

## **Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee - 11th January 2024**

### **Report of the Director of Regeneration & Enterprise**

#### **Progress on Major Regeneration Projects**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide an update on the major regeneration projects and other town centre proposals/projects in development.

##### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended:-
  - That the contents of this report are noted.

##### **Background**

3. In the last few years there have several well documented major regeneration projects developed and completed. This report gives an update on the status on next phase of projects both in the main town centres and around the borough. This report does not give an update on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension as that is the subject of a separate presentation to the Scrutiny Committee, by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).

#### **Dudley – projects on site/with consent**

##### **Towns Fund- Health Innovation Dudley (HID)**

In July 2021 DMBC secured £25 million to build a new higher education facility at the bottom of Castle Hill. A full business case was submitted in April 2022 and funding was confirmed in Summer of the same year.

Dudley's proposed Towns Fund Project is The Health Innovation Dudley ('HID') project which will deliver a new 3,618 sqm (approximately) University Centre at Castle Hill focused on Health and Life Sciences. The HID will be constructed by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) and leased to Dudley College of Technology and the curriculum delivered by the University of Worcester.

The project aims to attract new students to Dudley, provide new technical skills and degree programmes which align with local employment opportunities, and to improve progression rates for local people into higher-skilled employment opportunities.

Planning consent was issued on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

Most of the proposed site for the new University Centre is already in Council ownership, however the project will require the assembly of third-party interests. The Council is currently in negotiation with the owners of these properties regarding acquisition. If these discussions do not result in the mutually agreed sale and acquisition of land interests, the Council will, where appropriate and if needed, use its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers. The CPO Order was made on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023. The Inquiry is anticipated to take place around March/ April of 2024 unless the objections are withdrawn beforehand.

The parcel of land already in the Council's ownership was formerly occupied by the Hippodrome building which has now been demolished and land secured ready for commencement of construction works.

## **Dudley Interchange**

The existing Dudley Bus Station is over 30 years old and is dated in its design. Furthermore, the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension under construction by the Midlands Metro Alliance (MMA), will run through the existing bus station making it inoperable in its current format.

Designs and highway layouts have been developed in partnership with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and TfWM, to provide a new Interchange facility to accommodate both bus and Metro. Full planning consent was approved by Planning Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022, and an amended interchange building design has subsequently been submitted and approved.

The council have designed the public realm around the new Interchange to create high quality pedestrian routes and spaces.

This work will be built by TfWM and funded by City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) monies. The council have assisted TfWM by using its CPO powers to acquire the required properties.

WMCA/TfWM and DMBC are due to start site enabling works in January 2024 with construction works likely to last between 12 and 15 months. While the works are being carried out, all the bus stops will be relocated to Tower Street and Coronation Gardens.

## **Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative (TH2)**

The Townscape Heritage (TH 2) programme is funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund and offers grant assistance to carry out repair, reinstatement and refurbishment works to historic buildings in the historic core of the Dudley Town Centre Conservation Area as well as a programme of complementary education and community engagement activities. The TH2 programme is building upon the success of projects delivered through TH1 delivered between 2008 -2015.

TH2 is operating with a grant budget of £1.178m from the NLHF and £300,000 match funding from the Council. Achievements since the last include:

- Plaza Malls (Phase 2) – new shopfront to ground floor, complete subject to some minor snagging items to the lead detail above the fascia.
- Fountain Arcade – repair and architectural reinstatement work to Market Street elevation (first and second floor) and installation of 4 new shopfronts (2 external and 2 internal, one of which is the Butchers shop) – complete subject to some minor snagging items to be addressed by the contractor.
- 208 and 209 Wolverhampton Street - repair and architectural reinstatement works and installation of new shopfronts – complete subject to some minor snagging items to be addressed by the contractor.
- 207 Wolverhampton Street - repair and architectural reinstatement works and installation of new shopfronts – ongoing.
- Delivery of community engagement projects such as ‘Growing up in Dudley’ which saw a wealth of images, oral histories and artwork inspired by people’s experiences and memories of Dudley <https://www.dudleypeoplesarchive.com/growing-up-in-dudley> and ‘Dudley Days’ which held workshops with small groups of local volunteers to create music inspired by connections with Dudley
- Installation of a plaque on the front elevation of Fountain Arcade to acknowledge and thank the funders of the project, the NLHF and Dudley Council.
- Successful delivery of Heritage Open Days annually every September from the Coroners Court and provision of 12 virtual tours of heritage

