

**Wyre Forest District Kidderminster Central Area
Action Plan DPD**

Independent Examination

Regeneration Initiatives Background Paper

October 2012

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Background Paper has been produced to highlight how the regeneration agenda, and its support organisations and programmes, in Wyre Forest is playing an active role in supporting the development of the Local Development Framework and its Development Plan Documents, and helping the delivery and implementation of future development.

2. Regeneration Organisations

- 2.1. The following organisations and partnerships are focused on regeneration and economic prosperity and will have an important role in delivering projects that contribute toward achieving the aims and objectives included in the Development Plan.

2.2. North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR)

- 2.3. The NWEDR service was established in 2011 to deliver Economic Development and Regeneration across the three North Worcestershire Districts of Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Redditch by merging the existing teams provided by each of the Councils. One of key advantages of this was the perceived increased level of influence that a North Worcestershire service could have at a county and regional scale to lever in greater resources.
- 2.4. The NWEDR service is to produce a North Worcestershire Prospectus that will identify and present priority projects in the area. These identified projects are intended to have major impacts of the economic wellbeing of North Worcester and in particular the three towns of Kidderminster, Redditch and Bromsgrove. The promotion and implementation of town centre development opportunities in Kidderminster is certain to be a priority project including the continued delivery and programme of works through the ReWyre Initiative and the State of the Area Debate (see below).
- 2.5. The NWEDR service also has an important relationship with both the Greater Birmingham & Solihull, and the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and looks to influence strategic policy direction and highlight and promote the case for investment across North Worcestershire.
- 2.6. The delivery and implementation of investment is a further key function of the NWEDR service. NWEDR has an important role in bringing together the necessary skills, expertise, and knowledge to work with investors and developers to deliver complex development projects and ensure that investment is managed to deliver the regeneration objectives for the District.

2.7. ReWyre Initiative

- 2.8. The ReWyre Initiative was established in 2009 and aims to promote and develop the prospects of the District and make it an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. ReWyre looks to

bring the public, private and voluntary sectors together to work towards improving the District. As part of ReWyre the Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus document was launched to highlight the town's challenges and opportunities to a wide audience from within and outside the area in order to attract support and investment. It provides a bigger, strategic picture for the town's development and looks to bring the right people together to make projects happen.

- 2.9. The Prospectus highlights four key themes of focus for Kidderminster which are: transport, jobs, homes and communities, and design and environmental quality. Efforts to address these themes are focused on four main Action Areas which present the majority of the strategic development opportunities. These areas are the Town Centre, Comberton Hill, Churchfields, and the former British Sugar Site.
- 2.10. Under the ReWyre Initiative the District Council has worked with partners to deliver key projects on Churchfields, Eastern Gateway and the former British Sugar sites that will help promote and deliver investment in these key regeneration areas. ReWyre will continue to play an important role in promoting regeneration in the District and bringing the right partners together to deliver the development set out through the Development Plan Documents.

2.11. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)

- 2.12. Wyre Forest is a member of both the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and the Worcestershire LEP (WLEP). The LEPs are a partnership between public and private sector organisations that look to set economic priorities for the area and deliver economic growth and regeneration as well as stimulate inward investment, business growth and job creation. LEPs also have the opportunity to gain a greater devolution of power from Central Government and the potential to have greater direct control over the allocation of resources to help deliver growth and regeneration. Increasingly both the GBSLEP and WLEP are working in partnership in regard to Wyre Forest to assure complimentary priorities and interventions are reached.
- 2.13. Wyre Forest District Council has played its part in the development of both of the LEPs and the NWEDR service represents and promotes the interests of the Districts on their various boards, panels and groups. The LEPs are increasingly important regeneration bodies for Wyre Forest and provide the opportunity to get funding and investment into the area and helping to enable development.

2.14. Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP

- 2.15. The GBSLEP is producing a Strategy for Growth which focuses on three 'pillars' – business, people, and place. The business emphasis is on support which enables businesses to start and growth as well as the identification of key employment sectors. The people element is targeted on skills and creating a talented workforce pool. Key to the Place theme is the improvement of connectivity within and outside the LEP and using the physical and environmental assets to support the development of housing and employment land.

