



Enterprise & Business Scrutiny Panel

2 December 2014

Report title	City Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) – Draft Plan Consultation Stage	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson Economic Regeneration and Prosperity	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Tim Johnson, Education and Enterprise	
Originating service	Planning	
Accountable employee(s)	Simon Latham	Planning Officer
	Tel	01902 555639
	Email	simon.latham@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be considered by	Cabinet	10 December 2014

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the Draft City Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and refer comments to Cabinet.

Recommendations for noting:

The Panel is asked to note:

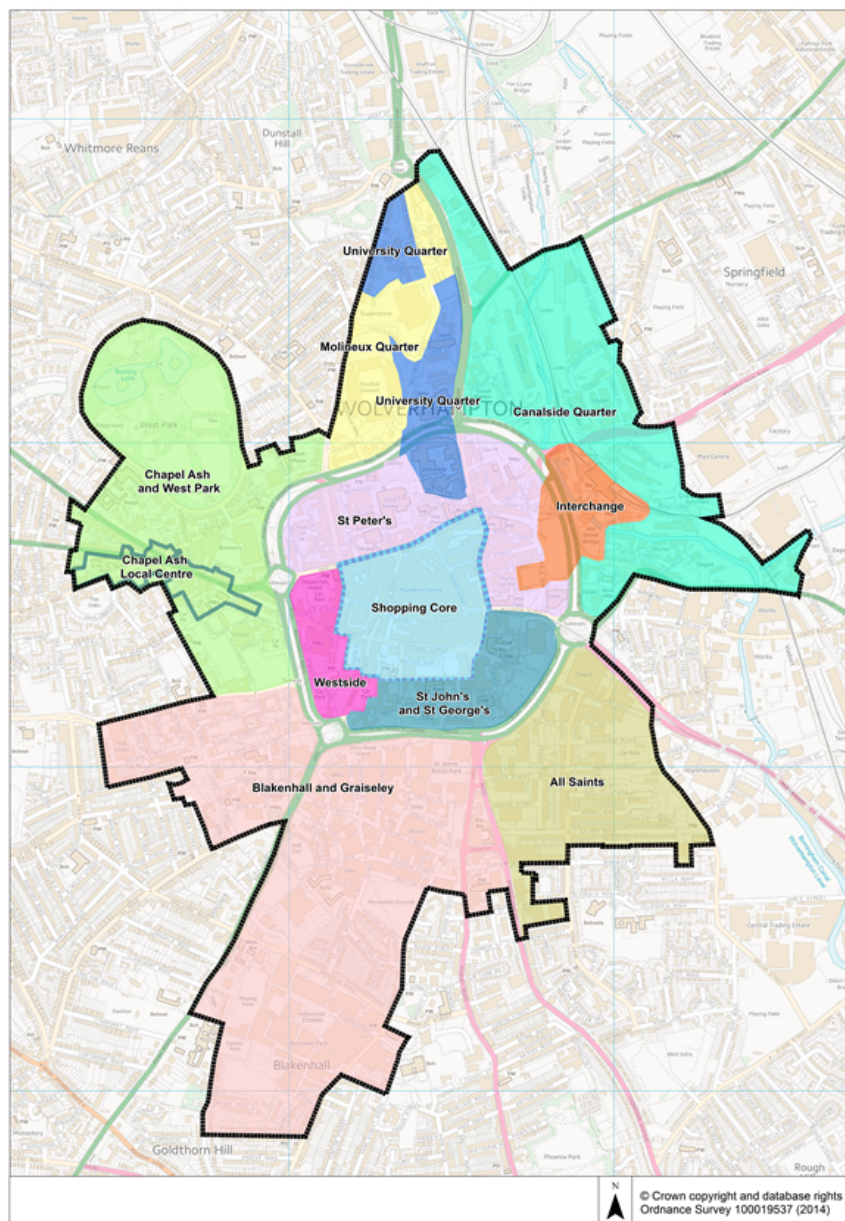
1. This item is being considered as pre-decision scrutiny and will therefore not be available to call-in once a decision is made by the Executive.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Panel of the progress made with the City Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) and to outline the key elements of the draft Plan. The Plan is programmed for consideration by Cabinet on 10th December 2014. The Draft Plan document is available electronically as a background paper to this report and hard copies are available for Members on request from the report author (Simon Latham ext. 5639).

