

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy
Performance Board (PPB)

DATE: 26th June 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and
Resources

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment

SUBJECT: Regeneration Working Party Final Report

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a final report on the work of the Regeneration Working Party. The report proposes that the PPB is updated annually on Regeneration Projects through the delivery of a Member regeneration workshop. Video clips which depict the borough's major regeneration projects will also be presented at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) Members welcome the work completed by the Regeneration Working Party;**
- ii) Members agree to the establishment of a Member annual regeneration workshop**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In September 2017, the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property provided a presentation on the development of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan (plus) document. The document identifies a number of 'Key Impact Areas' and regeneration opportunities that will arise following the completion of the Mersey Gateway project and the future 'hand back' of land that is no longer required.

3.2 At the request of the Chair, a Regeneration Working Group has been established to advise and inform Members regarding regeneration projects as they emerge and or develop, and importantly gain Members' views on these projects. The Terms of Reference for this Group are contained in Appendix 1.

3.3 The Working Party comprising Councillors Woolfall, Fry, Nolan, Morley, Sinnott, Wall and Zygadllo, has met on several occasions. The group considered the following Key Impact Areas:

- Runcorn and Runcorn Station Quarter
- The Widnes Waterfront
- Astmoor Business Park
- 3MG Ditton Corridor
- West Runcorn Employment Growth Area
- Halton Lea and the Healthy New Town

Further information on the remaining impact areas of West Bank and Southern Widnes Impact Area will be presented in due course.

A presentation has been provided by the Lead Regeneration Officer for each of the above areas. Each presentation outlined the proposed objectives and intended outcomes resulting from the potential development of each area. The presentations have emphasised the dynamic nature of regeneration and that proposals would need to be worked up in more detail over time.

Runcorn/Runcorn Station Quarter

Starting Point

Members welcomed the development of a Vision document for Runcorn and acknowledged that the station quarter provided a potential catalyst for the regeneration of the wider town centre.

Members were hopeful that capital funding could be allocated to support de-linking work whilst the Silver Jubilee Bridge was closed and considered the various options for delivering improvements to the road links to and from the station.

Members supported the development of a Masterplan for the area given that the arrival at Runcorn station did not encourage visitors to venture beyond the station. A Ward Councillor for the area asked to be kept involved as the Masterplan emerged and it would be useful to provide a separate briefing for the other Ward Councillors. References were made to, at the very least, improvements to signage and pedestrian links to the town centre. The management of car parking was discussed. Members referred to the need for a long-term strategy which balanced the needs of rail users locally who travelled into Liverpool for work, whilst avoiding any negative impact on residential zones in Runcorn Town Centre.

There was also a discussion regarding the complexity of land ownerships in the area. There were also topographical issues to consider.

Overall, Members were content that the Council was taking a long-term and strategic view of the area.

Further Progress since the Working Party has met

Planning permission has been granted and work has commenced on the demolition of unwanted road infrastructure in and around the station.

Preparatory work has commenced in advance of the creation of a new junction to provide better access to the station.

Positive discussions have been taking place with the Combined Authority to seek funding for some elements of the wider scheme including improved sustainable transport links.

A design for a Piazza in front of the station has been developed and costed up. A short DVD illustrating how this will look in the future will be shared with the PPB.

Discussions have been taking place with Network Rail in respect of their landholdings.

3MG Ditton Corridor

Starting Point

Members expressed concern over the existing road access to the train station and the former castaway site. They said it was completely inadequate. Officers explained that with the sale of the part of the former castaway site, road access had been secured from Newstead Road and that there was a longer term ambition to improve the road junction from Speke Road to Hale Road and provide better connectivity.

Members said the area around the Golden Triangle and Cameron's site continues to be an eyesore. However, they said there were small businesses operating from the area and if the use were to change, this would need to be managed and relocations offered.

Members said there had been a lot of commercial traffic accessing and egressing from Stobart through Foundry Lane over the years, which has caused nuisance. Officers explained that the Council has worked with Stobart to secure this as an emergency access going forward and that the Desoto Road would be the main access and egress point for new developments.

Members said there was a lot of opposition to new housing on the greenbelt and one Councillor asked for their objection to any housing on the greenbelt to be recorded.