buildings in the Conservation Area:

<https://www.dudleyheritageopendays.org.uk/>

- Training session for bricklaying students at Dudley College has been provided where they were provided hand-on training from a conservation bricklaying specialist.
- Production of travelling exhibition material in the form of 4 pull-up banners about the history of Dudley, this has been on display in the Museum, Dudley Castle and in the recent Constable exhibition.
- Successfully re-established the Dudley Coffin Race in 2018
- Evaluation and monitoring of the project – work on this has commenced.

By the end of December/beginning of January the priority is to complete the snagging items on Fountain Arcade and 208 and 209 Wolverhampton street. To complete the render repairs and installation of the new shopfront on 207 Wolverhampton Street, complete any outstanding items in the activities programme, complete the evaluation and monitoring of the project and to work with the main funder (NLHF) on the closedown of the project.

For more information about the above visit the webpage for the project:

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/historic-buildings-and-structures/heritage-led-regeneration/dudley-townscape-heritage-programme/>

## **Castle Hill Vision - Phase Two – Dudley Castle Repair Grant**

The Castle Hill vision (Phase Two) is a master plan document prepared with the express intention of building upon the success of what was delivered under Phase One, e.g. restoration of 5 Tecton Structures, repair of the 1950's chair lift and the substantial infrastructure improvements including the creation of the new car park and public realm along Zoological Way.

The focus of Phase Two is on a series of improvements and investments to the Castle Hill Conservation Area with particular emphasis on Dudley Castle, 4 Tecton structures, Stores Cavern, a new visitor and education building and the Castle Hill Woodland. Thanks to the Castle Hill Vision (Phase 2) document, development funding of £82,000 has been successfully levered in from Historic England for Dudley Castle in the form of the 'Dudley Castle Repair Grant'. The funding has been used to:

- undertake extensive vegetation clearance to expose all the elevations of the Castle
- undertake a full measured survey of the Castle and
- compile a detailed condition survey and costed management and maintenance plan of the Castle.

The remaining last 15% of the grant was claimed from Historic England at the end of March 2023 with the successful completion of the condition survey and costed management and maintenance plan for Dudley Castle. This information is now being used to inform the contents of further bids for

external funding for works at Dudley Castle and also for other projects identified in the Castle Hill Vision Phase 2 document, in particular the 4 Tecton Structures (Tropical Bird House, former Moat Café, Queen Mary Restaurant and Elephant House) who thanks to £120,000 of funding from the Getty Foundation are now at RIBA Stage 3.

## **Black Country Blue Network 2**

Black Country Blue Network 2 aims to improve the biodiversity and conservation status of 121.84 hectares of green space linked by the canal and river network.

The funding is from ERDF for a 3 year programme ending in June 2023 with the match funding from CIL, Section 106, capital monies, contribution from Metro and The Wildlife Trust of Birmingham & the Black Country. Proposed total spend is £648,400.

There were 7 individual projects in the Dudley Borough:

1. Castle Hill – Perimeter barrier improvements, removal of dead and dying Ash trees, path improvements and new tree and wildflower planting.
2. Peggy's Meadow- restoration of existing pastureland and fencing area to allow for future grazing.
3. Sedgley Beacon – new footpath from Wolverhampton Road, water retention swales, tree thinning works, hedge laying, grassland improved to create more biodiversity and work to expose limestone outcrops.
4. Holloway St. – converting existing pedestrian routes to formal compacted stone footpaths, tackling drainage issues and forming a low grassland meadow area.
5. Coseley Open Spaces – park improvements to increase biodiversity, woodland planting.
6. Turls Hill – restoration of meadow for grazing and boundary improvements.

