

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education – 10th September 2007

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment)

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.

Background

2. This report sets out the work that has been undertaken by the district and local centres team since resources were secured to progress the regeneration of the borough's 16 local and district centres in 2005/6

Local and District Centres Review

3. In February 2006 a review of the 16 centres was carried out to identify those with the greatest need in terms of regeneration. This review undertook an individual analysis of each of the centres, highlighting specific issues and provided a summary of the key issues, with an evaluation of performance against some basic criteria. The criteria used were vacancy levels, retail representation in the protected frontage, diversity of uses and traffic congestion. Other measures suggested by then Planning Policy Guidance Note 6 (PPG6) now replaced by Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) – Planning for Town Centres were considered, but either there was no data or it was not available for all the centres, and so a proper comparison could not be made.
4. The centres that have been identified as a priority as a result of the review are: - Shell Corner, Lye, Cradley, Pensnett and Quarry Bank. Lye already has the Lye District Centre Action Plan (approved in 2004) and the intention is that for the remaining four priority centres Regeneration Plans will be developed. The Regeneration Plan will be non-statutory 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. Although Brierley Hill is designated a District centre in view of its proposed designation as a Strategic Centre, it was not considered as part of the review and its priorities and issues are dealt with by the current Town Centres team in Economic Regeneration.
5. This review and priority list was approved by Cabinet in September 2006.

6. In the remaining non priority district and local centres Regeneration Plans are not currently being developed but regeneration projects are being supported as required within the resources available.

Lye

Updated Lye District Centre Implementation Plan

7. The Lye District Centre Action Plan was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2004 and, given the passage of time, a review of the implementation plan was conducted to establish what aims had been achieved and what needed to be progressed. This exercise has been carried out in consultation with the Lye and Wollescote Partnership whose membership includes faith groups, Valley Road Youth Centre, SureStart, Christ Church, Lye Community Centre, Dudley Council Officers, Ward Councillors, Lye Area Regeneration Alliance (LARA), The Orchard Partnership, Bethel Chapel, United Reform Church, Ghausia Mosque, Wollescote Primary School, Rufford Primary School, Hob Green Primary School, local residents and businesses and the Police. The update of the implementation plan sets out the current position of each aim in the Action Plan. It highlights the actions that have already been achieved, lists the projects that have not been implemented but are still relevant and also notes the actions that are no longer needed due to changed circumstances or where there are currently insufficient resources to implement them. For a more detailed analysis of the position of each action listed in the Plan, please see 'Lye District Centre Position Statement, September 2006', attached as Appendix 1

Achievements

8. A number of aims identified in the Action Plan have been achieved, these include:-
 - Pocket Park revamp- including the introduction of ornamental fencing and gates, new seating and bins, pavement improvements, repainting of murals and clock funded by Dudley Council.
 - Design and construction of Public Park behind Christ Church Park- comprising of new green park with path, paved area, bins, seating and shrubs and fencing. This was funded by Dudley Council and the Countryside Agency.
 - Sir Cedric Hardwicke memorial has been completed and is located at Lye Cross.
 - Railway station improvements- including upgrading the footbridge, resurfacing the car park, new vandal proof shelter and the introduction of CCTV and lighting.
 - Development of a Surestart Family Centre on the Lye By-pass and the conversion of the shop at Lye Cross into a Surestart facility.
 - A healthy eating initiative called Healthy Take Away Award 2004 was run with a small number of establishments.

Work in progress.

9. *There are a number of projects, identified in the Action Plan that are being progressed, these include:-*

- Christ Church Park Community Safety Improvements- An application has been submitted to the Big Lottery for £50,000 to help fund Phase 2 of Christ Church Park which includes lighting, a dwarf wall and railings along the bypass boundary and gateways to the Park.
- 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 is in pre application discussions with a retail developer. A planning application for these sites is expected to be submitted at the end of 2007.
- Bring forward sites for housing development- The Council is now in a position to take forward selected sites that have been identified in the Action Plan for residential development and which can now be marketed.
- Potential LIFT scheme- Within the Action Plan, this site is identified for community facilities and recently the Council has been in negotiations with a developer about locating a LIFT scheme on this land. The site has been declared as surplus to requirements and pre application discussions are taking place

10. *Community Safety Grants to Lye traders*

Community safety grants were awarded to three traders in Lye that had suffered crime. These grants funded security improvements to their premises.