- 2.16. In regard to connectivity this means working with Worcestershire County Council align the Local Transport Plan packages with better linkages between Wyre Forest and Birmingham. The LEP is also working in establishing a Local Transport Body to oversee transport investment in the area which to lead to greater funding being available for infrastructure that could benefit Wyre Forest. This includes working with Centro to drive forward a programme of regional rail investment.
- 2.17. In relation to the delivery of housing and employment land, LEP promotes approaches that support their sustainable development and growth. The LEP is looking to conduct an area-wide assessment of the need to provide strategic employment land and the identification of high quality sites, developing an investment plan of priorities.
- 2.18. The LEP can access significant resources and powers from Central Government and shape and influence the spending of departments and agencies. The Growing Places Fund is a prime example of this and through the GBSLEP and WLEP the District Council was able to secure £2.5m via this fund for highway infrastructure to help deliver the redevelopment of the former British Sugar Site. Through the City Deal process the LEP has begun a process of real devolution of power from Central Government which could provide further flexibility to allocate resources to local projects to stimulate development. The Strategy for Growth will be the tool under which the LEP accesses funds and powers in the future and will provide an investment plan for their distribution.

2.19. Worcestershire LEP

- 2.20. The WLEP has set out a vision which looks to create the right economic environment for business and to encourage investment and sustainable employment. In order to achieve this it has put forward a number of objectives to promote Worcestershire as a business destination, enhance businesses access to finance, improve employment and skills levels, and improve planning, development and infrastructure.
- 2.21. The LEP have set out a number of priorities to help meet its aim and objectives. One such priority is to deliver strategic employment sites and related infrastructure and includes the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park. A further priority is to improve access to the motorway network in the north of the county through improvements to A449. This commitment has been highlighted by the LEPs joint funding for highways infrastructure on the former British Sugar Site through the Growing Places Fund as detailed above.

3. Regeneration Programmes

- 3.1. There are a number of programmes in existence that look to support and deliver regeneration in Wyre Forest.

3.2. State of the Area Debate

- 3.3. Between February and March 2012 Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) held the District's first State of the Area Debate (SotAD), a process designed to engage WFDC's partners, and the Wyre Forest community more generally, on how best the Council could support the recovery and regeneration of the local economy. A series of works and debates were held which culminated in a final debate held at a Full Council meeting in March 2012. Discussion was centre around the four key themes of skills, connectivity, town centres, and business.
- 3.4. For each of the themes a number of important ideas were produced which it was viewed would help increase success in these areas. Concerning the regeneration of town centres, the focus of the debates was on Kidderminster and its vitality and economy. In particular there was a desire to see more of an 'urban culture' in the town and a greater mix of uses, not just retail focused, especially concerning the visitor and evening economy. The state of the public realm was a noted concern as was the issue of the ring road. Through the connectivity theme the barrier affect of the ring road was again highlighted, as well as accessibility to the motorway via the A449 and A456.
- 3.5. Using the information gathered through out the SotAD the Council set out a series of priority actions to support the Corporate Priority for Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District. Within this a budget was made available to support the development of a Kidderminster Public Realm Development Framework, support public realm improves in Stourport and Bewdley, the establishment of a Kidderminster Town Team to replace the form Town Centre Partnership, provide business rate relief in town centres, and support a programme of apprenticeships
- 3.6. These actions are being led by the NWEDR team and their delivery will directly support the regeneration of the area and the town centres in particular. These actions will help to implement some of the objectives included in the Development Plan Documents, providing some certainty to the deliverability of the documents.

3.7. Local Development Order

- 3.8. In August 2012 the District Council adopted a Local Development Order (LDO) for the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park which covers the existing businesses and land located along the Stourport Road and Worcester Road in Kidderminster and includes the former British Sugar Site.
- 3.9. The purposes of the LDO designed to simplify the planning process to encourage businesses to locate in the area and for existing businesses to expand their operations. It allows development falling into specific employment use classes to be undertaken without the need for planning permission. The introduction of the Order can also help to reduce costs and provide certainty for businesses within the area.
- 3.10. It is hoped that the LDO will support business growth and the local economy and further develop the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park concept and to support the regeneration of

the wider area.

3.11. Kidderminster Public Real Development Framework

- 3.12. The NWEDR service, on behalf of the District Council, has commissioned a consultant team to develop a Public Real Development Framework (PRDF) for Kidderminster Town Centre. The poor environmental quality of the town, the disjointed connectivity, and lack of public space have all been identified as contributing to holding back the economic potential of the town. Therefore a plan to improve this was deemed necessary to help deliver these improvements.
- 3.13. The PRDF will provide a deliverable public realm strategy that builds upon the regeneration strategy set out through the ReWyre Initiative and through the District Council's Local Development Framework. The PRDF will provide a comprehensive scheme of public realm improvements, provide the basis for future investment and include an implementation plan.
- 3.14. In addition to the PRDF, an initial Phase 1 public realm scheme is set to be delivered in summer/autumn 2013 with the District Council committing capital funding to kick-start this investment. This specific scheme is to be identified during the process of creating the PRDF.