All schemes are now complete.

## **Dudley – projects in development/pipeline**

These following sites have been identified in the Dudley Area Action Plan (AAP) (adopted 2017) as located within designated Development Opportunity Sites and consequently subject to site allocations and design parameters. The Dudley AAP is in the process of being reviewed to form part of the Dudley Local Plan (DLP).

## **Portersfield**

A report was presented to Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 updating on the project and the key actions/timescales moving forward.

Several site surveys were commissioned and have been completed during the mid/end of 2023 – including Archaeology and Heritage, Ecology and Tree, Invasive Plants, Topographical and environmental Ground investigation. The results of these surveys are supporting the ongoing work to prepare the development brief and a scheme design.

A public consultation exercise was also held from 26<sup>th</sup> July to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023. 459 people completed the questionnaire which asked ten questions about movement, accessibility, heritage and landscaping. All questions secured a 'strongly agree or agree' rating from more than 70% of respondees, with several in the high 80%/low 90% rating – and these results are also informing the preparation of the development brief and scheme design.

Heads of Terms have also been agreed with the main third-party landowner Avenbury, enabling the preparation of a Collaboration Agreement (CA). The CA will document the intentions of both parties; how DMBC and Avenbury will work together to progress a joint disposal of their respective land interests to a third-party developer; details of costs and value apportionment; and timescales.

Work in the first half of 2024 will include:

- Ongoing discussions to complete the Collaboration Agreement and then to agree a draft Development Agreement for inclusion as part of the development partner procurement process.
- Progressing negotiations with the other smaller third-party landowners – to progress land acquisition in lieu of commencing a CPO process.
- Completion of the Development Brief/Scheme Design for approval by Cabinet in February 2024.
- Progressing the procurement of a Development Partner through a competitive dialogue process. This will commence in early 2024.
- Engaging with partners to identify the funding package for the site, based on the preferred development brief/scheme design and the viability assessment.

## **Eton College**

In March this year it was announced as part of the Levelling Up Agenda that Star Academies and Eton College would be bidding for funds for potentially three academic sixth form colleges, one of which was to be located in Dudley.

The Council has worked with Star Academies to identify a preferred site which is in Council ownership. To accommodate the new college, several relocations will be required each with its own issues and risks and Corporate Landlord Services are working on gaining vacant possession and working with occupiers to relocate where required and possible.

Star Academies submitted the bid for funding to DfE at the end of November and an announcement was made late summer 2023 confirming the award of the Department for Education (DfE) funding to Star Academies and Eton College for the proposed college.

Star Academy's programme assumes a start on site in December 2024 with an opening date to new students in September 2026.

## **Flood Street**

This is a key gateway site, opposite the new Duncan Edwards leisure centre and is predominantly in council ownership with the exception of the "Homescene" property. Following a competitive bidding process, terms have been agreed (subject to Full Council approval) for the Council to acquire the Freehold of this property to avoid a future CPO and to complete its strategic landholding of the site.

The Flood Street site is located close to the town centre and the soon to be redeveloped Interchange, and with a Metro stop adjacent, it provides an opportunity to enhance the leisure offer and create a new quarter. Officers are in discussions with a Leisure Provider on this site for a multi-use scheme focused on a key leisure facility, with negotiations are underway on an exclusivity agreement.

## **Wellington Road**

The site of the former Dudley Leisure centre has been vacant since the new leisure centre opened in 2022. Officers have prepared a development brief for a medium density housing scheme which is has been shared with several prospective developers. The site was under an exclusivity agreement (EA) to allow one of these developers to undertake due diligence checks including pre application discussions. The EA expired earlier in the year 2023, following which the decision was made to market the site for disposal. The marketing closed at the end of December 2023.