11. *Funding secured to introduce street light in alleyway*

As a result of concerns raised by the community and traders at Lye and Wollescote Partnership meetings, funding was secured to put up a street light in the alleyway leading from the High Street to the car park which is next to Christ Church Park.

Cradley

12. *Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan*

Cradley/Windmill Hill has been identified as a priority centre for regeneration and as a result, resources were secured in November 2006 to appoint Colin Buchanan Planning consultants to assist with the development of the Cradley/Windmill Hill Regeneration Plan. The Plan was subject to extensive consultation with local businesses, residents, stakeholders and organisations.

13. The Regeneration Plan flags up the key issues in the local centre, identifies the regeneration principles and sets out the Regeneration Plan which identifies three development sites, transport improvements, environmental and public realm enhancements and a better pedestrian environment. The Regeneration Plan also includes a timetabled implementation plan.

14. In relation to implementing the Regeneration Plan, negotiations have already begun with a number of developers who are interested in taking forward some of the regeneration proposals highlighted in the Plan.

Shell Corner

15. *Environmental Improvement Project*

The antisocial behaviour problems associated with the planters located in the local centre on Long Lane and the corner of Maple Road have been raised at Halesowen Area Committee. Consequently a feasibility study was undertaken, looking at ways to improve this environment and reduce anti social behaviour. This study set out three separate improvement options and as a result of consultation with the local community a preferred option was chosen. Funding for these environmental improvement works has been secured and work on the scheme is expected to begin later this year.

16. *Shell Corner Regeneration Plan*

The Regeneration Plan for Shell Corner local centre is currently being developed and initial consultation has already taken place with community groups, residents, stakeholders, key organisations, businesses about the issues, needs and possible regeneration solutions. Discussions are now being progressed internally and with other key organisations regarding potential regeneration options. It is expected that a Draft Regeneration Plan will be produced by autumn 2007. This will be subject to consultation with the local community and key stakeholders.

17. *Shell Corner Redevelopment Sites*

The negative image created by the row of derelict shops located on the corner of Long Lane and Malt Mill Lane has been highlighted as a major problem by the Shell Corner Partnership and also during the plan consultation process with the local community, businesses and stakeholders. A number of meetings have been held with Council officers, Black Country Housing Group, and English Partnerships, and ward members looking at how to address the numerous problems associated with redeveloping this site.

18. The owners of the block of properties next to the row of vacant shops have contacted the Council about the possibility of purchasing Council owned land adjacent to their property with a view to undertaking residential development on the site, which will hopefully act as a catalyst for further investment into Shell Corner local centre. The property owners have submitted pre planning application sketches of the proposed scheme and have met with officers to discuss their proposals

19. *Improving Youth Provision*

During the consultation with the community about the Shell Corner Local Centre Regeneration Plan, many people raised concerns about the antisocial behaviour caused by youths hanging around Shell Corner in the evenings and the lack of provision for young people in the area. A working group involving youth groups, youth and leisure providers, Police and the Shell Corner Partnership has been set up to try and tackle these issues. The completion of Hurst Green Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) has contributed to this.

Pensnett

20. Funding has been secured to appoint consultants to produce a Regeneration Plan for Pensnett and these resources have been supplemented by the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership. Work on the Plan is scheduled to begin in September 2007 with the view of having a Final Regeneration Plan by January 2008.

Quarry Bank

21. The development of Quarry Bank Local Centre Regeneration Plan has been put on hold pending the consideration of options concerning the inclusion of the centre within the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan (BHAAP) boundary. This decision is expected to be made in January 2008 when all the consultation over the boundary options has taken place.

