

Wyre Forest District
Regeneration & Economic Prosperity
Work Programme
2008-2014

Aim & Context

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide an overarching blueprint for regeneration across Wyre Forest District that will complement the Wyre Forest Matters Sustainable Community Strategy, the Worcestershire Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan and the West Midlands Economic Strategy by bringing together a range of regeneration programmes from the District's urban and rural communities.
- 1.2 The regeneration programme is very much about working in partnership with the Local Strategy Partnership, Town and Parish Councils together with regional and County partners.
- 1.3 District-wide Regeneration is one of the Council's four corporate priorities for 2008/09. In July 2007 the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section was established to help co-ordinate the various regeneration programmes spread across the three towns of Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley and the surrounding rural areas.
- 1.4 During the late 1990's and in to the early 2000's Kidderminster experienced a considerable stint of development that is manifest in four crucial developments of Weavers Wharf, Crossley Retail Park, B&Q in Green Street and the new College building in Kidderminster town centre. A number of major housing sites included the Stourvale Mills, now known as Waterside Grange, the Cattle Market and the redevelopment of the former college site at Hoo Road.
- 1.5 Whilst this development was on going in Kidderminster, plans were being put in place for the co-ordinated regeneration of Stourport on Severn and this is detailed below. As this work now starts to come to fruition, attention is turning to Kidderminster where a similar co-ordinated approach to regeneration will be promoted through the 'Connecting Kidderminster' initiative which will provide a Prospectus for regenerating the town.
- 1.6 As the main service centre providing jobs, shopping and leisure opportunities for the entire district and parts of the Rural Regeneration Zone to the west, it is important that the Prospectus for Kidderminster complements the on-going regeneration programmes for Stourport and Bewdley as well as the surrounding rural areas. In essence that is the role of this work programme document.
- 1.7 The District Council's Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section established in July 2007 aims to develop the regeneration plans, through collaborative working with partners, and to guide their implementation. In terms of implementation, the service ranges from direct support for partnerships including Town Centre Management support services in Kidderminster through to the preparation of site specific design concepts, planning and development briefs. In this latter urban design capacity the

team helps to provide additional support to the statutory Development Control and Forward Planning functions.

i) REGENERATION PROJECTS for Stourport-on-Severn

2.1 A considerable amount of planning has been dedicated to providing a co-ordinated regeneration programme for Stourport which has focussed on the town's unique canal basins as a catalyst.

2.2 Regeneration plans are now coming to fruition in Stourport-on-Severn following years of planning. It was way back in 1993 that the seminal 'Pieda' study was commissioned to look at how Stourport could capitalise on its waterside setting and unique canal basins. In the years that followed designs, development briefs, the District Local Plan, Market Town Initiative (MTI) and Basins Restoration have provided a joined-up regeneration programme for the town.

Canal Basins Restoration

2.3 The HLF Canal Basins Restoration is nearing completion with a major launch event, known as the 'Flow Festival', planned for the summer 2008. The multi-award winning partnership regeneration project scooped further awards at the national BURA (British Urban Regeneration Association) Awards ceremony earlier in the year. As part of the wider regeneration a new canal basin, Lichfield Basin, has been re-opened as the setting for a high quality development of new homes. The plans for the area have successfully merged art, landscaping, design and development.

2.4 As part of the works, the formal gardens to the Grade II* Listed Tontine building are being restored and enhanced and Stourport Forward, the body set up to manage the MTI, have plans to open a new café restaurant, office complex and heritage information point in former stables overlooking the garden. This development is an important strand in the succession planning for Stourport Forward and provides a legacy for the town's Market Town Initiative.

Lichfield Basin & Severn Road

2.5 The Lichfield Basin development represents the first phase in the delivery of the Severn Road Redevelopment Brief Supplementary Planning Guidance which was adopted by the District Council in 2001. This area is also subject to Policies STC.1-3 of the District Local Plan. Further mixed-use phases include the former Carpets of Worth site where a proposed Tesco store together and link road have recently been granted planning permission. This site is also earmarked for new homes and other uses such as offices, together with improvements to the River Stour. The third and final phase of the Severn Road regeneration programme is Cheapside which is home to the current premises of TP Activity Toys. The District Council's Economic Development team will be actively working to assist the relocation of this important local company whose current premises are understood to be inefficient for modern manufacturing.