## **Brierley Hill - Projects on site/with consent**

### **Brierley Hill Future High Street Fund Programme**

Brierley Hill High Street was awarded funding from the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) in December 2020. This confirmed investment of £9.985m to support a mixed package of interventions. These include:

- Highway junction enhancements to improve traffic flows and air quality. The highway works completed in June 2022.
- Public realm works to improve connectivity and integration of the High Street to the new Metro terminus. The High Street works commenced on site on 8th January 2023 and will complete in March 2024.
- Refurbishment of the High Street public library and re-opening of the town centre public toilets.
- Redevelopment by DMBC of the long-term vacant Daniels Land and High Plateau sites; and the rear car park of the Moor Centre for new homes.

The Future High Streets (FHS) grant funding needs to be spent by 2023/24 to align with the programme rules. Delivery on the larger projects will continue to 2025/26 to allow the remaining match funding to be spent.

West Midlands Combined Authority's decision during 2022/23 to delay the Midlands Metro extension to Brierley Hill meant the public square improvements around the Metro Terminus could not be delivered within Future High Street Fund timescales. The funding has therefore been re-allocated to other projects within the Future High Streets programme.

West Midlands Combined Authority's decision in July 2022 to delay implementation of the Midland Metro to Brierley Hill has had a serious impact on the redevelopment programme and the ability to spend FHS monies by March 2024. This is because of the need to construct the tram viaduct and undertake works on the Embankment to create the Merry Hill tram stop before full redevelopment works can commence on the sites.

After lengthy negotiation with the Department for Levelling Up, the Council has successfully obtained approval to re-allocate the £3.55m of unspent headroom into a schedule of replacement projects at Brierley Hill High Street. These include an extended programme of public realm works to address connectivity issues, funding for the repair of historic buildings, improvements to Marsh Park, an environmental improvement programme, improvement to the Moor Centre open space and funding for a Changing Places toilet. A programme extension has been granted to March 2025 to spend the reprofiled grant funding.



The decision in Autumn 2023 to cancel the HS2 Northern Route has allowed transport funding to be re-allocated to local transport schemes. As the result, the West Midlands Mayor has given a commitment to fund the Metro extension to Brierley Hill.

Therefore, in parallel, the Council is holding discussions with Homes England and West Midlands Combined Authority over strategic acquisition of the development sites.

### **Brierley Hill High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ)**

The Brierley Hill High Street HAZ is a 4-year programme, due for completion by March 2024, it is Government funded and run by Historic England. At the start of the programme a grant of £1.8m was awarded by Historic England with £400,000 match funding coming from the Council, equating to an overall grant of 81.80% from Historic England and an overall budget of £2.2m. At the end of September 2021, this figure was increased with an additional grant of £242,171 from Historic England, which with the 18.20% match from the Council provides a total grant increase of £296,052.46 and therefore an overall budget of just under £2.5m.

The programme provides grant assistance to third parties to carry out repair, reinstatement and refurbishment works to historic buildings as well as grant assistance towards bringing vacant floorspace back into use. It also provides grant towards public realm improvements, plus there is a programme of complementary education and community engagement activities.

The public realm proposals for the Civic Hall Green and St Mary's Church are underway and being delivered in conjunction with the wider public realm proposals for the Future High Street programme.