Work in non priority local and district centres

Upper Gornal

22. *Arcade sign*
The Upper Gornal traders and residents group with assistance from the district and local centres team successfully applied for advertising consent and secured funding to help with the costs of a sign. This sign lists the businesses in the Arcade and will be located in front of the shopping area to encourage more people to use the local centre.
23. *Community Safety Grants*
Community Safety Grants have been awarded to two traders that have been victims of crime to help secure their premises. Funding has also been secured for railings to secure a block of flats within the local centre which have experience high levels of anti social behaviour.
24. *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.

Netherton

25. *Public Art*
The Friends of Netherton Park Group asked the Council to run an art competition with local schools to design a concept that will be worked up into a piece of public art that will go on the newly formed grassed bank on the Halesowen Road. The winning concept was chosen by the community and the borough artist, in consultation with the local community, is working on a final design. Funding for the piece of art has not yet been secured.

Sedgley

26. *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 2006. The Council is also assisting the Sedgley Traders Group with projects aimed at improving the local centre.

Local and District Centres Officers Group

27. An internal officers group has been set up to share information and give advice on the regeneration issues emerging in the borough's 16 local and district centres. Divisions and Directorates represented include Traffic, Planning Policy, Development Control, Urban Design, Historic Environment, Adult Community & Housing Services, Law and Property, Landscape Design, Street Care and Green Care. The group meets on a bimonthly basis.

Local Centre Survey Work

28. The Council is attempting to identify funding to carry out survey work within the local and district centres which will provide useful baseline information that can be used to measure changes within a centre over time. The Council already collects information on vacancies and diversity of uses within the centres each year and the additional survey work will be added to this to give a more accurate assessment of the performance of a centre. The additional survey work will include information such as footfall, environmental factors and accessibility.

Areas to be developed in next 12 months

29. The local and district centres identified in the Unitary Development Plan have not been reviewed for a number of years and therefore some are no longer functioning as centres and there are other retail areas in the borough that fit the criteria for a local centre but are not included. It is important to begin to discuss a process of reviewing the local and district centres in the borough and agree how this will feed into the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Issues for Discussion

30. The securing of resources to appoint an officer with a small 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. By investing in a modest budget, a lot more 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.
31. The Council's priorities within the Economic Strategy have been to concentrate resources and investment on the 4 principal centres. 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 larger.
32. The preparation of Regeneration Plans is running alongside the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF). Regeneration Plans do not have the same planning status as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) or Area Action Plans (AAPs).

Finance

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

Law

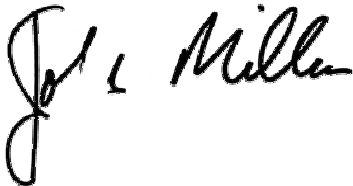
34. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of its area.

Equality Impact

35. 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

36. That the Committee note the significant progress made in regenerating the district and local centres since additional resources were allocated 2005/06.



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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

Theme/Plan Reference	Objective	Action	Lead Section/Agency	Progress made up to July 2006
PUBLIC SPACES - PS1	To enhance the function and aesthetics of existing public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pocket park revamp/redevelopment 	Design & Projects, DMBC/Private Sector.	The improvements to the Pocket Park have been completed and include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The erection of an ornamental fence and gates at the rear of the site. Replacement of old seating with new larger seats. The planting of a specimen tree towards the rear of the site. New minor pavement improvements and repairs to existing paving. Repainting the existing clock and murals. Providing new bins.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Park: -Design -Implementation 	Design & Projects, DMBC/Church/ Groundworks	The construction of the public park at the back of Christ Church finished. The funding for community safety improvements has not yet been secured but the Lye and Wollescote Partnership have submitted an application to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund to finance some of this work. The park includes:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small amount of tree and hedge clearance. New footpath route across the site. New ornamental fencing between the Church and the park. Cultivation and resurfacing of park area. Planting of new specimen trees to the rear of the site, along the Bypass boundary. A new paved route linking the park to the Bypass. Planting of low maintenance shrubs.
		High Street Enhancements	Street Care	Not taken place The High Street enhancements referred to in the Action Plan include pavement resurfacing and improved street lighting. To progress this, there is a need to assess what High Street enhancements are still needed, whether there is any strategy to improve street lighting and pavements in the Borough and whether any funding can be accessed to implement improvements.
CREATING AN IDENTITY - CI1	To create an attractive environment through the use of public art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Arts Strategy 	Design & Projects DMBC	Not taken place Liaise with Head of Arts, Heritage & Parks to discuss whether the original intention of developing a Community Arts Strategy involving local people in public art initiatives to provide gateway features to brighten up the central area of Lye is still appropriate and achievable and whether there is any funding available to support this initiative.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sir Cedric Harwicke Sculpture 	Borough Artist	The Sir Cedric Hardwicke Memorial is complete.
DIVERSIT	To promote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design Briefs 	Design &	Not taken place

