

3 NOVEMBER 2004

ECONOMIC REGENERATION WORKING GROUP VISIT TO THE BRIERLEY HILL REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP

REPORT OF THE LEAD OFFICER

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the members of the Select Committee on the Economic Regeneration's visit to the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 21st September a number of members of the Working Group spent an afternoon visiting both the offices of the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership (BHRP) and touring the developments at Merry Hill and Brierley Hill Town Centre.
- 2.2 At the offices of the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership, the Director of the BHRP outlined the background behind the developments in a well researched and clear exposition of both the historical and the future drivers for the long term plans.
- 2.3 It was very clear to all members of the Working Group that this was one of the largest developments in Western Europe let alone the UK. What was envisaged was the creation of a new town centre in a way which blended into the existing developments and was not the monolithic 'new town' structure that had taken place in Milton Keynes, Harlow, Basildon and Skelmersdale.
- 2.4 It was clear from the presentation that we're not seeing a Government agency coming into and planting a new town but the moulding of the best ideas from the private and public sectors to create the framework for the kind of 'organic' town centre development that is more suited to the local environment and closely aligned to the aspirations of the local communities.
- 2.5 Following the formal presentation, a more informal 'walkabout' took place which visited a number of the new residential units on the site. The first of which was a development of flats backing onto a new car park. Despite the surroundings, all the units had been sold. The new car park for the British Home Stores, offered the secure parking for the apartments. The car park itself had been finished to a very high standard which was given as one of the reasons levels of vandalism had been so low.

- 2.6 The next residential development comprised town houses and flats alongside Pedmore Road but the internal courtyard area gave the perspective of being in an up-market Metropolitan square.
- 2.7 A number of sites were then visited, most notably at the Briars School. This site and surrounding area demonstrated that the distance from Brierley Hill Town Centre was in reality no difference than the distance across the present Merry Hill Development.
- 2.8 It was envisaged that a centre piece walkway would link the present Merry Hill Development to the present centre of Brierley Hill. This would give access to the present LIFT scheme and allow crossing of the proposed relief road through a series of well planned crossing points.
- 2.9 A wide range of civic provision sites were planned to respond to the further creation of 10,000 new jobs and over 1,000 new homes.
- 2.10 The formal response to the afternoon session is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.11 It was felt on the day that this was a showcase scheme for the area which would not only have an impact on Brierley Hill but its beneficial influence would impact on the rest of the borough.
- 2.12 Future sessions can be arranged and given more time. Some of the housing initiatives now at Merry Hill could have been visited internally.

3. **PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 That the report be noted.

4. **FINANCE**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage.

5. **LAW**

- 5.1 Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, enables the Council to do anything that is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of the borough.

6. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- 6.1 This report complies with the Council's policies on equal opportunities and diversity.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 That the proposals set out in paragraph 3.1 above be approved.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 The formal response to the visit, attached as Appendix 1.

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