In terms of building projects, the programme is dependent on the acceptance of grants by building owners and on contractors being appointed and being able to manage time pressures (imposed by the tight spend window for the project, significant rising costs and material delays). That notwithstanding grant offers have been offered and accepted on seven projects:

- 2A and 2 Albion Street, repair and architectural reinstatement and bringing vacant floor space back into use – (building had been vacant/derelict for a number of years) – complete, subject to some minor snagging items to be addressed by the contractor.
- 68 High Street, repair and architectural reinstatement - complete, subject to some minor snagging items to be addressed by the contractor.
- 101 High Street (Phase 1 – roof) – complete

- Brierley Hill Institute – repair and architectural reinstatement works, contractor has commenced site set up and relevant pre-commencement planning conditions have been discharged
- 8 Mill Street – repair and architectural reinstatement - complete, subject to some minor snagging items to be addressed by the contractor
- St Mary's Church (door) – complete in time for the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the building.
- 121 High Street - repair and architectural reinstatement and bringing vacant floor space back into use – (building had been vacant/derelict for a number of years) - underway

Projects that are currently in development looking to receive grant funding through the programme are:

- Brierley Hill Market – planning consent granted, tenders returned and contractor in the process of being appointed.
- 101 High Street (Phase 2 – new shopfront) – planning consent granted and tenders returned and being assessed.
- 3-5 Church Street - planning consent granted, tenders returned and being assessed.

As is currently stands, if all these projects progress to completion all of the HAZ funding will be fully committed.

Community engagement and activities are also being positively progressed and delivered in conjunction with Brierley Hill Community Forum, Friends of Marsh Park, Dudley Market, Black County Living Museum and with teams in Adult and Community Learning, Museums, Communications and Public Affairs, Dudley Business First and the Historic Environment Team. There is in-place an Activity Plan for the project with agreed milestones. An example of one of the delivered projects in the Bells of Brierley Hill which has been promoted on the webpages of Historic England: <https://heritagecalling.com/2023/03/16/the-bells-of-brierley-hill/>

Another major element of the High Street Heritage HAZ is the development of a Cultural Programme. The Arts Council England, National Heritage Memorial Fund and Historic England are providing funding for the development and delivery of the High Street HAZ Cultural Programme providing the total sum of £94,000. In accordance with a milestone and instalment schedule issued by Historic England, the following projects have been approved and have either been delivered or are in the process of being delivered:

- 100 Faces of Brierley Hill
- Radio Public Library (social art project) – Workshop 24
- Pop Up Gallery and Shop – Dudley College
- Brierley Hill Song Book – Dan Whitehouse

- Great Big Green Week – Ekho Collective
- These People, This Place - Ekho Collective

All the funding for this programme has been committed and is now in the process of commencing the evaluation and monitoring stage.

For more information visit the webpage for the project:  
<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/brierley-hill-high-street-heritage-action-zone/>

## **Stourbridge - projects in development/pipeline**

### **Stourbridge Project Plan**

Following the removal of the temporary Covid Emergency Active Travel measures in Stourbridge Town Centre, officers were asked to consider what permanent improvements could be developed to improve pedestrian movement and safety together with wider sustainable connectivity enhancements supporting the town centre. Alongside this, officers were also requested to identify potential funding streams to aid delivery of these improvements.

To support this work a project plan has been developed for the town centre, to include opportunities for improving access to and within the town centre for walking and cycling within an overall enhanced public realm environment. Public consultation on the proposals contained within the project plan is scheduled to take place in January 2024. This will inform the business case necessary to secure the West Midlands City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) allocation towards a sustainable connectivity package for Stourbridge Town Centre. The Council has already secured an indicative allocation of £3M and this funding is subject to the approval of the required Business Case submissions to the West Midlands Combined Authority Single Assurance Framework, which requires compliance with strict criteria relating to the design of active travel measures.

In parallel with the consultation and business case development, work is underway to deliver previously committed to projects which have funding in place. These include a Changing Places Toilet at the Town Hall, enhancements to Stourbridge bridge, and a 'pocket park' approach to the northern gateway at the top of Lower High Street.

### **Lye Regeneration Programme**

Lye is one of the poorest areas within Dudley Borough and features highly on the national Index on Multiple Deprivation. There are a number of key regeneration and investment opportunities within the district centre to support renewal and new growth. These include: -

- Land South of Lye Bypass - Regeneration of Council owned vacant land and underutilised car parks south of Lye By-Pass presenting mixed development opportunities.
- Stour Valley - Opportunities exist to consolidate the area as a location for housing growth and improve the green infrastructure.

