

Central Dudley Area Committee – 31st January 2012

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Dudley Town Centre Regeneration

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on regeneration activity in and around Dudley Town Centre

Background

2. The Committee has considered a number of reports in recent years on this subject, most recently on the 15 March 2011. This report seeks to update the Committee on progress that has been made since the last report
3. The Dudley Town Centre Area Development Framework (ADF) was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2005. Its vision is to achieve comprehensive redevelopment of nine opportunity areas together with public and civic spaces which will act as a catalyst for the transformation of the town centre
4. The ADF provides a means to address the economic decline of the town and provide a catalyst for complementary development within the town centre and the surrounding area.
5. Delivery of the ADF will also contribute to fulfilling the new role of Dudley town centre as set out in the new Black Country Joint Core Strategy (JCS). This statutory planning document addresses a wide range of activities and interventions that are required to create sustainable communities across the whole of the Black Country. It provides a framework for the regeneration and renaissance of the area, addressing its economic, transportation, social infrastructure and environmental needs whilst reducing its carbon footprint and helping to tackle climate change.
6. The JCS provides a vision for Dudley Town Centre based on family living in the rejuvenated market town and a tourism focus of regional and national repute based on Black Country Museum, Dudley Zoo, Dudley Castle and Dudley's geological and heritage assets. In the Centre's hinterland the vision is for innovative high quality industrial opportunities stretching towards the new strategic centre of Brierley Hill. The area will be set in an attractive environment, well connected by public transport and served by significant new retail growth opportunities, office and leisure growth in Brierley Hill new strategic centre with high quality housing for all in and around both Centres as well as excellent green infrastructure through enhanced green spaces and parks.

7. Implementation of the ADF is expected to bring significant benefits to the town centre including creation of:
- £15m of improvements to public and civic spaces and infrastructure
 - new development worth £300m
 - a catalyst for complementary development in and around the town
 - 700 - 1000 residential units
 - an additional population of between 1300 and 1800 residents in the town centre.

Current development activity

8. It is fair to say that despite difficult market conditions the Town Centre is currently undergoing an unprecedented level of public and private sector investment. Within a square mile of the town there are residential, commercial and leisure projects underway in which the investment exceeds £200m. The major projects contributing to this renaissance are listed below.

Dudley College redevelopment

9. Dudley College is currently undergoing a major redevelopment of its property in the town centre. Of the college's six sites, four are to be disposed of either wholly or substantially. Two new buildings are currently under construction on two separate sites within close proximity of the college's main campus on The Broadway in the first phase. These two new buildings are:
- A Vocational Centre on the Tower Street West site providing for hair & beauty, sport & leisure, public services, creative and performing arts.
 - A Sixth Form Centre on the Priory Road site
10. In addition, the college wishes to ensure the whole of its property strategy for the new Town Centre campus is realizable before committing major funds toward the proposal. It therefore secured outline planning consent in September 2010 for a new Construction and Engineering Technologies Centre block on the existing Broadway site which will comprise the second phase of its campus development.
11. Further, the sites proposed to be vacated will also need certainty as to their redevelopment potential and to assist this, the College are seeking to obtain outline planning permission as part of the project programme. These sites are:
- Mons Hill Campus
 - Wolverhampton Street Site
 - Castle View campus site (granted outline planning consent in February 2011)

Major foodstore

12. As previously reported to the Committee, the Council has been seeking the provision of a major town centre foodstore at the Tower Street East site in liaison with a number of potential operators. The market testing associated with this proposal demonstrated that whereas there is significant interest in developing the Tower Street East site, it is potentially too constrained and as a result alternative sites in the town centre were explored. As a result, a proposal has now emerged

for a major foodstore development on the Cavendish House site. The proposal is for a 75,000 sq. ft store which will provide a complementary offering to enhance the Town Centre's retail offer and which will anchor an historic and prominent gateway. The development also proposes the demolition of Cavendish House which was acquired by the developer some years ago by the developer currently proposing the foodstore development.

