

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education 13th September 2010

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Progress Report on Regeneration of the 16 Local and District Centres

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Select Committee on progress in the regeneration of the Borough's 16 local and district centres.

Background

2. This report sets out the work that has been undertaken since the last report to the Select Committee on 26th October 2009.
3. The local and district centres as defined in the Dudley Unitary Development Plan 2005 are as follows;

District Centres

- Brierley Hill High Street
- 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

4. The hierarchy of all centres in the Borough will be reviewed by the Black Country Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and through the Development Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). The JCS, which proposes changes to the hierarchy, sees Brierley Hill upgraded to Strategic Centre status and adds two new local centres at Oldswinford and Hawne, was the subject of an Examination in Public in July 2010. The Inspectors report is awaited. The DPD was subject to a public consultation from 30th July to 10th September 2010 on scoping and issues and the representations made during that period will now be assessed, prior to publication of the first draft early in October 2010. The DPD is due for adoption in March 2012.
5. The DPD is unlikely to 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.

Local and District Centres Review

6. 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.
7. 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 has limited weight in planning terms but is able to be prepared, adopted and reviewed in a more expedient manner than if prepared as a statutory planning document
8. 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) and Shell Corner Local Centre (approved in December 2008) and Pensnett (approved in July 2009).
9. A Strategy for Quarry Bank is currently being developed and is at its final stage following extensive consultations. A final report will shortly be signed off by the Cabinet Member and adopted as Council policy.
10. 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 next 3 years and a further two centres at Netherton and Wordsley have been added to the priority list.

11. The priority work for the centres team over the next year is to deliver the actions identified in the Regeneration Strategies/Plans. However any review of these approved plans/strategies and the production of strategies for the two additional centres will have to be dealt with through the new Development Plan System as part of the Development Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD).
12. 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. As indicated in para 4 above, the DPD is due for adoption in March 2012.

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

Lye

13. The projects identified in the Lye District Centre Action Plan and by the implementation group for the Plan (Lye and Wollescote Partnership) that are currently being progressed are as follows:-
 - *LIFT* –The Primary Care Trust (PCT) have been in discussions with the Council about redeveloping the site identified in the Lye District Centre Action Plan for community facilities for a LIFT scheme (health led development). Considerable progress has been made with this scheme which has now received first stage approval from the PCT and the Council itself in terms of its financial commitment to the project. Work is progressing on the building design and a planning application is expected soon.
 - *Design and construction of Food Store* –In October 2009 I reported that the sites identified in the Action Plan for retail development now had formed part of the LIFT site and that alternative sites would have to be identified for a food store. Considerable work has been done to identify such a site and is being tested with potential developers. Given that the LIFT proposals have reduced in scale from those originally proposed, work is being carried out to see whether the site can accommodate both healthcare and food store uses.
 - *Lye feasibility study*- The Lye and Wollescote Partnership had raised concerns over the hard landscaped area in front of the library and the overgrown land on the corner of Chapel St and High Street as creating a negative image of Lye. A feasibility study has been carried out looking at improvement options for the area and the potential of creating a gateway to Lye High Street and options have been identified and Capital resources allocated. Consultation with the Partnership will now take place and it is intended that the project will be completed by March 2011.

Cradley

14. The Cradley Implementation Group is a sub group of the Halesowen Area Committee and oversees the implementation of the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Strategy. The projects identified in the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan that are currently being progressed are as follows:-

