

Meeting of the Cabinet – 31 October 2007

Delivering the Masterplan for Dudley Town Centre

Appendix C: Summary of complementary regeneration projects within and close to Dudley town centre

Civic Quadrant

At the end of 2006 Cabinet, (23rd November) and Council (4th December) approved recommendations made by the Director of Law and Property and Director of Finance for BV Strategies Ltd to progress into the second phase of the Dudley Quadrant Project. This project would see the rationalisation of outdated, disparately located and unsuitable Council offices. These would be replaced by a mixed use development that, whilst being modern and efficient, would also enhance the historically important buildings on the site bounded by Priory Road, Priory Street, St. James's and Ednam Roads. BV Strategies are currently compiling a business case that would meet the following key success criteria:

- to provide the Council with an acceptable office accommodation solution;
- that it is affordable and represents good value for money; and
- that it can be delivered within an acceptable legal framework and timescale.

Whilst this site is not an Opportunity Site identified within the Dudley Area Development Framework, (ADF) it would remain an important civic and administrative hub and its development would complement, contribute to and be consistent with the Council's plans for wider regeneration of Dudley town centre.

Castle Hill/ Zoo

A revised outline planning application was submitted by St. Modwen's Properties plc and approved by Development Control Committee in June 2005 to develop a 65.7 hectare site at Castle Hill, Dudley. The application includes the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Dudley Zoo and Castle complex including a new origins attraction, residential development of 65 dwellings, a garden centre, heritage retail, a fitness and leisure complex, a hotel and a public house, integration of a metro stop, improved junction works and integration with Dudley town centre, and a revitalised woodland walk. This development, with a potential end value of £100 million, is seen as a vital component in the regeneration of Dudley town centre and a milestone in the further development of Dudley's tourism offer.

Castle Gate

Castle Gate is a business and leisure park located on the outskirts of Dudley town centre on a site of approximately 19 hectares.

Since 1999, the brownfield site has been reclaimed and following a joint venture between AWM and developers AMEC, is now home to in excess of 72,000sqft of office space. There is approximately 10 acres of land with outline planning consent which remains available for development.

A461 / A4123 Junction Improvement, Burnt Tree

Burnt Tree Island lies at the junction of two primary routes, the A461 Dudley to Walsall road and the A4123 Birmingham to Wolverhampton road. It is a key node in the regional highway network, serving both local traffic and that accessing the M5 motorway at Junction 2. The junction suffers from considerable congestion, particularly at peak times, and suffers from a poor safety record.

The junction improvement promoted jointly by Dudley MBC and Sandwell MBC involves the replacement of the existing five-arm roundabout with a four-arm traffic signal junction and the diverting of one arm into a further new signal controlled junction on the A4123. Public transport, pedestrian and cycle facilities are also included in the scheme. Works on site are programmed to commence early in 2009 with an anticipated completion date of December 2010. The scheme will:

- reduce delays and congestion at an important node in the Black Country highway network;
- improve the links between Dudley and the regional and national highway networks thus contributing to the economic well being of the area;
- improve bus service reliability by reducing delays for bus services serving Dudley town centre from the east; and
- provide dedicated pedestrian and cycle facilities at a location where little provision currently exists.

Midland Metro – Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Extension

The proposed Midland Metro Wednesbury to Brierley Hill extension would run through the heart of the Black Country linking Wednesbury, Great Bridge, Dudley, Merry Hill and Brierley Hill serving existing and proposed residential, retail and leisure areas. It would also connect to the existing Metro Line 1 that runs between Wolverhampton and Birmingham City Centres.

Providing a vital transport link through the heart of the regeneration area Metro would offer a step change in the quality and accessibility of public transport. All stops and trams would be fully accessible and the modern vehicles would be able to carry over 200 people. Modern trams would enhance the image of the region aiding inward investment and regeneration.

This route also benefits from integration with the bus and rail network at many locations along the way, in particular Dudley Bus Station, helping to open up the employment market.

North Priory Housing Development

In November 2005 urban regeneration specialists Tribal were appointed to undertake a feasibility study of the North Priory Estate to identify options to create a vibrant, high demand housing market – a place where people choose to live and invest, that will improve the quality of life for existing and incoming residents.