Further Progress since the working party has met

Proposed Re-Opening of Ditton Station

‘Catchment and Passenger Demand’ modelling has been undertaken. This has considered different scenarios based on an opening of the station in 2021, taking into account Local Growth plan growth and other Liverpool City Region wide growth in the future.

The findings:

The demand figures calculated for Ditton Station are low compared with other local stations, largely due to the limited local catchment and the presence of other stations in the area with overlapping catchments (particularly Hough Green).

The following could be considered to strengthen the likely economic case and should therefore be included in future feasibility work:

- The provision of 2 trains per hour as a minimum;
- Adequate parking provision that is priced to attract park and ride users;
- Working to deliver and even accelerate the local development proposals based on the arrival of the station;
- The provision of a relatively low-cost station (recent examples of basic 2-platform new stations have been delivered for approximately £8m to 10m);
- Consideration of which service(s) to stop to minimise the impact on existing passengers; and
- Discussions with bus operators on how to best serve the new station.

Next steps:

As development work progresses the assumptions and calculations developed for this study can be refined to give a more accurate picture of the likely economic case for the station. This will also need to be supplemented by wider feasibility work, including operational and engineering elements, to give an indication of the likely capital and operating costs.

The tasks for this will include:

- Option development around the station location and design (including technical feasibility)
- An operational review to understand if the station can realistically be served, by which operator(s), and the wider impact this may have on the network (including rolling stock requirements)
- Cost estimates for delivering the new station
- An early indication of the benefits (largely user benefits at this stage) and the expected Value for Money (VfM) case
- Other constraints and impacts and how they can be mitigated (e.g. on the highway network)
- A comprehensive risk register for the scheme
- An investigation into potential funding sources and delivery models
- Stakeholder engagement to inform the study and to gauge the

level of support across the industry

Merseytravel have submitted a request to the Combined Authority to fund this next piece of work. In the event that the CA cannot fund then there will be a discussion between HBC and Merseytravel as without this next piece of work we will not be able to conclude if the re-opening of the station is viable.

Foundry Lane Residential

The Council has aspirations to bring forward underutilised employment areas in Halebank for Housing. These areas include the former Cameron's site, the Golden Triangle, the Tarmac site and other land holdings to the north of Foundry Lane. We know from the Barrett's development there will be issues around flooding, remediation and raising the ground level. PPB members also asked Officers at the meeting in January 2018 to ensure that existing businesses were offered alternative accommodation.

The Council commissioned a '**Flood Risk and Development Feasibility Study**' to consider the entire area proposed for housing to ascertain if the flood risks could be mitigated. The study considered various scenarios for development.

The findings:

From the latest EA flood zone mapping the site was deemed to be at risk from both fluvial and tidal sources, these being from Ditton Brook and the Mersey Estuary respectively. This risk has been further interrogated through recent and approved EA modelling on both of these watercourses.

There are flood defences in place along Ditton Brook although these are graded at a poor or very poor condition and as such cannot be effectively relied upon to protect the development site from flooding. Flood risk, both fluvial and tidal, appears to stem from the bank and/or defences failing around a culvert that passes underneath the railway; north of the site at the top of Harrison Street. Flooding begins here with flow paths moving down Hale Road and through the site.

Land raising options focusing upon raising areas of the sites out of flood risk whilst lowering areas both internally as a sensitivity test and outside the site so as to provide compensatory storage due to the fluvial risk that has been modelled.

Next steps:

Future recommendations of this feasibility study would suggest:

- Consultation with EA on acceptable tidal boundary influences upon flood risk, i.e. a 1% AEP or 50% AEP boundary.
- Consultation regarding land ownership at the development.
- Consideration of changing land use, i.e. a focus on mixed use or industrial.

- Consideration of combined land raising and stilled development where appropriate to be supported by further modelling.
- Accurate potential of developable ground levels as a result of contaminated land issues in the site location.

Concept Design is underway to develop a comprehensive housing layout for the area, incorporating the existing internal road arrangements within the Barratt's site (which currently reach dead ends). This indicative layout will be ready in Summer 2019. Opportunities may present themselves during 2019 for land acquisitions. Stobart have vacated their site on Foundry Lane and are preparing this for sale and the Bridge Timber site on Foundry Lane is also up for sale. We are currently taking advice on values. A meeting took place with Homes England to request support in bringing forward Foundry Lane Residential and we are currently exploring options with them.