Y THROUGH DESIGN - DD1	innovative and sustainable building form that demonstrates the principles of urban design		Projects, DMBC	Liaise with Landscape & Urban Design Manager to discuss whether design briefs providing detailed guidance on the development of specific opportunity sites is still appropriate and if so to identify which sites need design guidance. Resources would need to be identified to aid the production of design briefs for relevant sites.
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT -HE1	To protect areas of local distinctiveness and character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Heritage Policy Guidance (specific sites and properties) 	Development Services DMBC	DMBC are in the process of producing a supplementary planning document on the historic environment entitled 'The Dudley Borough Landscape and Townscape Character Study'. Although this is not specific to Lye this document does offer the necessary policy guidance.
-HE2	To ensure the conservation of locally listed buildings and structure by encouraging their retention, maintenance, appropriate use and restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact all owner/occupiers of locally listed buildings and advise on relevant policy 	Development Services DMBC	Not taken place. Liaise with the Historic Environment Team to organise contacting owners and occupiers of locally listed buildings to advise them on the set of approved council policies relating to Locally Listed buildings.
-HE3	To protect archaeological remains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply of information for development proposals and mitigation of impacts arising 	Development Services DMBC	The Historic Environment Team comments on relevant Planning Applications when submitted

<p>District Centre Facilities -DF1</p>	<p>To provide a range of District Centre amenities & facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Store -Design/PP -Construction • Multipurpose community facility - feasibility study - Detailed design/PP -Construction 	<p>Urban Policy, DMBC/Private sector</p> <p>Resources & partnerships, DMBC/varied public agencies</p>	<p>DMBC Law and Property are in negotiations with a retail developer and Layout Plans for a proposed public house & restaurant, food retail unit and associated car parking provision have been submitted to the Council for comment. The progress of this development has been delayed because of a number of issues which are preventing the release of the land needed for the scheme. Law and Property are in the process of trying to rectify these problems.</p> <p>There is a lack of support for a one-stop-shop Multipurpose Community Facility because the original intentions of DMBC departments and other organisations wanting to locate their offices in this building have now changed and community facilities planned for this Centre are provided in other buildings based in Lye. The funding source that was identified for this project has also changed its priorities and this type of scheme would no longer meet the criteria. A regeneration concern is that many community facilities are located on the High Street and the relocation of these to a multipurpose centre would result in a number of vacant buildings. A LIFT scheme is planned for Lye for 2008/09 but there is no commitment to using this site for the project.</p>
<p>-DF2</p>	<p>To protect existing retail uses within the High Street</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop frontage improvements - Survey/design - Construction • Retail Core Policy 	<p>Resources & partnerships, DMBC/AWM/Private sector/local traders & businesses</p> <p>Development Services DMBC</p>	<p>Not taken place- difficulties identifying funding sources that will support shop front improvements.</p> <p>Liaise with Partnership and Resources Team to identify if there are any potential funding sources for shop front improvements and if not look at alternative methods to encourage High Street improvements.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring by Planning Policy and enforcement through Development Control</p>
<p>-DF3</p>	<p>To attract and sustain new uses to the High Street</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Strategy 	<p>Resources & Partnerships, DMBC,AWM/traders</p>	<p>Not taken place.</p> <p>Liaise with Marketing Team and Resources and Partnerships to discuss whether a marketing strategy to attract inward investment, support new businesses and sustain existing ones is still appropriate and can be resourced. The original intention of the Strategy was to focus on the role of specialist shops and restaurants in particular. One of the aims was to take advantage of the 'Enterprise Area' status but it would need to be clarified whether this status still exists and if so, establish the benefits of it in terms of a marketing tool. Discussions would also need to take place with AWM to establish whether they would still be prepared to fund a marketing strategy.</p>