13. In parallel with exploring alternative sites, retail market advice has been sought in relation to the Tower Street East site. This advice has confirmed that in the context of other development proposals in and around the Town Centre, that there will be sufficient demand for a strategic Town Centre car park at this location, and that the remainder of the site will be suitable for the type of modern retail outlets which operators have struggled to identify elsewhere in the Town Centre

Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

14. The THI is a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant giving programme to assist the repair and regeneration of the historic environment within conservation areas in towns and cities. Its aims are:

- to use built heritage as a stimulant for economic regeneration;
- to contribute to the sustainability of local economies ;and
- to support the communities that live and work in each project area

15. The Council had been successful in securing £4.1m of grant from HLF and AWM for the 'Common Fund', plus a £150,000 contribution from the Council. A Project Officer has been appointed and liaison has been underway with the occupiers of 35 property projects interested in taking part in the initiative. However, the initiative suffered a major setback in August 2010 when Advantage West Midlands, following a strategic funding review, withdrew their £2.1m investment. Since that time strenuous efforts have been made to secure alternative funding, resulting in a revised funding package comprised of investment as follows;

- HLF (£1.9m, secured)
- The Council (£150k, secured)
- English Heritage (£120k, secured)
- ERDF (£500k, secured)
- Growth Points (£191k, secured)

16. A revised programme of properties based on the above funding package has been assembled, and grant offers are currently being prepared by the Council for a number of priority properties where statutory consents and tenders have been secured and suitable funding is in place. 3 projects have successfully been completed: The former Crown Public House (Wolverhampton Street); 168 High Street and Baylie's Hall.

17. A key project in the THI programme is the refurbishment of Holloway Hall and Chambers (Priory Street), for which tenders are due to be invited in early 2011 for works to provide serviced start up space and small business space on flexible terms

18. The programme also includes training programmes, guidance for shop owners and heritage trails and interpretation. As an example of this, there has been a

successful Contractor Placement training scheme, and this initiative will be followed with other projects in the THI programme

Castle Hill & Zoo

19. Following the Council's withdrawal from the previous joint venture arrangements for the redevelopment of the Castle Hill site in 2009, the Council and NHRL have worked in close partnership with Dudley Zoo, Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Canal Trust to develop a new strategy for the redevelopment of this key site. The proposals for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site are now based on;

- an ambition to raise visitor numbers from the present 600,000 per annum to 1 million per annum,
- a new access (for which planning permission was granted on the 2nd February 2010) from Tipton Road
- preparation of land for new and complementary tourism/leisure development
- further capital investment in the Zoo
- acquisition of further land required for development, for which compulsory purchase powers were secured in November 2009

20. Full approval for funding of £4.5m has been secured under the European Regional Development Fund's Sustainable Urban Development programme. In addition, support has been given by the Council and NHRL to funding bids of £1m and £2m submitted by Dudley Zoo to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Regional Growth Fund

21. The Council has taken the opportunity to carry out acquisitions of strategic sites to support the delivery of this project, and in late 2010 secured the purchase of the former Gala Bingo and Royal Brierley sites. Proposals are currently being prepared for the former site, and work has commenced on site on the first phase of development on the site, the Council's £6m Archives project. Work is expected to commence on the second phase, the Tipton Road access, in Summer 2012

Public Realm developments

22. The Council has been successful in securing a Stage 2 award for £1.8m of funding from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) under the Parks for People programme for Priory Park and Ruins. The improvements include a redevelopment of the pavilion, which will provide public toilets, act as a base for a park ranger and provide educational and community facilities. Plans also include installation of lighting at the Priory ruins and a range of other works such as the planting of tree avenues, repairs to path surfaces to allow better access, new signage, artwork and sculptures, improvements to drainage and resurfacing of the five-a-side football pitch and Bowling Green. Detailed design has been completed and the main contractor selected following a comprehensive tender exercise. Work is due to start on the ground in early 2012

23. A key element of the ADF is the enhancement of the town's public realm; its streets, squares, parks and gardens. Work is underway on the preparation of proposals for enhancements that will support safe, accessible and attractive public spaces. The first of these to be brought forward is the £6m Market Place project, for which outline approval for £3m ERDF has been secured. The project

has been through two stages of public consultation; the first, in March and April 2011, sought feedback on the outline proposals and on the preferred option for revised market stall layouts. The second, in November and December 2011, sought feedback on a greater level of detail on the market place, and in particular, responded to comments made at the first consultation by the inclusion of a proposed extension of the improvements along Castle Street.

24. The proposals have been very well supported through the consultation exercises, and officers are currently working closely with the market traders to ensure that their needs are met and the Market is given every opportunity to prosper. Subject to the outcome of the full ERDF application, which is due to be submitted in early January, work is due to commence on site in late 2012

The Portas Review – an independent review into the future of our high streets

25. In December 2011 Mary Portas, at the request of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, published a review into the state of the nation's high streets and town centres. The report fully recognised the challenges posed to the traditional high street and town centre as a result of factors including radical changes in shopping behaviour and the global economic climate, and that a return to the traditional high street and its shops is in most cases unrealistic. However, the report made a number of recommendations aimed at building on the unique offer that the high street may provide.