- *Foredraft Street Development Site* - A development brief for this site was agreed by the Cabinet Member on the 19th May 2010, following extensive local consultation. The site will now be marketed for residential development.
- *LIFT Scheme*-- The PCT has identified Cradley as a location for a LIFT scheme (a health led development) and the development partner (Dudley Infracare LIFT) had been in discussions with the Methodist Church about the possibility of redeveloping the site for a LIFT scheme. However, this site's constraints are such that it is not considered suitable by LIFT for a scheme. However the PCT remains committed to locating a scheme in the Cradley/Windmill Hill area and other sites are currently being assessed for suitability and deliverability.
- *Methodist Church Site*- Discussions are continuing with the Methodist Church regarding the redevelopment of their site possibly for social housing.
- *118-122 Windmill Hill Development Site* - The Council is in ongoing discussions with a developer who is interested in redeveloping the site identified as 118-122 in the Regeneration Plan for retail led mixed use scheme.
- *Implementing highway and public realm improvements* - Funding was secured (£30,000) from the Capital Programme to undertake a number of improvements identified in the Regeneration Plan. These included upgrading the pedestrian footpath linking Windmill Hill to land at Foredraft Street, creating Gateways to the local centre and upgrading signage/road markings. This work was completed in 2009.

Shell Corner

15. The projects identified in the Shell Corner Local Centre Regeneration Strategy that are currently being progressed are as follows:-

- *Shell Corner Development Site 1 (297-308 Long Lane) and 2 (295-296 Long Lane)*- The Council has been in pre planning application discussions with a developer interested in redeveloping this largely derelict block of shops. There are a number of issues affecting this site which the Council is working with the developer to try to resolve.
- *Implementing highway and public realm improvements* - Funding was secured (£28,264) from the Capital Programme to undertake a number of improvements identified in the Shell Corner Local Centre Regeneration Strategy. These include upgrading the Nimmings Road/Malt Mill Lane roundabout and improving signage to public car parks. These improvements were implemented during 2009.

Pensnett

16. The Regeneration Strategy for Pensnett was approved on the 9th July 2009. The Strategy aims to revitalise the area with new shops and homes and provide enhanced traffic management measures. Discussions are proceeding with the PCT with a view to locating a new doctor's surgery and with Dudley Infracare LIFT on the provision of a health and social care facility in the centre. A site has been secured for the latter and the project has been approved by the PCT for funding.
17. The proposed highway improvements in the Plan are currently being drawn up. However the funding for these through the minor improvements programme is currently uncertain due to recent reductions of the budget. Public consultation will be carried out when there is more certainty about the funding package.

Quarry Bank

18. As indicated in paragraph 8, a Regeneration Strategy for the centre is shortly to be recommended for approval by the Cabinet Member. The Strategy will deal with traffic issues, enhancement of the public realm and how to attract new investment.

Work in remaining local and district centres

19. In the remaining district and local centres Regeneration Plans/Strategies are not currently being developed but projects are being supported as required within the resources available. The projects that have been supported are as follows:-

Netherton

- *Gateway/Public Art*- Funding was secured (£10,000) to implement a gateway/ public art following an art competition won by a pupil at Hillcrest High School. The Borough Artist has completed the design and the artwork has been constructed It is intended that the gateway/public art will be installed on the grass bank on the Halesowen Road, opposite Northfield Road.
- *Titanic Project*- In August a celebration took place around the return of a replica of the anchor of the Titanic that was manufactured in the town in 1911. The replica was towed from the site of Dudley station to Netherton by 20 shire horses, the reverse of its original journey. Various celebratory events took place in the town and local park during the day and the replica now stands in the centre of the town
- *Netherton Park –Healthy Towns* - The outdoor gym contract was completed at the end of March 2010 and the contractor is to return to site to install the access path to the hub building on completion of the building contract. The Hub building contract was completed in August. Remaining works includes path works, lighting to outdoor gym from Greaves Road and signage.

Areas to be developed in next 12 months

20. As indicated in paragraph 4 two new local centres will be identified in the JCS. Policies and proposals for these centres will be developed through the emerging Development Strategy DPD, as will a review of policies for the existing local centres.

