

**Stourbridge Area Committee – 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2008**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Stourbridge Northern Gateway Improvements**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek the Committee's support for proposals to improve the northern gateway into Stourbridge town centre.

**Background**

2. The construction of Stourbridge ring road in the 1960s provided a network of subways to enable pedestrians and cyclists to access the town centre safely. Whilst the ring road and associated subways fulfil their roles effectively, they have been the subject of some criticism from members of the public and their contribution to the town's visitor experience could be improved.
3. Pedestrian access to the town centre has been much improved in recent years with the Foster Street subway refurbishment and the new Hagley Road surface level crossing both completed in 2006. Vehicular access was also improved in 2006 with the reconfiguration and widening of the Enville Street approach.
4. The historic canalside area to the north offers significant regeneration opportunities but currently has little relationship with the town centre. The River Stour which runs parallel to the canal is also inconspicuous in its industrial setting.
5. Lower High Street subway is the only pedestrian thoroughfare linking the town centre with the canalside area and neighbourhoods to the north. New and planned residential developments in this area will increase the substantial amount of pedestrians and cyclists already relying on the subway.

**Proposals**

6. This report outlines proposals to create an attractive and welcoming first impression to visitors accessing the town centre from the north and improve links with the historic canalside area.

7. There are three key elements to the project:
- Emphasising the crossing over the River Stour, from which the town derives its name, through public art.
  - Upgrading Lower High Street subway to provide a safer environment and a more attractive entrance to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.
  - Creating a pocket park on the disused tarmac area at the bottom of Lower High Street to provide much needed seating for students and the wider public.
8. A feasibility study has been undertaken to assess the constraints and opportunities of the site and illustrations, informed by this research, have been produced for public comment.
9. The Area Committee forms part of a month long public consultation including a mail drop to nearby residents and businesses, a manned exhibition under the town clock (6-8 March), an unmanned exhibition in Stourbridge and Amblecote libraries (March) and presentations to business and community groups.

### **Finance**

10. The total project will cost £150,000 - £200,000 and is anticipated to be funded through existing capital budgets and planning contributions from new developments that will benefit from the improvements.

### **Law**

11. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough.

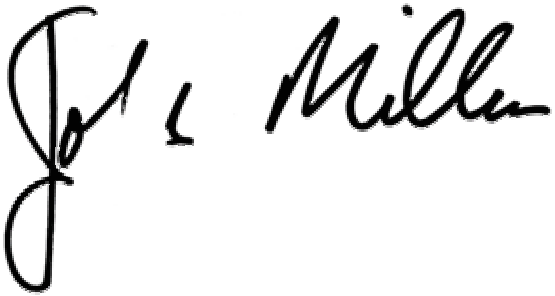
### **Equality Impact**

12. The proposals fully comply with the Council's policies on equal opportunities and diversity.
13. Young people, particularly students from King Edwards College, will benefit from these improvements and are being consulted on the proposals.

## **Recommendations**

14. It is recommended that the Committee:-

- Note the work undertaken to date and comment on the proposals for Stourbridge town centre's northern gateway to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Millar'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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

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## **List of Background Papers**

Dudley Unitary Development Plan  
October 2005, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Stourbridge Town Matters: Key Findings  
March 2007, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council