Alstom

Alstom have now relocated the Preston facility to Widnes, this completed in July 2018. Only 60 people transferred out of a possible 200, all 60 jobs have are now safeguarded. In addition Alstom have created 139 new jobs at Widnes, since opening the facility in July 2017. Alstom are continually bidding for new contracts and submitted a bid for the HS2 contract on 5 June 2019 and are waiting on announcements from Government. Executive Board agreed to extend Alstom's option over a further 17 acres of the site, which now expires on 30 June 2019. Alstom are hoping to commence the conversion of Hydrogen trains at Widnes in 2021 are currently undertaking feasibility work. The Council has commenced new discussions with Alstom regarding their land requirements going forward.

Liberty Park

Liberty Park is a 25 acre site, remediated in 2017 and is a Development by Stoford and Liberty. The site has planning consent for 478,000 sqft of B1,B2,B8 warehousing. Unit 1 - 107,000 sq. ft. a speculative build, is under construction and due for completion July 2019. Liberty had a marketing launch in February 2019 on site and invited agents from across the region. Liberty are also constructing the road to Ditton Station as part of their road, to allow road across from the West, therefore avoiding the local roads to the East. Once the first unit is let or sold, Liberty intend to commence the construction of the second unit.

Viking Park

Stobart Group have built a new headquarters for the group and energy division at Viking Park.

The construction of the 20,000 sq. ft. facility was completed in August 2018. The Staff relocated from the Foundry Lane facility into the new office in September 2018.

Stobart have undertaken a selection process for a land remediation project at the site and worked with the Council, advertising the opportunity on the Chest to encourage local businesses.

West Runcorn

Starting Point

Members said the existing road to the Port of Weston was no longer suitable for commercial traffic as it passes close to residential properties and causes a nuisance. Officers explained that the plans for this area were at a very early stage and that alternative access were to be considered. Also, that in the past Inovyn had agreed that commercial traffic could use its new road and gain access over the canal, thus minimising the impact on the residential roads.

Further Progress since the Working Party has met

Over the last few months work has continued to develop West Runcorn in terms of the submission of major planning applications, studies about land ownership, transport and opening up access to the ports and allied developments with pertinence to this improvement area.

Planning Applications

The two major planning applications received over the last 18 months are from INOVYN and Vynova at the heart of the chemicals cluster. INOVYN (among a number of transitional planning applications) have submitted an application for 100,000 sq. ft. head office (Runcorn) with all administrative functions brought together literally under one roof. Given the dated and “industrial nature of the buildings in the area this will act as the catalyst for the aesthetic renaissance of the improvement area. This will be a flagship development.

The second major application relates to the transition in operations of Vynova by introducing state of the art plant, machinery and operations within the same footprint currently utilised.

Land Tenure Study

A land tenure study was carried out to identify who owns the land in the area in order to better inform future plans and assist with the land assembly process, where appropriate. INOVYN, Stobarts and Peel are the major landowners in the area this study provides us

with a strong understanding.

Transport Study

A transport study has been commissioned. The aim of the project is to make the most of the potential opportunities created by large port sites in West Runcorn, with direct access to the Manchester Ship Canal and situated close to the existing rail sidings and major highway routes. This brief has been prepared to investigate how the port sites might be developed with associated development of the highway network and the local rail network including improvement of the existing railway sidings and freight loading terminal situated adjacent to Picow Farm Road, south of where it crosses over the A557.

Separate proposals to cover the port improvements, rail access improvements, highway access improvements and an explanation of how they work together. The final outcome of the commission will include a detailed final report with summary pages and recommendations and financial breakdowns referring to plans within the appendices.

Hydrogen

The Regeneration Team has successfully bid for Single Investment Fund development funding to further test the feasibility of using and storing hydrogen.

A very successful Hydrogen Conference with positive TV coverage was held on 5th June at the Heath Business and Technical Park. A presentation is being given to the Employment Learning and Skills PPB which provides further detail, but in summary, the event brought together the key organisations which are fundamental to developing and delivering Hydrogen as an alternative clean energy source.

Widnes Waterfront

Starting Point

The presentation was well received and supportive of the current approach however one Member raised an issue regarding the type of tenure on the Routledge site.