Other issues

21. The securing of resources to appoint an officer with a modest budget to address issues in the District and Local Centres has been a success. It has raised the Centres' profile within the Council and the expectations of residents and traders. This is not only in the priority centres but also the other centres as well. As a result, additional internal and external resources have been attracted. The current Project Officer is now working at full capacity in developing regeneration plans, identifying funding, undertaking development appraisals, looking at delivery options and negotiating with developers. As a result there has been a reallocation of workload with the Town Centres team in order to address gaps in the demand for activity.
22. The Council's priorities within the Economic Strategy have been to concentrate resources and investment on the 4 principal town centres (i.e. Dudley, Brierley Hill, Halesowen and Stourbridge). There will be a greater demand for resources as work in the priority district and local centres increases and also as the demand for the Council to get involved in the non priority centres becomes greater.
23. The preparation of Regeneration Plans/Strategies is running alongside the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) as it was felt that action was needed within these centres that could be pursued within the existing planning framework. However any new policies and proposals for these centres will have to be dealt with through the JCS and emerging Development Strategy DPD.
24. It should be recognised that the production of Regeneration Plans/Strategies will in itself not create development activity or the funding to drive it. It will however provide a framework to guide appropriate investment where resources exist. To that end, all of the actions proposed in Regeneration Plans/Strategies are entirely reliant on the availability of private and public sector funding for them to proceed.
25. With respect to private sector funding, the recession has had an inevitable and significant impact on development activity in all of the borough's centres. As a result, development reliant on private sector investment anticipated in adopted Regeneration Plans/Strategies has in a number of cases been delayed or cancelled.
26. Even during the times when the private sector was more willing to invest in development, local centres have not been able to attract the levels of investment that has happened in larger centres. Therefore in the current climate securing investment is even more of a challenge. The problems and issues of the local centres are ingrained and the sites difficult; were this not the case they would have been addressed by market forces by now. The role of Regeneration Plans/Strategies is to encourage development more rapidly than would happen if left purely to market forces. Many of the sites considered for development have low value and require high investment to solve long standing issues thereby giving poor or no return to the investor in the current market.
27. Despite the above, market confidence will return for private sector investment in the borough's local centres will be restored when there is greater access to funding and returns to investors improve, and strenuous efforts are being made to seek out potential developers who are prepared to carry out work either now or when market conditions improve. Liason has taken place and is continuing with a number of

Coseley Regeneration Activity

28. Whilst Coseley is not identified as one of the priority 16 district and local centres it has long been a concern of this Select Committee that the regeneration potential of the wider Coseley area is recognised and enhanced for this Committee.

29. The following projects and initiatives are underway

- Silver Jubilee Park – As part of the Healthy Towns programme the park is one of the hub locations. The outdoor gym was completed in March 2010 and the hub building works started on site in April 2010 and was due for completion on the 3rd September. Further works are programmed to include path and entrance improvements, seating, lighting and resurfacing the play area. This work, together with the previous improvements carried out under the Liveability programme, brings the total of recent and committed investment to the park to just over £900,000
- £196,000 of Healthy Community Travel funding has been secured to provide direction & warning signage, road markings, improved crossing facilities, segregated and shared pedestrian and cycling routes, improvements to public rights of ways and paths through parks and public open spaces. These improvements will be carried out within the catchment of Silver Jubilee Park in order to complement the Healthy Towns project. This work is expected to be well advanced by the end of the current financial year.
- £290,000 of Congestion Target Delivery Plan Reward funding has been secured for the replacement of obsolete traffic signal equipment at the Ivyhouse Lane, Bank Street and Mason Street junctions with the A4123 Birmingham New Road. This work is intended to reduce traffic congestion and delays and lead to improvements in road safety and will also bring benefits in accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists to the Healthy Hub proposals underway at Silver Jubilee Park. These works are now substantially complete.
- The £12M Wallbrook Extra Care Development is now on site and under construction by Midland Heart. The development will provide 72 homes for older people and 30+ jobs and will be completed in the spring of 2011.
- New Coseley Youth club and Multi Use Games Area are completed.

30. Whilst the projects referred to in this report tend to be of a physical nature, there are many community initiatives being developed and delivered in many of the centres by the Community Renewal team. It is not appropriate to deal with all these in this

Finance

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

Law

32. 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

33. 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

34. That the Committee;
- (i) Note the significant progress made in regenerating the district and local centres since additional resources were allocated 2005/06.
 - (ii) Support the growth of resources to deliver the Council's aspirations in the district 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