26. The report includes a number of recommendations that the Council has already been undertaking for some time. These include:

- Putting in place a 'Town Team'; the Dudley Town Centre Partnership has been in place since 2008. The Partnership is made up of public and private organisations and businesses, including the council and retailers, and is working in a similar way to a town team to transform Dudley into a sustainable town centre with a secure future.
- Implementing free controlled parking schemes; the Council has recently added an extra 55 free short stay spaces in the town centre, and is shortly to add more; in addition the Market Place proposals include additional free short stay spaces
- Promote the inclusion of the High Street in Neighbourhood Plans: the Council already has a wealth of planning policy which seeks to promote the sustainable development of its centres, and this is set out the Black Country Joint Core Strategy, Area Action Plans for Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Halesowen, the adopted Area Development Framework for Dudley Town Centre and the proposed Dudley Area Action Plan. A presumption in favour of town centre retail development is already set out in the Council's planning policies, which are supportive in principle of the retail developments referred to in paragraphs 12 and 13 above. There have as yet been no requests for neighbourhood plans from any communities within the Borough, however officers are working with Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to promote neighbourhood planning in the Borough.
- The report also refers to a need to reduce red tape in planning, which the council has already taken on board as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership charter.

- More proactive use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are recommended. The Council has a successful track record in its use of CPOs to support appropriate development activity across the Borough, and indeed sought such powers in advance of negotiating the acquisition of the former Gala Bingo site

Finance

27. The costs incurred in delivering the Dudley Area Development Framework will be met from resources detailed in the body of the report and by the Council in partnership with private sector development partners
28. Given the challenging economic climate, affordable opportunities will continue to be sought to secure appropriate additional external funding to support the delivery of the ADF

Law

29. The Council may do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social, or environmental well being of its area under S2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

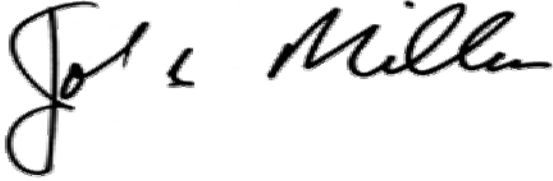
Equality Impact

30. Delivery of the Dudley regeneration programme would bring significant benefits to Dudley town centre. It would have a major positive effect on all users of the town centre including residents, visitors, businesses, investors and developers. Benefits would be achieved for people of all ages, including children and young people, and groups in society.
31. All work undertaken in connection with delivery of the Dudley regeneration programme would be carried out in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Recommendations

32. It is recommended that:

- The Committee note the contents of this report



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List of Background Papers

Central Dudley Area Committee Report (15 March 2011) Dudley Town Centre Regeneration, Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Decision Sheet DUE/56/2009 Compulsory Purchase Order powers for the acquisition of land at Castle Hill, Dudley

Cabinet Report (17 June 2009) 'Delivering the Masterplan for Dudley Town Centre', Joint Report of the Directors of the Urban Environment, Law & Property and Finance

Cabinet Report (11 June 2008) 'Delivering of regeneration in the Borough: a proposed arms length company', Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Cabinet Report (31 October 2007) 'Delivering the Masterplan for Dudley Town Centre', Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Cabinet Report (13 June 2007) 'Delivering the Masterplan for Dudley Town Centre', Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Cabinet Report (13 December 2006) 'Dudley Area Development Framework: Cavendish Quarter Compulsory Purchase Powers', Joint Report of the Directors of the Urban Environment and Law and Property

Cabinet Report (15 March 2006) 'Appointment of Consultants in Connection with Dudley Town Centre Area Development Framework', Joint Report of the Directors of the Urban Environment, Law and Property and Finance

Cabinet Report (8 February 2006) 'Dudley Area Development Framework: Cavendish Quarter Compulsory Purchase Powers', Joint Report of the Directors of the Urban Environment and Law and Property

'Dudley Area Development Framework' (December 2005) Dudley MBC

Cabinet Report (21 September 2005) 'Dudley Area Development Framework: Compulsory Purchase Powers', Joint Report of the Directors of the Urban Environment and Law and Property

Executive verbal report (17 December 2003) 'Establishment of the Dudley Town Centre Partnership', Director of the Urban Environment.