

**Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education 26<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**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 4th March 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 and through the Development Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). This may mean that some centres may change status, be deleted from the hierarchy and others may be added in. The DPD is due for adoption in March 2012.

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

5. 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 weakest 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.
6. 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 developed within the framework of current planning policy i.e. 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
7. 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).
8. Planning consultants were appointed in December 2008 to develop the Quarry Bank Local Centre Regeneration Strategy and completed the first consultation stage in January 2009. The second consultation stage took place in March 2009 and involved the presentation to the community and stakeholders of a number of regeneration options for the centre. The Draft Quarry Bank Regeneration Strategy has been received and its content is currently being reviewed by officers prior to completion and approval by the end of 2009.
9. The District and Local Centres Review has recently been updated and was approved by Cabinet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009. The Review again identified the district and local centres that will become the priorities for regeneration over the next 3 years. In assessing the centres the review used the same criteria as before but with two additional measures relating to footfall and traffic accidents, the latter being combined with traffic delay figures to form a measurement for traffic congestion. As a result a further two centres at Netherton and Wordsley have been added to the priority list.
10. The priority work for the centres team over the next year is to finalise and gain the Council's approval for the Quarry Bank Local Centre Regeneration Strategy and

concentrate on delivering the actions identified in all of the combined Regeneration Strategies/Plans. The 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 DPD.

11. 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 previously the DPD is due for adoption in March 2012.

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

#### **Lye**

12. 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). At the March meeting I reported that the PCT were looking elsewhere close to Lye but outside the centre. I am pleased to say that the PCT have revived their interest in a site in the centre, and officers are working closely with Dudley Infracare LIFT on the options for this facility, as a result of which a planning application is expected to be submitted.
- *Design and construction of Food Store* -The sites identified in the Action Plan for retail have been declared as surplus to requirements and the Council had been in pre application discussions with a retail developer working on behalf of a national retailer. In 2008 this national retailer abandoned the scheme because they were not satisfied with the access arrangements to the site. Since then, the retail developer has been seeking interest from other national retailers but difficulties continued to be experienced with access to the site to satisfy retailers. In view of this the land has been made available to allow the LIFT scheme to proceed and alternative sites in the centre are being investigated for a food store.
- *Lye feasibility study*- The Lye and Wollescote Partnership have 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. Resources have been allocated to carry out a feasibility study of the area in front of the library and the overgrown area of land on the Corner of High St and Chapel Rd. This study will look at improvement options for the area and the potential of creating a gateway to Lye High Street. The study will report shortly.

#### **Cradley**

13. The Cradley Implementation Group which is a sub group of the Halesowen Area Committee had its first meeting in April 2008. This group oversees the implementation of the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Strategy, and has met on a

number of occasions since. The projects identified in the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan that are currently being progressed are as follows:-

- *Foredraft Street Development Site*- Funding was secured in 2008 to undertake a Developers Brief for land at Foredraft Street which has been consulted on with local residents and Ward Members in February/March 2009. The intention is that this Council owned land will be marketed for sale with the Developers Brief to ensure a comprehensive residential led redevelopment of the site. The final brief is due for publication shortly.
- *LIFT Scheme- Methodist Church Site*- The PCT has identified Cradley as a location for a LIFT scheme (a health led development) and the developer partner (Dudley Infracare LIFT) has 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 has not been possible to prepare proposals to date that are capable of being implemented. The Chief Executive of Dudley Infracare Ltd has attended a number of meetings of the Working Group in order to inform Members of the progress in identifying sites and proposals for a LIFT Health and Social Care centre, for which the Primary Care Trust's Strategic Partnership Board has stated a preference for a facility in the Cradley/Windmill Hill local centre. The PCT's Strategic Partnership Board considered the future of the Colley Gate site for a LIFT proposal at their meeting on the 10th June 2009 and wished to see the continuation of the development of proposals for this site, or at another suitable site in the vicinity. To this end, officers are continuing to work with Dudley Infracare LIFT to identify a suitable site for this facility
- *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 Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan for a retail led mixed use scheme.
- *Implementing highway and public realm improvements* - Funding has been secured (£30,000) from the Capital Programme to undertake a number of improvements identified in the Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan. These include 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 has recently been completed.