Strategic Connectivity Package - Improve connectivity within the town centre and address poor air quality with the opportunity for improved linkages to Lye station which provides the transport connection to Central Birmingham and mainline rail services. High Street - Improvement of public realm and enhancement of the historic environment. To support the approach,

In 2021 the Government introduced a requirement for all local planning authorities to develop local design codes. This is part of the government's agenda to improve design quality, particularly for new developments. On the back of this, the government (via the Office of Place) has established a National Design Code Pathfinder Pilot Programme whereby local authorities and other organisations have been selected as pilots to produce exemplar design codes for areas within their local authority boundary. The Council secured £120,000 from the Department of Levelling Up to produce a Design Code as part of the National Design Code Pathfinder Programme. Building Design Partnership (BDP) were appointed to develop a masterplan and design code for the Lye and Stour Valley area. The pilot project is nearing completion and will be used to inform the strategic regeneration programme to be taken forward across the town centre.

The Council made a submission to Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund in July 2022. This was for a mixed regeneration funding package to support the town centre. The funding bid was unsuccessful.

In the period since, West Midlands Combined Authority has secured regeneration funds through the Devolution Deal with Government. The intention is now to align the Lye programme to these funds. A Project Plan was prepared in the summer of 2023. This sets out a 10 year strategic approach for the town and the next steps of an implementation strategy, including internal governance arrangements and opening a dialogue with strategic funders. The programme includes an infrastructure and connectivity package, public realm and historic buildings improvement programme, a community programme and support for the private sector to bring forward new homes on brownfield land. There is also approval to set up a Town Board. The overall programme has a value in the region of £90m. There is a requirement for an initial £20-25m of funding support from public partners.

There has been engagement with the High Streets task Force which has offered support from a member of the Institute of Place Management to help develop the Lye proposals. In particular, support around food and drink and re-establishment of the night-time economy.

Initial engagement with WMCA has been very positive. The Project Plan follows a 'place based' approach which WMCA is looking to develop for the distribution of its Devolution Deal funding. The Chief Executive Laura Shoaf has requested her Directors establish a high-level dialogue with the Council on strategic principles, so the parties can then discuss funding and access to Devolution Deal monies.

Briefings have been held with the local MP Suzanne Webb who is supportive of the approach. The Lye Ward Members have been briefed and a series of update meetings scheduled going forward.

The intention is to establish internal governance and reporting arrangements in Q4 2023/24 and appoint internal project managers to take forward the individual work packages.

### **Pipeline Projects/Bids**

#### **Levelling Up Growth Zones (LUZs)**

The Council has been engaging with the West Midlands Combined Authority during 2023 on the Dudley Levelling Up Zone (LUZ) and associated business rate retention sites. The process has been evolving and adapting, as WMCA and Government agree the details on arrangements for the West Midlands area, and most appropriate way for the local authority areas to benefit.

The process has reached a conclusion, with agreement on three LUZs within the West Midlands that have business rate retention sites within them. This has required the Sandwell and Dudley Growth Zones to be presented as one zone, the '**Sandwell and Dudley Growth Zone**'. Assurances from WMCA have been secured that this is for presentational purposes only and that the two zones will operate separately with their own governance and financing arrangements.

The Dudley Levelling Up Zone has been drawn to be consistent with the emerging Priority Regeneration Corridor within the Dudley Local Plan. Within that there are three proposed business rate retention sites, detailed in the spreadsheet below.

Name	Size (ha)	Site details
Brierley Hill LUZ site	14.0	Level Street/Waterfront Way, Brierley Hill
Dudley LUZ site 1	2.5	Plot 3 Castlegate Park, Dudley
Dudley LUZ site 2	8.8	Includes Hall Street, Portersfield, Flood Street sites
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25.3</b>	

There is still a considerable amount of work to do to understand the financial modelling for the proposed business rate retention sites, with colleagues in Revenues and Benefits continuing to work with DHLUC to provide baseline data.

