

Meeting of the Cabinet – 13th February, 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Public Consultation on the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval of the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options document, **copy available in Members Room**, as a basis for statutory public consultation.

Background

2. **The Council's ambition has been to have Brierley Hill recognised as a Strategic Town Centre at Regional Planning level.** For several years Dudley Council and other partners have been seeking to regenerate the Brierley Hill area and to form a strategic centre by integrating the High Street, Merry Hill and the Waterfront.
3. A change to regional policy has been proposed through the Phase One Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) which has been informed by the Black Country Study and included a proposal for Brierley Hill as a strategic centre. The RSS Phase One Revision as a whole has been examined in public in January 2007 and on the 15th January, 2008 the final approved version of the RSS for West Midlands was published designating Brierley Hill as a Strategic Centre. This now provides the context for the area to be regenerated.
4. Consideration has been given to including Quarry Bank as part of the Strategic Brierley Hill Town Centre however a more appropriate method of regeneration for this unique local centre of character is being devised through a Structured Regeneration Plan. The RSS Phase One Revision carefully conditions future growth at Brierley Hill. It requires that three conditions be met before new retail floorspace becomes operational and the doors are opened to shoppers. One of those conditions requires that an Area Action Plan is adopted for Brierley Hill.
5. Area Action Plans are thorough planning documents focussed on delivery and take time to prepare. As such, in the interests of securing regeneration at Brierley Hill as quickly as possible, Dudley MBC has started to prepare the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan now, prior to the final decision being made on whether Brierley Hill will be designated as a strategic centre. The Panel Report encouraged this positive action being taken by Dudley MBC.

6. The Area Action Plan is being prepared in parallel with the Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country and will have to be consistent with this strategy which sets the strategic Black Country context.
7. The Brierley Hill Area Action Plan, when it is formally adopted in 2009, will form part of Dudley's statutory planning framework, the 'Local Development Framework', which will gradually replace the Unitary Development Plan 2005 and it will be the starting point for making decisions on planning applications.
8. The Area Action Plan will contain detailed delivery proposals for the future of Brierley Hill at least up to 2021, a number of objectives to achieve this together with policies that will guide development including allocating sites for certain uses.
9. A vast amount of work has already been undertaken to identify the issues in Brierley Hill and the best strategy for delivering regeneration. All of this work, including the Black Country Study and the various documents produced by the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership, will inform the preparation of the Area Action Plan.
10. There is a statutory process that the Council must go through in order to produce the Area Action Plan. Early in 2007 evidence was gathered about the area and issues identified that the Area Action Plan should respond to. Cabinet approval was given in June 2007 for public consultation on the different potential options for the strategy. The results from that consultation have informed the choice of preferred options. **Those preferred options are presented in a consultation document available in the Members Room.**
11. The preferred options set out a strategy for the expansion of the town centre over the long term to 2021 and prioritise retail development at Merry Hill as the catalyst for the wider regeneration of the town centre. Provision is also made for new retail development on the High Street together with supporting town centre uses including homes, education, leisure health and social care and office uses. The strategy sets out a plan for improved accessibility which includes new streets, public spaces and public transport interchanges. These proposals consider the historic environment and character of Brierley Hill and maximise opportunities for new green infrastructure including wildlife corridors. **The consultation will seek people's views on whether they agree with the preferred options or whether there are other more preferable options.**
12. The results from this consultation will be considered alongside the technical evidence to prepare the final draft Area Action Plan to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination. Following examination and the receipt of the Inspectors Report it is anticipated that the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan will be adopted in October 2009.

Finance

13. The Brierley Hill Area Action Plan will be funded from Dudley Council's existing budgets and resources dedicated to the production of Development Plan Documents and other such statutory planning documents.

Law

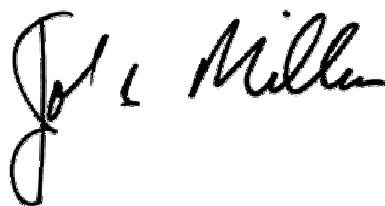
14. The production of an Area Action Plan for Brierley Hill is a condition for delivering retail-led regeneration as set out in the draft Phase One Revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Furthermore, as a Development Plan Document, its production is in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and must be in accordance with its regulations.
15. 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 or environmental well-being of the area.

Equality Impact

16. The Brierley Hill Area Action Plan will set the planning framework for the development of the Brierley Hill area at least up to 2021. The Area Action Plan will seek to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, community and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of the people in the area. 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.

Recommendation

17. That the Committee approves the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options document as a basis for public consultation.



J. B. Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officer: Nicki Thomas
Telephone: 01384 816967
Email: nicki.thomas@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Preferred Options – available in Members Room

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040005.htm>

Draft Phase One Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy

<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=55>

Black Country Study

<http://www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk/page.asp?PageRef=10>