Bridge Street Basins Link (STC.4)

- 2.6 The proposals for the Bridge Street Basins Link development known as STC.4, after the Local Plan Policy of the same, provide a further major development opportunity. Various studies have highlighted this as being crucial to opening up the basins to the town's wider visitor economy. The scheme is subject of a Supplementary Planning Document which includes a comprehensive vision for the entire east side of Bridge Street. The District Council is working in partnership with Advantage West Midlands and British Waterways to bring forward a first phase around the existing 'Lloyds Garage' site and has recently served a Compulsory Purchase Order on the owners of this property. The development of phase one will provide the catalyst for developing the remaining part of the site.

Stourport Pride – improving public streets and spaces

- 2.7 Elsewhere in Bridge Street the District Council has worked with the County Council and Stourport Forward to improve the quality of the street. This scheme includes new pavements, carriageway surfaces, lighting, street furniture, finger posts and public art. It is the first project to emerge from the 'Stourport Pride' initiative with further phases currently being delivered for the riverside promenade. The wider initiative is gradually being rolled out with support from the Town Council and looks set to include improvements to pedestrian signage and interpretation across the town centre. Further opportunities to continue rolling out this programme of improvements will continue to be developed and, subject to resources, implemented.

The Former Mall – redevelopment site

- 2.8 The boarded up premises of the former Mall in Bridge Street is a known concern and detailed investigations into the prospects of bringing forward the development of the site are progressing. These involve the Head of Planning, Health and Environment, the Head of Property and Operational Service and Head of Legal and Democratic Services and further reports to Cabinet are anticipated in due course.

Other major development sites

- 2.9 Beyond the town centre a new housing scheme has been approved on land at the Morgan Advanced Ceramics site on the Bewdley Road and this will help to secure the long term future of this major local employer which specialises in research and development of ceramic components. The former Parsons Chain site on the Hartlebury Road has been cleared and presents a further regeneration opportunity for the future.

ii) REGENERATION PROJECTS - Kidderminster

- 3.1 In 2007 the District Council announced plans to prepare 'Connecting Kidderminster: a Prospectus for Regeneration' to pull together the key challenges and opportunities. An initial discussion paper was approved by the Community and Regeneration Committee in January 2008 as a basis for public consultation. The full version of this paper was circulated to key consultees in March and a less technical summary was produced for wider public circulation including schools, the college and youth groups.
- 3.2 The consultation process has been widely publicised through a series of features in Kidderminster Shuttle, the Internet and leaflet drops throughout the town including two of the major supermarkets where postcards have been made available at the tills. This further demonstrates wide consultation and partnership engagement.
- 3.3 The purpose of this initial round of consultation has been to generate discussion and ideas. The closing date for comments was 30th May 2008 and they are now being analysed. Feedback will be reported to Members in July together with the outcome of workshop events and some preliminary proposals.
- 3.4 The development of the Prospectus is being supported by Advantage West Midlands and Worcestershire County Council and designers, architects and economists are in the process of being appointed to work up ideas over the summer. Their skills will help to bring the vision to life and provide artist impressions and market appraisals.
- 3.5 Ultimately, the Prospectus will be a brochure showcasing a number of detailed projects and providing a possible vision for key sites. It will include a number of high profile proposals to be delivered by a combination of public and private sector organisations. This will be accompanied with cost estimates and an estimate of the number of jobs that may be secured by such proposals. Work is underway to prepare this information which will then form the basis of the next round of consultation through the publication of a draft brochure that will be reported in September. This consultation will run from October to November 2008.
- 3.6 Further issues being considered through the Prospectus include transportation infrastructure including proposals for the railway station and tackling the severance impact of the town centre ring road. Preliminary ideas will be worked up with designers and Worcestershire County Council. Other key themes will include place identity and the inclusion of public art as an integral part of the regeneration process.
- 3.7 The Prospectus, which now looks set to be finalised in December 2008 will provide a key part of the evidence base and part of the delivery plan for the LDF and in particular the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan Development Plan Document (DPD). It will therefore feed in to the development of the DPD Issues and Options Paper to be considered by Members in November 2008.