We also need to develop a programme and governance framework for the Dudley LUZ, which will be subject to cabinet approval (likely in early 2024). This will require more clarity on the financial modelling, the risks/ rewards to the Council and the engagement/reporting process with WMCA and DLUHC.

### **Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPfT)**

The Council has been awarded £20m for a 10-year socio-economic regeneration programme, focused on the town of Dudley. LTPfT funding can be drawn down from Government from the summer of 2024, subject to the identification of an inclusive Town Board and the preparation and approval of a 'Long Term Plan'. A report was presented to Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

The report set out the detail of the LTPfT initiative, the priority themes, objectives and the steps that the Council need to progress. It identifies that work during the early part of 2024, to enable the drawdown of resources, should include:

- *Engagement with DLUHC* – government is developing further guidance that will include advice on developing the Town Board, as well as further detail on funding. When this is received, the Director of Regeneration & Enterprise will engage with DLUHC and the proposed Towns Taskforce on the implementation of the initiative.
- *Creation of the Town Board* – including engagement with the Dudley North MP and with key groups and individuals. The key groups to be represented on the Board are detailed in the LTPfT guidance and The Director of Regeneration & Enterprise has been given approval to engage with the key groups and individuals, including those on the current Dudley Town Board, to refresh and re-purpose the existing Dudley Town Board. This will need to include the identification of a Chair.

- *Preparation of the 'Long Term Plan'*- the Long Term Plan should be in place by Summer 2024. To achieve that date, approval has been given for work to commence on the Long Term Plan, alongside the creation of the Town Board and in discussion with emerging Board members. This could include the planning of community engagement events, in conjunction with key stakeholders and emerging Board members.

Membership of the final Board and agreement to the Plan will be subject to Cabinet approval.

### **Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 3**

In August 2022, the Council submitted four LUF bids to Government. The LUF has been established to invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities – including a range of high value local investment priorities, such as local transport schemes, urban regeneration projects and cultural assets.

Unfortunately, in January 2023 it was confirmed that none of these bids were selected for funding, although it is understood that the Brierley Hill bid, in the Dudley South constituency, made a shortlist.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November Michael Gove announced non-competitive allocations of £20m to both the Brierley Hill and Halesowen bids.

The Brierley Hill bid will support the development of an Education and Learning Quarter. This includes investment to help Dudley College build a new Technology Centre at Venture Way; and a package of support to address connectivity issues between the High Street and Merry Hill.

The Halesowen bid will use the Pool Road Car Park as a catalyst for change by providing a new college facility that will be operated by Halesowen College. The college will offer hair & beauty courses, catering & hospitality, and adult learning. The facility will also include a public-facing restaurant and other retail provision – offering practical training for students, economic uses in the town centre and valuable new amenities for residents.

The bid will also include the creation of additional parking capacity at Andrews Road and Halesowen Leisure Centre to offset some of the loss at Pool Road, as well as improving the entrance to Cornbow Hall. To support the Pool Road scheme and improve active travel there will be significant infrastructure, public realm, and landscape improvements.

Further guidance is awaited.

## **Dudley Economic and Regeneration Strategy**

In June 2023, the Council appointed SQW to prepare an 'Economic and Regeneration Strategy' for the Council. The Strategy is required to address a highlighted corporate priority and to underpin future funding bids to Government, The West Midlands Combined Authority, and other sources.