It was noted that this would be a matter to be considered as part of the housing planning application. The site is not within Council's ownership. There was also a discussion about the number of residential units to be provided and were a full planning application be submitted, that the number of units will be considerably less than initial numbers which were based on a pre-2008 housing boom and demand for apartment developments.

Further Progress since the Working Party has met

A planning application has been received to develop the former Routledge site for housing.

The remediation of the Gorse Point site (former Bayer site) has now been completed. A new access road has been created. The Council continues to work with the developer, Marshalls, to attract an end user to the site.

On Johnsons Lane, completed sales and sites under offer total 12.32 acres and are expected to generate capital receipts of £1.82 million. There is one remaining plot of 4.95 acres which is currently in negotiation. Once this is complete, all the land will have been sold, which is a significant achievement.

Astmoor

Starting Point

Compared to the wider employment offer in East Runcorn, Astmoor Industrial Estate has underperformed for a number of years, largely due in part to a concentration of dated commercial premises, compounded by a poorly defined public realm and layout. Astmoor struggles to meet modern industrial and business needs but does benefit from being a designated Business Improvement District (BID).

The construction of the Mersey Gateway Crossing, was made possible through the acquisition and clearance of a central area of Astmoor, and the relocation of a number of businesses. Approximately seven hectares of residual project land will be handed back to the Council in the coming months following completion of the Mersey Gateway. Working in partnership with, and complementing the Astmoor BID, 5 key objectives guide the single Masterplan and Delivery Strategy:

Objectives:

1. A connected Estate
2. Meeting the demands of modern business
3. Improve the image and profile of Astmoor
4. A safe and attractive environment
5. Business led and inclusive growth

Intended Outputs:

1. An uplift in business rate receipts of £2million per year
2. Almost 1million sq. ft. of additional commercial floor space
3. 2,000 new jobs and safeguarding many more
4. £2.52million capital land receipt

Members were broadly content with the 'direction of travel' at Astmoor, acknowledging that the area presented a real opportunity to generate some future business rates uplift.

Some aspects of the future development of the area were dependent upon the outcome of the Business Improvement District vote. This was completed at the end of February 2018.

Further Progress since the Working Party has met

1. BID Ballot 31st March 2018

BID status was renewed for a further five years in March 2018 by a vote of businesses and landlords.

The successful ballot secured additional private investment of £750,000 for Astmoor for the period April 2018 up to March 2023, and secured a communication and engagement path that might not otherwise exist.

2. Appointment of Consultants

In November 2018, a consortium of consultants was appointed by the Council to deliver a single 5 year Masterplan and Delivery Strategy.

3. Initial Stakeholder Consultation

At the MG Working Party Stakeholder Workshop on 12 December 2018 the Council presented its Vision & Objectives for the regeneration of Astmoor. More structured presentations were made to Executive Board Members, the Astmoor BID Executive Board, and the Astmoor BID Landlords Subgroup comprising four of Astmoor's key landlords.

4. Baseline Report

In February 2019 BDP completed and presented a draft Masterplan report to the Council's Regeneration Team for comment, including draft 'Concept Statements' for the 5 handback sites.

5. Masterplan Consultation Events

In March 2019, 2 drop in consultations events were held that

presented the Masterplan proposals via 5 detailed Information Boards to existing businesses on Astmoor and residents of the adjoining Wards. BDP also presented the proposals at the Astmoor BID AGM. In addition, a questionnaire was available at each of the consultation events, and remained online for a period of four weeks.

6. Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme

On 1 April 2019 the pilot Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme was launched. Expressions of interest are being sought from businesses/developers and landlords that are undertaking developments which complement the Halton Plus Regeneration Plan, and who may be eligible for discretionary business rate relief. The scheme is limited to a period of 5 years, 2019 - 2024 and will principally seek to boost private sector investment in high quality commercial buildings.

7. Handback Land

Expressions of interest are being requested and collated by Property Services. Only one site at Goddard Road has been returned to the Council, but the remainder is expected to be returned by the end of Summer 2019. Discussions are ongoing with Property Services as to how the land will be marketed and disposed of.

8. Busway

In 2018 Highways secured grant funding of £1.5million to upgrade the Busway. This includes widening of the footpaths, a cycle way, improved landscaping, repositioning of new bus shelters and new traffic lights at each of the junctions where the busway crosses access roads. Completion expected July 2019.

