

Cabinet Meeting – 29th June 2011

Report Of The Director Of The Urban Environment

Stourbridge Area Action Plan (AAP) (Preferred Options)

Purpose Of Report

- 1 To inform Cabinet of progress on the Stourbridge Area Action Plan (AAP) and to seek approval for the AAP Preferred Options (dated June 2011) as a basis for public consultation.

Background

- 2 The preparation of an AAP for Stourbridge Town Centre and its immediate surroundings features in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and its progression to adoption is stated as a key activity in delivering an Objective of the Council Plan (2013) - *improving the vibrancy and attractiveness of the Borough's town centres*.
- 3 Within the adopted Black Country Core Strategy (February 2011), Stourbridge is identified within a network of town centres, these centres form a distinctive and valued part of the Black Country's character. The general aim of the Core Strategy is to shape and revitalise these centres to meet the communities needs in the most accessible and sustainable way. The policies of the Stourbridge AAP seek to carry forward and provide a focus for these (sub-regional) strategic planning aims.
- 4 The AAP has an end date of 2026 and essentially will guide new investment into Stourbridge Town Centre up to that date, including identifying where new shops and homes will be located, along with the transport infrastructure and new public spaces which are needed to help support that growth and benefit the local community and local environment in general.
- 5 The AAP Preferred Options' policies have been shaped by previous rounds of public and other stakeholder engagement associated with the progression of the former stages of the AAP: the initial evidence gathering and the Draft Options stages. This previous consultation has involved landowners, town centre traders, developers and key interest groups, and included the display of information at libraries and at events in The Ryemarket, where officers were present to respond to any questions and views offered by the community who attended.
- 6 Whereas previous versions of the AAP contained a series of options for the planning of the area, which were assessed and tested through consultation with the community and other stakeholders, the Preferred Options sets out a preferred vision, along with specific strategies and policies, some of which are site specific (in relation to the Opportunity Sites). It is now considered a necessary step to open

up these Preferred Options to scrutiny, assessment and comment through a further period of consultation.

- 7 A copy of the Preferred Options is available to view in the Member's room and on the Committee Management Information system.
- 8 The key themes present in the Preferred Options are:-
 - Public Realm improvements within the town centre core, including the provision of a more attractive, accessible and pedestrian friendly shopping environment;
 - Greater pedestrian accessibility to the town centre.
 - Improvements to the River Stour (the "rediscovery of the river"), including its de-culverting, and the provision of a green open space corridor centred on it, with pathways along the river banks and improvements which focus on enhancements to the area's nature conservation value;
 - Proposals to shape development on a series of Opportunity Sites, with an emphasis on providing for new residential development within the river corridor to the north of the town, while providing measures to ensure that industry there continues to thrive where it remains viable;
 - The uplift of the Stourbridge Wharf area (at Canal Street) with an emphasis on providing space for creative/cultural industry and visitor economy related businesses, including entertainment and leisure uses, as well as upgrading the environment with measures which are sensitive to the area's historic value.
- 9 The period of consultation on the Preferred Options is recommended to begin on the 11th July 2011 and run for a period of 6 weeks until 22nd August 2011. During that time, the document will be able to be viewed at the reception areas at 3 St James's Road Dudley, Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge and Dudley Council Plus, as well as at all main libraries and on the Council's website. It will also be the subject of other, similar publicity measures to those which were carried out on previous versions of the plan, including, potentially consultation outside of the stated 6 week period.
- 10 Following this consultation, a 'Publication Stage' document will be prepared based on the responses received and any further evidence which is gathered. It is anticipated that this report will be subject to further public consultation around Spring 2012, prior to the submission of the document to the Planning Inspectorate in Summer 2012. The submitted plan is then likely to be subject to a formal Examination in Public in Autumn 2012, with a potential adoption date for the plan in Spring 2013.

Finance

- 11 The AAP will be funded from existing budgets and resources dedicated to the production of Development Plan Documents and other such statutory planning documents.

Law

- 12 This AAP is a Development Plan Document (DPD), produced in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended by the

Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. The Regulations which are relevant to community involvement and representations on DPDs are Regulations 25, 26 and 27 of the 2004 Regulations (as amended).

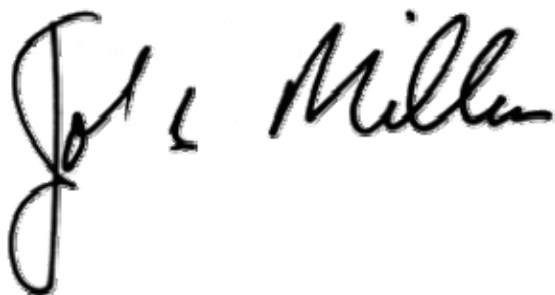
- 13 In addition, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area.

Equality Impact

- 14 The AAP will set the planning framework for the development of the Stourbridge area at least up to 2026. The AAP will seek to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social, educational and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of all the communities in the area.
- 15 This will include meeting the needs of children and young people by seeking to provide sufficient facilities for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations. Indeed, it is anticipated that this community group will potentially be a focus for some consultation outside of the stated 6 week period.

Recommendation

- 16 It is recommended that:-
 - Cabinet note the work being undertaken on the Stourbridge Area Action Plan (AAP).
 - Cabinet approve the Stourbridge AAP Preferred Options (June 2011) as a basis for public consultation.



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List of Background Papers: *AAP Preferred Options*