SQW has been liaising closely with a core officer team within the Regeneration & Enterprise Directorate and has undertaken the following:

- A detailed econometric analysis and preparation of a Key Issues Paper, highlighting the Boroughs key challenges and the themes that should form the focus of the Strategy.
- A workshop with the Council core team in early October 2023 to discuss the above and agree the evolving Strategy.
- A series of stakeholder consultations across different Council departments and external bodies/ individuals – and four themed workshops with internal/external parties in late October 2023.
- A workshop with the 'Dudley Business Champions' and the 'Education and Skills' Boards on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.
- A workshop with the Council core team on the 6<sup>th</sup> December to discuss the draft Strategy and the Action Plan.

SQW is currently finalising the Strategy and Action Plan for its consideration at Cabinet on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2024.



## **New Legislation**

### **The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023**

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) received royal assent on 26 October 2023, becoming an Act. The Act includes a number of measures to encourage investment and development in towns and cities by providing practical measures for local authorities to apply, or seeks to speed up and simplify existing measures :

- New powers for local planning authorities to instigate auctions to take leases on vacant high street properties thereby forcing/encouraging landlords to not leave their properties unoccupied.
- Simplifying the process for compulsory purchase orders, to reduce the time and risks involved and empowering local authorities to acquire brownfield land compulsorily for regeneration of their area.
- A requirement for local planning authorities to have an authority wide design code in place
- The replacement of Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Level (CIL) regimes with a new Infrastructure Levy
- Introduction of National Development Management Policies (NDMPs), they will sit separately to the NPPF and cover issues of national importance such as climate change, greenbelt and heritage.
- New powers to local planning authorities to serve a 'completion notice' on developers that are being too slow or have a track record of not implementing planning permissions within a reasonable timescale.

There are also a number of heritage related provisions in the Act which include

- Historic Environment Records will have statutory status
- Temporary stop notices in relation to listed buildings
- Urgent works to listed buildings: occupies buildings and recovery of costs
- Removal of compensation for building preservation notices
- Registered Parks and Gardens will get the same level of protection in the planning system as listed building and conservation areas

There will be a phased implementation of the various provisions within the Act and some matters will require secondary legislation and further public consultation.

## **Finance**

4. Any budgetary implications for individual schemes detailed are contained within the body of the report.

## **Law**

5. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate the discharge of any of its functions (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive, to the discharge of any of their functions.

Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides for the Council to obtain best consideration when disposing of land and property. The Council has adopted a Best Consideration Protocol which forms part of the Constitution.

Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, a Local Authority has the power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

## **Risk Management**

6. Each project has its own risk register managed as appropriate by the council or the delivery partner.

A overall risk register for the co-ordination of major projects is managed by Projects and Placemaking. The significant risks are included on the Corporate risk register and managed on Spectrum.

## **Equality Impact**

7. All of these projects will have a positive impact on people with different protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).
8. As each project is being delivered in a different way and are at different stages there has been a variety of consultations as appropriate.

## **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

9. Any staffing requirements resulting from this report will be accommodated within existing resources (internal and external) and therefore the report has no specific impact for HR/OD.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

10. All contractual agreements associated with the delivery of these projects will be let in accordance with the requirements of the Contract Standing Orders.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

11. All new buildings will be built to Net Zero standards.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

12. The project will contribute to the 2030 Borough Vision through;
  - Full of vibrant towns and neighborhoods, offering regeneration of current disused sites
  - Better connected with high quality and affordable transport, combining road, tram, rail, and new cycling and walking infrastructure
  - A place to visit and enjoy that drives opportunity

These projects link to the Regeneration and Enterprise section of the Council Plan – particularly regenerating the borough and growing a stronger visitor economy and the wider regeneration of Dudley Town Centre



**Helen Martin**  
**Director of Regeneration & Enterprise**

Report Author: Helen Martin  
Telephone: 01384 814004  
Email: [helen.martin@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:helen.martin@dudley.gov.uk)

## **Appendices**

### **List of Background Documents**

Meeting of Cabinet – Joint Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Legal – Capital Monitoring Report – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 - <https://cmis.dudley.gov.uk/cm5/Meetings/tabid/116/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/543/Meeting/6443/Committee/468/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>