9. Masterplan and Delivery Strategy

BDP are currently working on the Preferred Masterplan and Draft Delivery Report, a draft Masterplan was submitted at the end of May 2019. A Delivery Workshop for HBC and invited stakeholders will follow.

10. Inclusive Growth

The BID, already promotes upskilling of the Astmoor workforce as well as encouraging several health initiatives. This will continue with support from HEP, along with the Council's Health Improvement team. The BID will lead on estate wide programmes by promoting a 'Healthy Astmoor', that will include mental health awareness, smoking cessation, health checks for the over 40s and the appointment of Workplace Health Champions. In partnership with the Council this will be expanded to include health checks for the under 40s, musculoskeletal masterclasses, guided walks at lunchtime and outside break areas.

Halton Lea Healthy New Town

Starting Point

Members had received a presentation regarding the designation of Halton Lea as one of 10 areas nationally to be named a Healthy New Town. It was reported that compared with other areas nationally, which were 'new' Brownfield or Greenfield sites Halton's proposals focused on the regeneration of an existing area. The area had a number of strengths on which to draw, but some of the assets were not being maximised. Members were advised that some of the principles that had been used in other areas such as Castlefields could be applied but it would be important to focus on 'people' and health matters in tandem with the physical transformation of the area. It was reported that minimal funding had been made available and, therefore, the programme had initially started slowly. Nevertheless, the designation had served to strengthen relationships between health and regeneration professionals. Some funding had been received to prepare a Master Plan for the area, which would serve a framework for a longer-term vision for the area, but would also guide investment decisions. Members commented on the need to include wards in adjoining areas as part of the development and the need to ensure that any investment did not compromise the quality of the environment for local residents. Members felt that the area had the key ingredients needed to support a vibrant area but they needed bringing together in a coordinated way. It was important to ensure that the Hospital Health and Well-being campus linked to the regeneration of the wider area.

Further Progress since the Working Party has met

Approval was received from the Council's Executive Board to submit an Expression of Interest, for Halton Lea, to the Combined Authority for the Liverpool City Region's Town Centres' Commission. Submissions are currently being assessed but the focus is on supporting community schemes which increase footfall within town centres.

Based in premises adjacent to the marketing suite at Runcorn Shopping City, a Youth Zone has been established in partnership with Runcorn Shopping City, Cheshire Police, Halton Borough Council, Riverside College and several Third Sector group. Private sector companies have proactively supported the initiative by providing and fitting electrical and heating equipment to bring back into use underused space.

Following completion of the Masterplan last year, a delivery plan is being prepared which will be used to prioritise schemes, undertake

a Cost Benefit Analysis, and identify potential matching funding sources. There is also a review of the governance structures in respect of schemes in and around the Halton Lea area. There are a number of interlinked projects being developed and it is suggested that working groups and reporting arrangements will need to be streamlined accordingly. Recommendations will be presented to the Members Implementation Group for consideration

NEXT STEPS

- 3.4 Members will appreciate that the development of major regeneration projects does not happen overnight. This can be a dynamic and fast changing environment, where some schemes may be accelerated depending upon commercial opportunities, and it is important that Members are made aware of any developments. Subsequently, it is proposed that a Member annual Regeneration Workshop is provided, the purpose of which would be to share and update Members on various projects, but would also provide an opportunity to gather Members' views on schemes as they are developed.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no immediate policy implications arising from this report.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus document emphasise that regeneration goes beyond the construction of buildings and transforming places but should seek to add value for our local communities; we work with our schools and college to boost the qualifications and skills of our young people, but will drive the growth of apprenticeships to boost the local economy

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

During the next 10 years a number of sites contained in the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus document will be unlocked, leading to further job creation in the borough. The regeneration team will work with colleagues in Employment Learning and Skills to support local people in benefitting from these opportunities.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus document identifies Halton Lea Healthy New Town as a key priority. However, the Plan also promotes green routes and an emphasis on clean and healthy access routes to the borough's major employment sites

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus document will promote the quality of the environment and will ensure that security by design is factored into any future development opportunities

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan seeks to bring back into use approximately 20 hectares of residual project land.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no immediate risks outlined in this report.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues in this report.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
None		