

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet

Bromsgrove Town Centre 2040 Vision

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sue Baxter and Cllr Karen May
Portfolio Holders Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ostap Paparega
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Wards Affected	Sanders Park Bromsgrove central
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Run & grow a successful business• Affordable & sustainable homes• Sustainability Communities which are safe, well-maintained & green
Key Decision: No	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet:-

- 1) endorse the Bromsgrove 2040 Strategy (appendix 1) in principle and to ask officers with bringing forward proposals for key development sites.**

2. BACKGROUND

Following the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on town centres across England, NWedR (on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council) appointed Burrell Foley Fischer (BFF) to produce the Bromsgrove 2040 Vision. The brief for the work was to deliver a vision for the town centre up to 2040. The vision needs to be adaptable and resilient to change, one that will support the future development of the area and provide the right level of services to meet the needs of both residents and business population. The vision will be important to provide the context for the statutory plan making process.

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BFF were appointed via a competitive tender to set out the vision, identify the levers for change, and to propose an implementation strategy to bring the vision into life. The first stage of their work was to understand and set out the strategic context of the town centre. Following on from this initial stage the document provides evidence and analysis on key issues such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and relationship with high street vacancy rates (including recent data), a review of challenges in terms of access and connectivity through the town centre and identifies the regeneration of specific sites that have been vacant or underused for some time.

The analysis shows that pre-Covid-19 there were a small number of units within the town centre that were vacant (9), however, the pandemic made the situation worse with Bromsgrove experiencing a doubling of vacancies, in line with national trends. More recent data taken in Feb 2023 finds that vacancy rates in the town centre has grown with 24 units found vacant. These are privately owned and managed units.

The current vision that Bromsgrove District Council's (BDC) Centres Strategy 2017-2020 has adopted for its town centre is set out in its economic priorities, this seeks to diversify and strengthen the offer within the town centre to meet changing customer requirements. The objectives are based on implementing key structural interventions aimed at improving the town centre's vitality, vibrancy, attractiveness and competitiveness, in the following ways:

- Focus on residential uses, with an emphasis on high quality housing
- Provision of high-quality flexible workspaces, including co-working and co-location, building on Bromsgrove's attractiveness for start-ups and micro-enterprises
- Introduce and expand the range of uses that encourage and increase 'dwell' time, such as food & beverage and leisure
- Provision of multi-functional workspaces with a specific focus on the emerging creative industries sector, bringing arts, culture and tech together

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- Deliver public realm & green infrastructure with multi-purpose use to enable 'meanwhile' / 'pop-up' activities in key town centre locations

3. VISION OVERVIEW

3.1 The 2040 Vision provides a unique place-making opportunity to set an ambitious, yet deliverable, vision which delivers major social, economic, and environmental benefits and strengthens Bromsgrove Town Centre's viability, vibrancy, and attractiveness. The document is founded on the need to regenerate and the opportunity to redevelop major unused or underused sites which will attract people and investment to the town centre, these sites are:

1. Windsor Street Site – recommended for residential development and associated public realm improvements (following asbestos removal, demolition and remediation of the site).

2. Churchfields Car Park – recommended for residential development on an underused car park

3. School Drive site (former Dolphin Centre) – recommended for residential development

4. Former Market Hall Site – recommended for commercial and cultural uses and associated public realm improvements.

5. Stourbridge Road Site – recommended for either a commercial or mixed residential led development with a commercial offer

3.2 The Vision considers pedestrian access through the high street, highlighting where Bromsgrove currently has limited infrastructure to support walking and cycling journeys, and the subsequent effect of this on car use for short journeys.

The document examines car parking use and trends and provides data on current car parking capacity. Analysis is provided on car park usage in the town centre which identifies two sites, Churchfields Multistorey

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(which is now closed), and School Drive which is significantly underutilised (below 25% occupancy). In terms of the sites earmarked in the Vision document as development sites, which reduce the overall parking provision by 32% (456 spaces), BFF view is that this would not impact on the overall parking capacity because they would not expect occupiers of surrounding residential dwellings to use the car parks. Furthermore, even if a small percentage of people did use the car parks, there is still surplus capacity in the town centre. The detailed parking analysis, which analysed parking data to establish how many cars use each car park and for how long, against the number of spaces available in that car park and actual total hours once could use the car park. (This also includes season ticket holders and pay as you go ticket sales). The results from this analysis is provided in the table below:

Bromsgrove Car Park	Frequency of use
Churchfields Multistorey	5.9%
Recreation Road South (Asda)	27.0%
North Bromsgrove	19.7%
School Drive	20.7%
New Road	55.1%
Parkside	53.0%
Stourbridge Road	0.7%
St John. Street	49.9%
Windsor St.	57.0%
Parkside Offices	No data (permitted)

- 3.3 There is a review of planned public realm interventions to improve connections across the town centre, with the intention to create an improved sense of continuity and cohesion. The suggested improvements include replacement of pedestrian paving, resurfacing and realignment of highways, decluttering and rationalisation of street furniture, parking reconfiguration, augmentation of access routes and the selective planting of trees, shrubs, and perennial plants.
- 3.4 A final element of the document concerns access to sustainable transport, and the improvements needed to walking and cycling routes. The Vision provides a review of the key access and connections in the town centre from a walking, cycling, bus and rail connection perspective. BFF identify walking and cycling improvements as outlined

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in the A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme which in partnership with Worcestershire County Council could deliver upgrade of existing traffic infrastructure, path widening initiatives and additional and clearer signage to encourage walking and cycling. The Vision also considers vehicular access emphasising the need to address traffic congestion on the Market Street vehicular link. In relation to strategic transport BFF suggest a wider transport study which assesses the future transport infrastructure needed to support development in the Bromsgrove district. In particular, emphasis is given to the understanding how new residential developments will affect transport and parking needs and how this can be managed through both road and transport improvements.

- 3.6 The document pulls together key factors that impact on the look, feel and overall experience of the Bromsgrove town centre by its users at present, and sets out an implementation plan (covered in the later sections of the Vision) covering development of major sites, public realm interventions and infill sites in the town centre. This vision is principally delivered through the key intervention sites and associated public realm accessibility improvements to ensure that Bromsgrove Town Centre is fit for purpose over the next 20 years.

Delivery

- 3.7 This 2040 Vision is important now and over the next two decades, it will inform the council's Local Plan preparation and the emerging Bromsgrove Centres Strategy. NWedR will work closely with the Bromsgrove Town Centres Manager and all other council departments to deliver the objectives of this Vision.
- 3.8 The major development sites will be delivered in several stages. The first stage (January 2022 – March 2025) includes the re-development of the former Market Hall site for flexible workspace, community and food & beverage uses and site clearance and remediation works on Windsor Street site to unlock the site for residential use. These two projects are part of the Levelling Up Fund programme. The delivery of the Levelling Up Fund Programme is overseen by a Programme Board, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council.
- 3.9 A Project Board has been set up for the redevelopment of the School Drive site (former Dolphin Centre) and Windsor Street site. The Board

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is chaired by the Chief Executive. The projects are at feasibility stage with work being undertaken on site options appraisals, concept designs and viability appraisals.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The works on the former Market Hall and Windsor Street sites are funded by the Levelling Up Fund grant (£14.6m) and a £1.6m match funding from Bromsgrove District Council.
- 4.2 The Council has also applied for Brownfield Site Combined Authority for the clearance of the Windsor Street site. Funding for the development of new sites, as per the 2040 vision will need third party intervention/funding for delivery, which is now far more difficult to attract in the present financial climate. The Council must also assess how it will access over £1.5m of funding available through the now disbanded GBSLEP and possibly a further £78m of funding. Full business cases will be required to access these funds.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Specific legal advice is being commissioned for each project.

6. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 6.1 This project supports the following Strategic Purposes and Priorities:

Strategic Purposes: Run & grow a successful business; Affordable & sustainable homes; Communities which are safe, well-maintained and green

Priorities: Economic development and regeneration; a balanced housing market

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Climate Change Implications

- 6.2 Through the redevelopment of the sites, energy efficiency measures and Low and Zero Carbon technologies will be explored and may be introduced with a view to reduce operational energy consumption and the associated carbon emissions targets. Specific solutions and targets will be explored as the designs are progressed as well as a commitment to achieving a minimum BREEAM 'very good' rating on suitable sites.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken when the individual projects are commenced.

Operational Implications

- 7.2 The operational implications of each of the individual projects will be outlined in the respective proposals/reports.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 As part of the governance and reporting requirements a risk register and issues log has been (or will be) produced for each project.

9. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Bromsgrove 2040 Vision (Appendix 1)
- Bromsgrove Town Centres Strategy
- Bromsgrove District Plan – Town Centre Extracts
- GBSLEP – Town and Local Centres Framework

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10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	BDC Head of Planning	20/06/2023
Lead Director / Head of Service	Head of NWedR	20/06/2023
Financial Services	BDC S151 Officer – Peter Carpenter	20/06/2023
Legal Services	BDC Legal – Claire Green	20/06/2023