<p>ACCESS & MOVEMENT T -AM1</p>	<p>To manage traffic effectively within the District Centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway improvements (linked to new food store) • Car parking provision (linked to new food store) • Taxi Rank within the High Street 	<p>Traffic & Road Safety</p> <p>Traffic & Road Safety</p> <p>Street Care Traffic & Road Safety</p>	<p>Not taken place- DMBC working with retail developer to look at solutions to traffic issues associated with potential food store development.</p> <p>Not taken place- DMBC in discussion with retail developer regarding associated parking provision.</p> <p>Not taken place. Liaise with Traffic to establish whether it is feasible to set up a taxi rank in the High Street and if so identify an implementation plan and resources needed to support it.</p>
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-AM2	To encourage alternative modes of travel to car uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to the pedestrian environment (linked with new food store) • Railway Station Improvements • Cycle parking facilities • Park and Ride policy review 	<p>Traffic & Road Safety</p> <p>Street Care</p> <p>Street Care</p> <p>Traffic & Road Safety (with Centro) All DMBC</p>	<p>Not taken place- DMBC working with the retail developer designing the food store to ensure that the pedestrian environment is enhanced within design proposals.</p> <p>During 2005/06 Centro have made the following improvements to Lye Train Station:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to the footbridge • The car park has been resurfaced • New vandal proof shelter • CCTV and lighting has been installed <p>There are no plans to make any other upgrades to the Station apart from revamping the customer information but this is a long term plan.</p> <p>Improvements along the pedestrian route to the Railway Station have not taken place. Urban Design and Regeneration Projects Team need to meet to discuss the most appropriate pedestrian route from the Train Station to the High Street in terms of community safety and projecting a positive image to visitors of Lye. Once the route is agreed, Engineers and Urban Design need to liaise and identify improvement options which will need to go out to consultation with local stakeholders and potential funding sources will need to be identified and applied for.</p> <p>Not taken place- will be incorporated into the design of the parking area for the proposed food store and other future developments that require parking provision.</p> <p>Not taken place This was intended to be a joint initiative between CENTRO and DMBC. Discussions with Traffic will need to take place to establish whether the Park and Ride issues are still relevant and whether such an initiative is still appropriate.</p>
DESIGN FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY -DC1	To increase community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety - Strategy Development - Implementation 	Design & Projects DMBC/police/local partnerships	<p>Not taken place.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Management are leading on the Community Safety Strategy and working closely with the Lye Community Safety Group, DMBC Community Safety Team and the Regeneration Projects Team. The aim of this initiative will be to write a strategy for Lye that reflects the Borough Community Safety Strategy and the Lye District Centre Action Plan.</p>
EMPLOYME	To support the	• Employment	Resources &	Not taken place.

	provision	-Proposals	agencies inc. Lottery	
URBAN HOUSING -UH1	To develop new sites for quality housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring forward sites for housing redevelopment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Valley Road - Brief/Plans - Development ➤ Vicarage Road - Development 	Design & Projects, DMBC	Not taken place-DMBC Engineers have agreed that the proposed residential sites on Valley Road and the Lye bypass identified in the Action Plan can be released because all work to the bypass is complete. Sure Start were originally interested in using the site on Lye bypass for temporary accommodation while the Children's Centre was being built but they have confirmed that they no longer require this land. Legal and Property are now in a position where they can take these sites forward for marketing.
-UH2		Marketing Strategy and assessment property Conversion programme	Resources & Partnership/Housing/DMBC	Not taken place. Refer to initiative DF3