

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan

Purpose

1. To gain the approval of Cabinet for the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan to be adopted as a Development Control Guidance Note.

Background

2. One of the Borough's greatest assets is its network of diverse town and local centres, which have evolved from the villages and settlements which formed the Black Country and each has its own distinctive character and range of attractions. Each centre has had to respond to dramatic change over the last 20 years, including far reaching changes in people's lifestyles and new and evolving patterns of shopping, accessibility and investment. Combined with the development and expansion of Merry Hill, this has resulted in the decline of some of the traditional centres.
3. The adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) identifies a hierarchy of 20 centres in the Borough. These are subject to the policies in the Centres and Retail chapter which are designed to overcome these problems and secure the long term regeneration and development of all the Borough's centres.
4. The Council has for some time identified the four town centres at Dudley, Halesowen Stourbridge and the centre at Brierley Hill High Street as being a priority for action and investment.
5. Growth resources were secured by the Directorate of the Urban Environment in 2005/06 to address the remaining 16 local and district centres. Following a review and analysis of the district and local centres in February 2006 the centres identified for the most concentrated intervention were Shell Corner, Cradley/Windmill Hill, Pensnett, Lye and Quarry Bank.
6. Due to the urgency in starting the regeneration process, the decision was made to produce Regeneration Plans for each centre instead of a statutory planning document (i.e. Area Action Plan or Supplementary Planning Document) as part of the Local Development Framework. This approach was taken on the basis that a formal planning document would require a more extensive time period in which to be developed and adopted.
7. In terms of regenerating Cradley/Windmill Hill local centre, the Council appointed Colin Buchanan planning consultants to assist in developing the Cradley (Colley

Gate/Windmill Hill) Local Centre Regeneration Plan. Through a consultation process with local residents, groups, businesses, the Halesowen Area Committee and stakeholders a preferred regeneration option was chosen for the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan.

8. To summarise, the Regeneration Plan is set out under three main sections: development, movement/transport and environment.
9. In terms of development, it identifies three possible development sites; these are Providence Methodist Church, Land at Foredraft Street and No's 118-122 Windmill Hill. In relation to these sites, the Regeneration Plan sets out a development briefing and a design brief which acts as a guide for their development.
10. The proposed movement/transport strategy within the Regeneration Plan tries to achieve a balance between the need for regeneration in the centre, with the role of the A458 as a strategic transport corridor. The key measures proposed to achieve this are:
 - Improving the walking environment through footway widening and provision of an additional crossing at the centre of Windmill Hill.
 - Redesign of the bus lay-by adjacent to nos. 28 to 40 Windmill Hill to improve the environment for all users.
 - Improving the flow of traffic without increased traffic volumes through entry treatments, visual gateway treatments and junction improvements.
 - Short term improvements to the management to the existing public and private car parks.
 - Exploring a partnership/contract with Travel West Midlands to secure commitment to improved services.
11. The third section of the Regeneration Plan focuses on the environment with the key measures proposed to enhance it include:-
 - Greening Cradley / Windmill Hill through planting of street trees where possible and introducing trees and landscaping at car parks.
 - Developing a theme, materials, colours and finishes to be used throughout the centre.
 - Improved lighting to ensure safety and security in the use of the centre.
 - Shop front improvements.
 - Improvements to pedestrian links to the town centre.
 - Redesign of existing underutilised open spaces to create a focal point for the local community.
12. The final section of the Regeneration Plan summarises the recommendations in table format, according to potential delivery in the short term (1-2 years), medium term (2-5 years) or long term (6-10 years) and identifies funding opportunities that should be explored for the various proposals.
13. In terms of delivering the recommendations proposed in the Regeneration Plan, progress has already been made. This includes initial discussions taking place about the possibility of locating a health led scheme on Methodist Church site. The Council has also managed to secure resources to commission consultants to carry out a Developers Brief for the Foredraft Street opportunity site. This will act as a guide to

developing the site and suggest appropriate layout, scale of development, landscaping, design criteria, access, parking and circulation.

Finance

14. Work in developing the Cradley Regeneration Plan will be funded by existing budgets held within the Economic Regeneration division.

Law

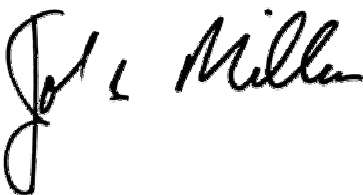
15. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of its area.
16. It is intended that the Cradley Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan will be a Development Control Guidance Note and will go forward to Cabinet for approval at the earliest opportunity.

Equal Impact

17. 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 Cradley Regeneration Plan will seek to regenerate the local centre for adults, children and young people alike, hence promoting equal opportunities for all.

Recommendation

18. That Cabinet approve the adopted of the Cradley/Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan as a Development Control Guidance Note.



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J. B. MILLAR – DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Contact Officers: John Woodall
 Assistant Director Economic Regeneration

Ext: 4004
E.mail – john.woodall@dudley.gov.uk

David Morris
Ext: 4187
Email - david.morris@dudley.gov.uk

Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

1. Centres and Retail – District and Local Centres Review. February 2006
2. Dudley Unitary Development Plan 2005
3. Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres 2005
4. Cradley Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan July 2007