

Meeting of the Cabinet – 12th March 2014

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Public consultation on the Dudley Area Action Plan 'Issues and Options' stage document

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the Dudley Area Action Plan (AAP) Issues and Options document to be used as a basis for public consultation commencing in March 2014.

Background

2. Dudley Town Centre has witnessed a number of key regeneration projects over recent years. Many of these projects were set out in the policies within the existing Dudley Unitary Development Plan which was adopted in 2005, and the accompanying Dudley Area Development Framework which was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in the same year. There is now a need to produce a new planning policy document for Dudley Town Centre to replace these saved policies and proposals and bring them up-to-date. An Area Action Plan (AAP) is considered the most suitable means of achieving this.
3. The Dudley Area Action Plan (as with the already adopted AAP's for Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Halesowen) will form part of Dudley Borough's wider 'Local Development Framework'. It will provide a vision for the Borough's Town Centre by 2026, and through its policies and site allocations, it will set out how that vision will be delivered. The vision, strategy and policies for the town centre which have been informed by earlier information gathering undertaken between September and October 2013 where much support was expressed for the key issues and the suggested ways forward within the Plan.
4. The Dudley Area Action Plan will therefore be a planning policy document against which decisions on planning applications will be made for the period 2016 to 2026. It will consider such issues as:
 - Which areas need regenerating, and which need to be conserved.
 - What new development is needed and where this should happen.
 - Where the primary shopping area of the Town Centre is, thereby guiding retail and non-retail development to appropriate locations.
 - Whether any new or enhanced infrastructure is needed to service the Town Centre, such as public spaces, streets or green infrastructure.
 - What principles should guide new development, particularly in terms of urban design.

5. The AAP needs to deliver the retail floorspace requirements which are set out in the Black Country Core Strategy Policy CEN4 'Regeneration of Town Centres,' for Dudley. These being 5,000 m² net of convenience (food) and 15,000 m² gross of comparison (clothes, white goods etc) retail floorspace. Implementation of one or more of the the three approved foodstore planning consents in the town centre will help deliver these floorspace totals.
6. The planning process requires that the community and other stakeholders are engaged in the preparation of development plan documents such as Area Action Plans – hence the need for this 'Issues and Options' formal public consultation. The document therefore necessarily includes a number of questions on which stakeholders and consultees can comment on the contents of the document and propose changes.
7. The period of consultation on the Issues and Options is recommended to begin on the 14th March and run for a period of 6 weeks until 25th April 2014. During that time, the document will be able to be viewed at the reception at 4 Ednam House, Dudley, Dudley Council Plus, all the main libraries and on the Council's website. A copy will also be made available in the Members Room and on the Internet via the Committee Information Management System. Officers will also engage with key interested stakeholders in the town.
8. Following this consultation the next stage in the process will be to prepare the Dudley Area Action Plan 'Preferred Options' document – this being informed by responses received consultation and by other evidence gathered. The 'Preferred Options' stage document is anticipated to be put before Cabinet by the end of 2014 for approval for statutory public consultation in early 2015.

Finance

9. The Dudley Area Action Plan will be funded from existing budgets and resources dedicated to the production of Development Plan Documents and other such statutory planning documents.

Law

10. The production of the Dudley Area Action Plan is necessary in order to update and replace the Dudley chapter of the Dudley Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and will deliver those regeneration requirements for the town set out in the Black Country Core Strategy.
11. The Dudley Area Action Plan is a Development Plan Document (DPD), produced in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the NPPF (2012). When adopted, the Dudley AAP will form part of Dudley's statutory planning framework and will be used as the basis for decisions in planning applications for development in the Town.
12. 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

13. The Dudley Area Action Plan will set the planning framework for the development of Dudley Town Centre up to 2026. The Area Action Plan will seek to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of the communities 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.
14. This consultation document is accompanied by a Scoping Report and an Issues and Options Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report. The Scoping Report provides the background information required for the consideration of sustainability issues. The SA Report promotes sustainable development through the integration of environmental, social and economic conditions into the AAP's preparation.

Recommendation

15. That Cabinet approves the Dudley Area Action Plan (AAP) Issues and Options document to be used as a basis for public consultation commencing on 14th March 2014 for a period of six weeks.



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List of Background Papers

Dudley Area Action Plan (AAP) Issues and Options document
Dudley AAP 'Issues and Options' Sustainability Appraisal Report
Dudley AAP Scoping Report – All documents available in Members Room
Adopted Black Country Core Strategy (2011)
<http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/>