discussions are currently underway with a Housing Association considering carrying out a residential development on the Foredraft Street site in accordance with the adopted Development Brief for this site

### **Lye**

49. Officers are working closely with Dudley NHS and their development partner Ashley House on the development of proposals for the development of a LIFT healthcare facility adjacent to the Lye bypass. Work is focussing on the details of the land transfer from the Council to LIFT, car parking issues and pre-planning application discussions. Site surveys and investigations have been completed. The proposals have been subject to a successful public consultation exercise and a planning application has been submitted which is currently subject to the statutory planning process and is expected to be determined in early 2013.

### **Pensnett**

50. Officers are working closely with Dudley NHS and Ashley House on the development of proposals for the development of a LIFT healthcare facility in the heart of the local centre, for which planning permission was approved in 2012. However, the option agreement for the acquisition of the site between Dudley Infracare Liftco (DIL) and the site's owner expired in December 2012 and officers are working with DIL to try and find a suitable alternative site.

## **Quarry Bank**

51. Officers have worked with the Quarry Bank Community Association in their successful bid for funding for a feasibility study for the refurbishment of the Quarry Bank Community Centre (awarded in October 2011) and will continue to work with the association in the preparation of this work
52. Following the preparation of proposals to improve the public realm in the local, and the award by CENTRO of £360k Local Sustainable Transport Fund monies in order to support public transport, walking and cycling facilities in the area, a public consultation is being held in January 2013 to seek the views of local people on the proposals. The public realm proposals include resurfacing of footpaths, environmental improvements and public art, the implementation of which is dependant on securing funding, however, the LSTF funding has been secured and work will start on implementing its proposals in Summer 2013

## **Finance**

53. Those activities detailed in the report which are delivered directly by the Council are funded within existing revenue and capital budgets.

## **Law**

54. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of its area.

## **Equality Impact**

55. This work has been conducted in full accordance with the Council's equality and diversity policies and should in no way have any prejudicial impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups. The needs of children and young people are considered in the planning process for centres.

## **Recommendation**

56. That the Committee note the progress made in regenerating the Borough's principal and local centres



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## **List of Background Papers**

1. Centres and Retail – District and Local Centres Review February 2006
2. Lye District Centre Position Statement September 2005
3. Lye District Centre Action Plan – July 2004
4. Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan- July 2007
5. Shell Corner Local Centre Regeneration Strategy- October 2008
6. Pensnett Regeneration Strategy – July 2009
7. Quarry Bank Regeneration Strategy – December 2011