### **Shell Corner**

14. 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 has been 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. It is expected that these improvements will be implemented by December 2009.

### **Pensnett**

15. The Regeneration Strategy for Pensnett was approved on the 9<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Quarry Bank**

16. As indicated in paragraph 6 a Regeneration Strategy for the centre is in production and will be finalised and adopted by the end of the year. The Strategy will deal with traffic issues, enhance the public realm and attract new investment.

### **Work in the remaining local and district centres**

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

#### **Upper Gornal**

- *Arcade sign*- The Upper Gornal traders and residents group with assistance from the district and local centres team successfully applied for Area Committee funding and have erected a sign in front of the shops that lists the businesses in the Arcade to encourage more people to use the local centre.
- *Fun Day and Christmas Event*- The local and district centres team financially supported the printing of posters for the Fun Day and also some of the costs of hiring equipment for the Christmas Event.
- *Fencing in front of Pale Street flats*- The Council successfully secured funding from the Community Safety Fund and in 2008 erected a fence in front of the flats in order to eradicate the antisocial behaviour problems that were being experienced by residents.

#### **Netherton**

- *Gateway/Public Art*- Funding has recently been secured (£10,000) to implement a gateway/ public art following an art competition won by a pupil at Hillcrest High School. The Borough Artist is currently working up the final design and will be inviting local contractors to tender for the work in Autumn 2009. It is intended that the gateway/public art will be installed on the grass bank on the Halesowen Road, opposite Northfield Road by December 2009.

## Sedgley

- *Sedgley in Bloom*- The team has supported and advised the Sedgley in Bloom Group and the initiative won a merit award in the Heart of England In Bloom Awards 2008.
- *Gateway sign*- In conjunction with the traders a new sign welcoming visitors to Sedgley has been erected combined with flower baskets.

## Areas to be developed in next 12 months

18. The hierarchy of centres in the Borough will be reviewed as part of the Black Country Joint Core Strategy (JCS). This may result in additional locations in the Borough being identified as new centres and subject to certain policies. Consultants have been appointed to undertake this work across the whole of the Black Country and its outcomes will be fed into the JCS process.

## Other issues

19. The securing of resources to appoint an officer with a modest budget to address issues in the District and Local Centres has been an unqualified 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, pursuing external funding, negotiating with developers and encouraging the private sector to invest. As a result consultants have had to be employed to fill some of the gaps in the demand for activity.
20. 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.
21. The preparation of Regeneration Plans 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 emerging JCS and Development Strategy DPD.
22. Notwithstanding the above activity, the recession has inevitably had an impact on development activity in the borough's local centres. As a result development reliant on private sector investment anticipated in adopted Regeneration Strategies has in a number of cases been delayed or cancelled. As a consequence activity has been focussed on working with public sector partners and on gaining the most effective use of available land held by the Council.

## **Coseley Regeneration Activity**

23. 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 its regeneration potential is recognised and enhanced for this Committee. A visit to the area took place in February 2009 and its outcomes reported to the Committee in March.

24. The issues and potential identified were

- Silver Jubilee Park - Focus for the Healthy Towns Initiative, one of the 5 designated hubs, following on from significant investment made using Liveability funding. The project will provide a hub building which will provide for fitness classes and events and an outdoor gym, all linked to open local spaces and the other hubs.
- Mount Pleasant School Borough Archives – Proposed move to Black Country Living Museum still under discussion
- The 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 Youth Club and Multi Use Games Area- Contractors on site and project due for completion in Spring 2010.
- Potential for improved health facilities through the LIFT programme. However this centre has not been identified by the PCT as a location for such a facility under the current Strategic Service Development Plan.

## **Finance**

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

## **Law**

26. 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.

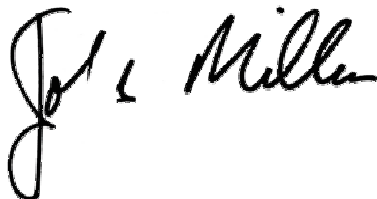
## **Equality Impact**

27. 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**

28. 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



**John Millar**  
**Director of the Urban Environment**

Contact Officer: David Morris  
Telephone: 01384 814187  
Email: [davidmorris@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:davidmorris@dudley.gov.uk)

#### **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



