

Council's Opening Statement
Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan Examination Hearing

Friday 1st February, 2013

On behalf of the Council, I would like to welcome you all to today's hearing sessions for the Examination into the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan. I hope that you will find today's discussions both informative and proactive.

The District Council is very pleased to be here today, to take the next major step towards having an up to date planning framework in place for our District. This follows our Adoption of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy in December 2010.

At the hearing sessions held earlier this week into the Site Allocations & Policies Plan, I referred in my opening statement to the Council's strong track record of delivery through its positive planning for the District and outlined the key milestones in the adoption and progression of our Plans since 1996.

Moving on to provide some context for our main town - Kidderminster is highlighted in the Adopted Core Strategy as the strategic centre of the District with significant redevelopment and regeneration potential. It is also a town undergoing major economic restructuring and faces a number of challenges. Kidderminster has many significant opportunities for regeneration and development. Since 2009, the District Council, in partnership with key regeneration bodies such as Worcestershire County Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Canal & Rivers Trust, has been progressing the ReWyre Initiative. In terms of delivery, there is a full and proactive programme designed to deliver development and regeneration within Kidderminster.

The Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (or as we know it the KCAAP), as the name suggests provides a targeted approach to development within the central area of Kidderminster. It allocates sites and sets out policies for the specific area contained within the boundaries of the action plan area.

The Council considers it important for Kidderminster to have a specific Area Action Plan to identify areas for change and to help stimulate and deliver regeneration opportunities. The key ambition of both the Council's Officers and its Members is to deliver regeneration and housing to meet the needs of the District in a timely fashion. This next stage of the statutory Development Plan process plays an essential role in pulling these initiatives together.

The Plan provides the clear and firm guidance needed to encourage investment and stimulate regeneration by giving confidence to potential investors. It also provides the basis for co-ordinating the actions of a range of public and private sector partners that have the ability to deliver key projects. However, the KCAAP also allows for the flexibility needed to deal with a variety of possible scenarios for the town's development and to take advantage of wider opportunities for growth that may present themselves.

During the discussions you will hear how the Council strongly believes it has presented both a sound and above all positively prepared Plan, which places a strong emphasis on deliverability, to you Madam for examination.

The Council considers that the policies contained in the plan have been fully informed by the production of a robust and comprehensive evidence base and I ran through a comprehensive list of these during the Site Allocations and Policies Hearing sessions. However, I'd just pick out a few key elements that have played a major role in informing the KCAAP, these being:

- The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment;
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Levels 1 and 2)
- Sequential Testing (Flooding)
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Kidderminster ReWyre Prospectus
- Retail and Commercial Leisure Study
- Sustainability Appraisal
- Urban Design Advice
- Viability Advice
- Churchfields Master Plan SPD
- Bromsgrove Street Site Concept Feasibility Study
- Green Infrastructure Strategy

As I have highlighted earlier in the week, once again Sustainability Appraisal was central to the process of the consideration of alternatives, option selection and policy formulation.

This Plan is the culmination of a number of years work and positive engagement with key stakeholders, local business representatives and local communities. The relatively low level of objections received at its publication stage demonstrates a high level of support for the Action Plan and its strong focus on delivery and regeneration.

Madam, I wish to commend the Plan to you for your consideration.

Rebecca Mayman
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Wyre Forest District Council