
Halesowen Area Committee – 2nd July 2008

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Report of the Halesowen Area Committee (Cradley/Windmill Regeneration Plan Delivery) Working Group

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Committee on the deliberations of the Working Group at their first meeting on 14th April, 2008 and the informal meeting held on 2nd June, 2008.

Background

Meeting held on 14th April, 2008

2. Councillor Ms Partridge was elected Chairman of the Working Group for the remainder of the 2007/2008 municipal year.
3. Progress Report on the Cradley Regeneration Plan – a verbal report was given regarding progress made on the Cradley Windmill Hill Local Centre Regeneration Plan. The Project Development Officer referred to Land at Foredraft Street and indicated that there had been some delays and the development brief would now be completed at the end of April, 2008. With regard to Windmill Hill and the car park the Project Development Officer reported that consideration was being given to the possibility of a Spar supermarket. In referring to the Providence Methodist Church site it was reported that little progress had been made. Consideration was also being given to redesign the bus stop adjacent to 28-40 Windmill Hill together with providing loading facilities at the top of Windmill Hill. A transport bid had also been made to CENTRO to help fund projects.
4. Arising from the verbal report Members referred to Colley Gate and it was commented that the road leading to Colley Gate was a very narrow Road and needed to be widened. Also due to the lack of car parking on that particular road it would not be suitable for a red route, as it would make the matter worse. It was requested that consideration should be given to a long-term strategy as well as short term with a view to attracting businesses. Following a query about progress on the Medical Centre, the Project Development Officer reported that the matter had been held up by the Methodist National Board and it was requested that an update on the matter be provided to the next meeting and that the Methodist National Board be approached with a view to ascertaining whether the Council could help to speed up the process.
5. With regard to a query whether consideration had been given to identifying significant trees in the locality, particularly at the front of the Methodist Church, the Project Development Officer indicated that the information should be contained in the development brief but undertook to update the Group at a future meeting. The Project Development Officer further commented that the Working Group could consider designs for developing the street scene.

6. Discussion then ensued on the number of street signs, the placement of street signs and whether there was a better method that could be used. The Chairman requested that discussions should take place with the appropriate Officer with a view to reporting to the next meeting. The Chairman also referred to the Joint Core Strategy and asked that an update be given on how it could be linked to this particular regeneration programme.

Informal Meeting held on 2nd June, 2008

7. Reports were given on issues as raised at the previous meeting. In referring to the query about progress on the Health Centre development on the Providence Methodist Church site, the Regeneration Projects Manager reported that the Chief Executive for Dudley Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) had indicated that the site would not be big enough for their requirements and that the decision about the site was still in abeyance. Regarding the query about Tree Preservation Orders in the area the Project Development Officer reported that there was only one tree on the Vicarage Grounds that had a Tree Preservation Order.
8. Discussion ensued on the Joint Core Strategy and a Member referred to the distribution of floor space as mentioned in the document and pointed out that there was no reference to refurbishment or developments in the Colley Gate area and that only existing space and accommodation were being utilised. In response to the query the Planning Policy Manager advised that the Joint Core Strategy was a Black Country wide strategic document that had overarching policies and that the next level of the stage would be borough wide which would identify development opportunities in specific areas, via a consultation exercise. However, she undertook to note the concerns made with a view to including the response as part of the preferred options consultation exercise.
9. The Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy) reported on funding streams related to the red route package on the A458 but indicated that there had been a level of uncertainty following surveys that had been undertaken. If the Council did pursue the red routes scheme a report would be submitted to Cabinet at the end of the year with a view to engaging a public consultation exercise. However, if the red route scheme was not pursued then alternative funding sources would need to be identified.
10. The Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy) then referred to bus showcase funding and he indicated that rules for this type of funding had changed as it now allowed applications being made for "quick wins". He informed the meeting that a scheme to improve the Maple Tree Lane pelican crossing was being considered to enable a bid being made from this type of funding. However, he pointed out that applications made in this regard had to specifically relate to buses such as improving journey times. In response to a query the Principal Engineer (Transportation Policy) reported that it was intended that the Maple Tree Lane scheme together with improvements to Colley Lane and Chapel House Lane would, subject to a public consultation exercise be implemented during this financial year. He pointed out that funding from the red route scheme had no bearing on these schemes and that they were funded from a separate stream.
11. The Group Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) informed the meeting that there was a general policy to reduce sign clutter on streets and he enquired on the issues that were raised previously as to whether there was concern about warning or information signs. The Chairman expressed concern about the proliferation of signs in the Colley Gate area and queried whether some signs could be removed. In responding the Group Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) advised that all unnecessary signs were usually removed and taken away and he indicated that if there were any such signs that he would pursue the matter. In response to a request from the Chairman regarding an audit being undertaken

with a view to increasing or decreasing signs to a reasonable number, the Group Engineer (Traffic and Road Safety) undertook to carry out an audit on ColleyGate/Windmill Hill, between Park Lane and Drews Holloway.

12. The Planning Policy Manager described the contents of the Joint Core Strategy and pointed out that cross border regeneration corridors had been identified together with housing and employment land and that efforts were being made to attract companies and inward investment. The document identified land but a further document that would allocate land would also need to be prepared. Consultation on the document had been undertaken during February 2008 and a final plan would be produced taking into account responses received. It was anticipated that an Independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State would examine the final document sometime next year with a view to the Plan then being adopted. A Member commented that when the allocation of land document was being considered it was essential that all comments made be considered prior to the document being finalised. It was also requested that reference to Colley Gate should be included in the document. Following further discussions it was suggested that the matter be discussed in further detail at a future meeting of the Working Group. In response to a query from the Chairman in how the Cradley Regeneration Plan linked and fit into the Core Strategy, the Planning Policy Manager indicated that it fit well in that it supported the regeneration of the area.

Finance

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Law

- 14 Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

15. The report takes into account the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and there are no direct implications for children and young people in noting the report.

Recommendation

16. That the Committee notes the contents of the report.



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List of Background Papers

Minutes of the Working Group held on 14th April 2008

Minutes of the Informal Meeting of the Working Group held on 2nd June 2008