

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education – 4th March 2009

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment and the Lead Officer to the Committee.

Progress Report on Regenerating 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 and to feed back to members the outcome of the Coseley Regeneration Visit.

Background

2. This report sets out the work that has been undertaken by the District and Local Centres team since the last report to the Select Committee on 10th September 2007 and feeds back on the Coseley Regeneration Visit on the 16th February 2009.

Local and District Centres Review

3. In 2004 Dudley Council prioritised the Boroughs 16 District and Local Centres as defined in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for regeneration and a Project Officer was appointed in 2005 to regenerate these centres. In order to prioritise the local and district centres that had experienced the most decline and are most in need of resources, a 'District and Local Centres Review' was undertaken. The Local and District Centres Review, which was approved by Cabinet in September 2006 analysed the boroughs 16 local and district centres and identified the 5 weakest that would become the Council's priorities for regeneration over the next 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 frontage, diversity of uses and traffic congestion.
4. The local and district centres identified as a priority 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 policy i.e. the approved Unitary Development Plan but not included within the Council's Local Development Scheme. The reason why Regeneration

Strategies/Plans are considered to be more appropriate than a statutory planning document (i.e. Area Action Plan or Supplementary Planning Document) within the Local Development Framework (LDF) is because the development and approval of a formal planning document is a lengthy process which would have delayed the renewal of these areas.

5. Substantial progress has been made in developing the Regeneration Strategies for the 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 by Cabinet in February 2008) and Shell Corner Local Centre (approved by Cabinet Member for Regeneration in December 2008). DTZ Debenham Tie Leung Ltd Consultants were appointed in September 2007 to develop the Pensnett Local Centre Regeneration Plan and are currently consulting over the Draft Plan with a view to finalise it by March 2009.
6. Colin Buchanan 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 is scheduled to take place in March 2009 and will involve the presentation to the community and stakeholders of a number of regeneration options for the centre. It is intended that the Draft Quarry Bank Regeneration Strategy be finalised and approved by the Council towards the end of 2009.
7. The District and Local Centres Review 2005 will shortly be replaced by the 2008 Review which is currently being finalised. The outcome of this Review, once approved by Cabinet will identify the district and local centres that will become the priorities for regeneration over the next 3 years.
8. The priority work for the local centres team over the next year is to finalise and gain the Council's approval for the Quarry Bank Local Centre Regeneration Strategy and the Pensnett Local Centre Regeneration Plan and concentrate on delivering the actions identified in the Regeneration Strategies/Plans. The next section of this report highlights the progress of delivering the actions contained in these Plans/Strategies.

Lye

9. 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:-
 - *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 has been in pre application discussions with a retail developer working on behalf of a national retailer. In 2008 the 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 and is now in negotiations with another food operator. A planning application for these sites is expected to be submitted within 2009.

- *Health led development* –The Primary Care Trust (PCT) were in discussions with the Council about redeveloping the site identified in the Lye District Centre Action Plan for community facilities for a LIFT (Local Improvement Finance Trust) scheme which is a health led development. The PCT have since dismissed this site because the area is not sufficient to accommodate the Schedule of Accommodation and they have now identified an alternative site close to the district centre.
- *Lye feasibility study*- The Lye and Wollescote Partnership 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. An application has been submitted for Feasibility Funding 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.

Cradley

10. 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. 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 will be 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.
- *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. There are also a number of alternative sites in the Cradley area that are being assessed for the LIFT scheme and a Schedule of Accommodation is currently being prepared to analyse which site would be most suitable.
- *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 (£29,688) 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. It is expected that these improvements will be implemented by December 2009.

Shell Corner

11. 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.

Quarry Bank and Pensnett

12. Regeneration Strategies/Plans are currently being developed for these local centres (see paragraphs 4 - 8)

Work in non priority local and district centres

13. 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 the winning suggestion from a pupil at Hillcrest School. in an art competition for a gateway/ public art feature. The Borough Artist is currently working up the final design and will be inviting local contractors to tender for the work in Spring 2009. It is intended that the gateway/public art will be installed on the grass bank on the Halesowen Road, opposite Northfield Road in 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.
- *St Georges Parade*- The district and local centres team assisted the Chief Executives team with the successful St Georges Parade held in Sedgley on April 26th 2008.

Areas to be developed in next 12 months

- 14 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 are shortly to be appointed to undertake this work across the whole of the Black Country and its outcomes will be fed into the JCS process.

Issues for Discussion

- 15 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 not only the Centres' profile within the Council but also the expectations of residents and traders. This is not only in the priority centres but also the other centres as well. By the careful use of the funding available, additional internal and external resources have been attracted. The current Project Officer is now working at full capacity in developing regeneration strategies, 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.
16. 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.
17. 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 subsequent Area Action Plans or Development Planning Documents.

Coseley Regeneration Activity.

18. Whilst Coseley was not identified as one of the key 16 district and local centres in the Borough it has long been a concern of this Select Committee that its regeneration potential is recognised and enhanced for this Select Committee.
19. Within the work programme 2008/2009 was a commitment to produce an integrated report on local centres and the Coseley regeneration potential.
20. During the course of the municipal year this was buttressed by a commitment for a Select Committee visit.
21. The visit took place on the 16th February 2009 (see attached appendix 1).
22. In outline the visit started at Jubilee Park Coseley which has been chosen as the focus for the Healthy Towns Initiative proposal in the North Dudley area. A key element of the proposal will be the refurbishment of the band stand into a community hub with the provision for office accommodation for a park keeper and related staff.
23. The second part of the visit was to the existing Borough Archives and whilst there was concern that the Archives must move from Coseley there was no doubt that the present location at Mount Pleasant School has only a limited future. Only three years of accessions space remained and twenty five years was required.
24. The Borough Archivist was congratulated by members for the positive and proactive commitment to enhancing the service delivery for archives and local history for the whole of the Borough.
25. A visit was made to the modular building of the new Children's Centre on Bayer Street. This would be the model for the provision of the new Youth Club and Centre to be built to replace the present facility. The attraction of the new modular building was applauded by members. It took one month to erect and yet had the look and feel of a permanent brick built structure. It would be easily extended in modular form and had a very flexible internal configuration.
26. The final part of the visit was to the proposed site of the Extra Care Development in Coseley and members walked the perimeter of the site. The present proposed site for the new Youth Club and Centre was also visited. It was felt that this would enhance the local facilities particularly with the potential for adding a range of sporting opportunities.
27. The visit demonstrated that even though Coseley does not feature at present as one of the key district or local centres there is clearly a platform for further development.

28. To ensure that all avenues of regeneration resource are examined then a further visit for the Vice Chair of the Committee is currently being arranged with the Chief Executive of the local LIFT programme, John Coyne, who presented to the last Select Committee.

Finance

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

Law

30. 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

31. 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

32. That the Committee note the significant progress made in regenerating the district and local centres since additional resources were allocated 2005/06.
33. That the Committee note the regeneration activity in Coseley which is one of the non priority district and local centres at present.



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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