The report concluded that the problems of the North Priory Estate were deep rooted and that transformational change was required and that this could be best achieved through redevelopment. This recommendation was confirmed by Full Council on 4 December 2006.

The Council is now working to select a development partner to redevelop the estate and proposals have been requested from a number of Registered Social Landlords who have an existing commitment to the borough, a viable management presence in the borough and are committed to meeting a range of housing needs.

Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

The THI is a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant-giving programme to assist in the repair and regeneration of the historic environment within conservation areas in towns and cities. The Council has been successful in securing a grant of £1.95M from the HLF subject to securing match funding of at least £2M. The Council has contributed £150,000 and a full application is currently being appraised by Advantage West Midlands for the balance.

The THI is proposed to operate on the basis of the Council administering, issuing and monitoring a grant scheme to property owners by drawing on the 'Common Fund'. Applicants will apply for grant assistance based on predetermined eligible criteria and percentage grant rate. It is predicted the Dudley Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) project will start in early 2008 and run until 2013 and is expected to bring around £8 million investment to Dudley town centre over the next 5 years.

It is intended that the Dudley THI scheme will act as the spearhead of the wider regeneration programme for Dudley town centre. It has been designed to complement other regeneration proposals within and adjacent to the town, and will provide early physical evidence of the Council's commitment to the regeneration of the town. The Dudley THI will improve and preserve the historic character of key buildings in Dudley town centre which have suffered from significant lack of investment. These works are integral to realising the regeneration agenda for Dudley town centre as they will fit within the context of new development proposed within opportunity areas.

Strata - Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve and the Seven Sisters Mine

Strata would be a new visitor attraction linking the Seven Sisters Mines and underground canal tunnels at Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve to Castle Hill, Dudley. At present, the project is part of the Black Country's bid to the Big Lottery Funds Living Landmarks: The People's Millions initiative – an opportunity for one transformational project within the UK to win up to £50million.

In August 2006, A Million People: Black Country as an Urban Park was one of six short-listed projects who were successful in obtaining a development grant from the Big Lottery Fund of £500,000. The Stage 2 application was submitted by the Black Country Consortium on behalf of the four Black Country local authorities and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust on May 31st 2007. A two day assessment was undertaken at the end of June by the Big Lottery Fund and the partnership will be informed during the middle of October whether we are successful in moving forward to the televised public vote.

The winner of the televised vote, in conjunction with ITV will win a grant of up to £50million. The Black Country has requested a total grant of £49.3million, with the Strata project being allocated in the region of £18million. If the project is selected to move forward to the televised vote, it will take place over the weekend of the 7th – 10th December 2007.

Priory Park

£3.4 m of ODPM funding, secured through the Liveability Pilot Project, and £372,000 of Big Lottery Funding through Transforming Your Space is being supplemented by Section 106 and other grant monies to improve public parks and green spaces within the Borough, reform Council Services and build community capacity through greater involvement of the Friends of the Parks Groups, comprising of local residents.

A Local Involvement Programme, with dedicated officers from Groundwork Black Country, are working with Friends of the Parks Groups to develop their skills and abilities to be self sustaining in their aim to improve their local park or green space. Physical improvements are being undertaken based on long term Master Plans developed for the participating parks which are based on public consultation and the views of the Parks Groups. Within Priory Park this has resulted in spend of £150,000 on an extension to the play area, a new multi-use games area and tennis courts. In addition, a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Parks for People programme is being prepared for the restoration of Priory Park and Ruins.

Dudley Guest Hospital

The site of the former Dudley Guest Hospital is allocated for residential development in the Council's Unitary Development Plan and is currently being disposed of by the Dudley Group of Hospitals Trust. The Council is currently preparing a development brief to guide potential developers, in order to make

best use of its existing assets and rich industrial and social heritage to create a distinctive new sustainable neighbourhood, close to Dudley town centre and adjacent the proposed Midland Metro.

The redevelopment of the site provides an opportunity to re-use the most valuable buildings and introduce new development to create a place that draws on its heritage, yet is at the forefront of design and use of new technologies. It is expected that there will shortly be an announcement by a Government agency, with high aspirations for the future of the site, of significant investment and action in the bringing forward this site to the market.