4. Kidderminster Town Centre Manager and Partnership

- 4.1 Beyond the Prospectus the Town Centre Partnership is working on a series of priorities including a new website dedicated to promoting Kidderminster Town Centre. Ultimately, this may provide a potential revenue stream for the Town Centre Manager and Partnership in the form of subscriptions and online hosting/ advertising.
- 4.2 The town centre partnership is also instrumental to co-ordinating events and working with the District Council's Economic Development Team and local agents to help connect prospective occupiers with available properties as part of any empty shops strategy. Other initiatives include helping to co-ordinate environmental improvements and working with the District Council's property and operational services teams responsible for car parking, streetscene and markets.
- 4.3 An Empty Shops Strategy is being drawn up and will have a particular focus on Worcester Street and Blackwell Street in Kidderminster. During 2008/09, this strategy will be supported by £20,000 of funding from the District Council. The newly appointed Town Centre Manager will assist in administering the strategy in Kidderminster.

KEY REGENERATION SITES: Kidderminster

KTC.3 – the former Magistrates Court

- 5.1 KTC.3 and the former Magistrates Court in Worcester Street is a key regeneration project for Kidderminster Town Centre and in, view of the Council's ownership, is being managed directly by the District Council's Head of Property and Operational Services. Having prepared a development brief for the site, Wilson Bowden emerged as the preferred development partner for the site for a mixed use scheme involving a multiplex cinema, hotel, bowling facility, restaurants and apartments. However, not long after that decision was taken, Wilson Bowden was bought out by Barratt Homes and this is understood to have delayed progress on the scheme.

6.0 KTC.4, Green Street & Other Sites

- 6.1 **CASE STUDY:** The area covered by Local Plan Policy KTC.4 includes the area around Green Street and New Road where proposals for a new Morrisons supermarket emerged during 2006/07. The new store is now under construction with a planned opening date of September 2008. The Regeneration & Economic Prosperity team have been working closely with Development Control and the developers to help maximise the opportunity from both an economic development and urban design perspective. Further work is being undertaken to find end users for both the Boucher Building and the current Morrisons store site.
- 6.2 There are a considerable number of major regeneration sites emerging throughout Kidderminster from the former British Sugar site in Oldington and Foley Park in the south throughout the town centre including Park

Lane and Worcester Street to the Churchfields Business Park/ Horsefair in the north. In the case of the former British Sugar and Park Lane timber yard sites there are no obvious planning impediments to bringing these sites forward. However, in both instances there are understood to be commercial reasons for the delay to realising their redevelopment. Other sites including Churchfields will require a switch in their current planning designation and this will need to be worked up through the Local Development Framework (LDF) and specifically the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan.

iii) REGENERATION PROJECTS - Bewdley

7.1 The opportunity for major physical regeneration schemes in Bewdley is limited due to the tight knit nature of the town's conservation imperative. However, an area where the quality of the built environment undermines the Conservation Area is to be found in the 1960's style single storey premises around Load Street Car Park where plans are being drawn up for a mixed community facility that is fit for purpose and would include a new medical centre and library. The Heads of Planning, Health and Environment and Property and Operational Services are actively engaged in discussions with the Primary Care Trust, County Council and other key local stakeholders.

iv) REGENERATION PROJECTS – the Rural Areas

8.1 Consultation on a scoping paper for the proposed Rural Regeneration Strategy is due to close on the 27th June 2008.

8.2 Key aspects of the rural strategy will be gaining an understanding of rural business and emerging needs together with the prospects for economic diversification including the importance of tourism. The possible development of a tourism cluster focussing on the areas key attractions will also be considered together with the potential catalytic impact of schemes such as 'Grow with Wyre' together with the maintenance of rural services and the delivery of affordable housing.

8.3 The Strategy is due to be adopted in January 2009 and further reports will be considered by this committee in due course.

CONCLUSION

Bringing together the multitude of regeneration initiatives that are currently being developed and implemented across the District into one overarching strategy will put the individual parts into perspective. This should help stakeholders and inward investors to fully appreciate their contribution and ensure that the necessary links are made between initiatives. In turn this will help deliver complementary programmes.