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The City Centre AAP will be a statutory planning document covering the period up to 2026 as part of the City's Local Plan. The AAP covers the area within the city centre ring road and the neighbourhoods on its immediate periphery and is split into Character Areas, as shown on the Plan 1 below.



Plan 1 – City Centre AAP Boundary and Character Areas

- 2.2 The AAP is one of the key mechanisms to support the on-going regeneration of the City Centre. It will deliver certainty for the private sector to make investment decisions, an up-to-date legal basis for planning decisions and appeals, and will inform project pipeline identification for future funding bids, such as the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).
- 2.3 The AAP is the final piece in the jigsaw of detailed AAPs covering the City's 'regeneration spine', made up of i54, the Stafford Road Corridor, the City Centre and Bilston Corridor. The AAP area includes the key City Centre development opportunities including Westside, Southside, Canalside Quarter and Interchange and within these areas will identify sites for development, key infrastructure proposals and areas for consolidation, enhancement and environmental improvements.
- 2.4 The draft Plan builds on progress made in recent years with the adoption of the Black Country Core Strategy (2011) and the City Centre Prospectus (2012) and the on-going City Centre Soft Market Testing exercise led by the Commercial Development Team. It has been informed by extensive community, business and stakeholder engagement consultation which has taken place over the last year, including the City Centre AAP Issues & Options consultation in December 2013 – January 2014 and one-to-one meetings with key stakeholders and community groups. These consultations did not raise any specific equalities issues. The draft Plan is also based on an up-to-date evidence base, including a City Centre Retail Update Study and a City Centre Development Sites Study.
- 2.5 The draft Plan consultation will give the community a formal opportunity to shape the future of their area and the Plan is likely to generate significant interest from a range of organisations, businesses and members of the public. The purpose of the draft Plan stage is to encourage comment on the detail of policies and proposals, including capturing equalities information, in order to shape the Publication Plan to be produced in May/June 2015.

3.0 The draft Plan – key issues

- 3.1 The draft plan will reflect the following key messages informed by the robust, market-based and up-to-date evidence base:

Future Growth and Uses

- The City Centre has strong potential for growth in the short to medium term, with a wide range of development opportunities to deliver regeneration.
- The Plan should respond to changing shopping patterns and the impact of the recession by encouraging a wider range of activity including a far stronger leisure offer, additional Grade A office accommodation and a significant quantity of new housing. For shopping uses, the priority should be to consolidate and reconfigure the existing retail core of the Mander Centre, Wulfrun Centre, Dudley St and Victoria St and then plan for limited growth.

- The overall approach should be one of promoting mixed-use development and provide flexibility to respond to changing market conditions, but some areas should be prioritised for particular uses to ensure that key outputs are delivered – for example ensuring a minimum level of new housing and offices.

Car Parking

- Whilst currently the city centre has broadly the right quantity and balance of car parking spaces, the location, type, accessibility, signage and quality of parking spaces need to be improved, linked to future regeneration projects.
- Therefore, current levels of car parking should be maintained, with a focus on short stay parking within the ring road, comprising accessible, well-signed, higher density and better quality parking befitting of a city centre. A Car Parking Strategy is in the process of being commissioned which will also inform parking delivery mechanisms.

Historic Character

- The city centre has a rich and distinctive character but peripheral areas are in need of regeneration, including bringing key listed buildings back into use
- A number of sites with local character and distinctiveness need to be designated to protect local character in All Saints, Blakenhall and Graiseley

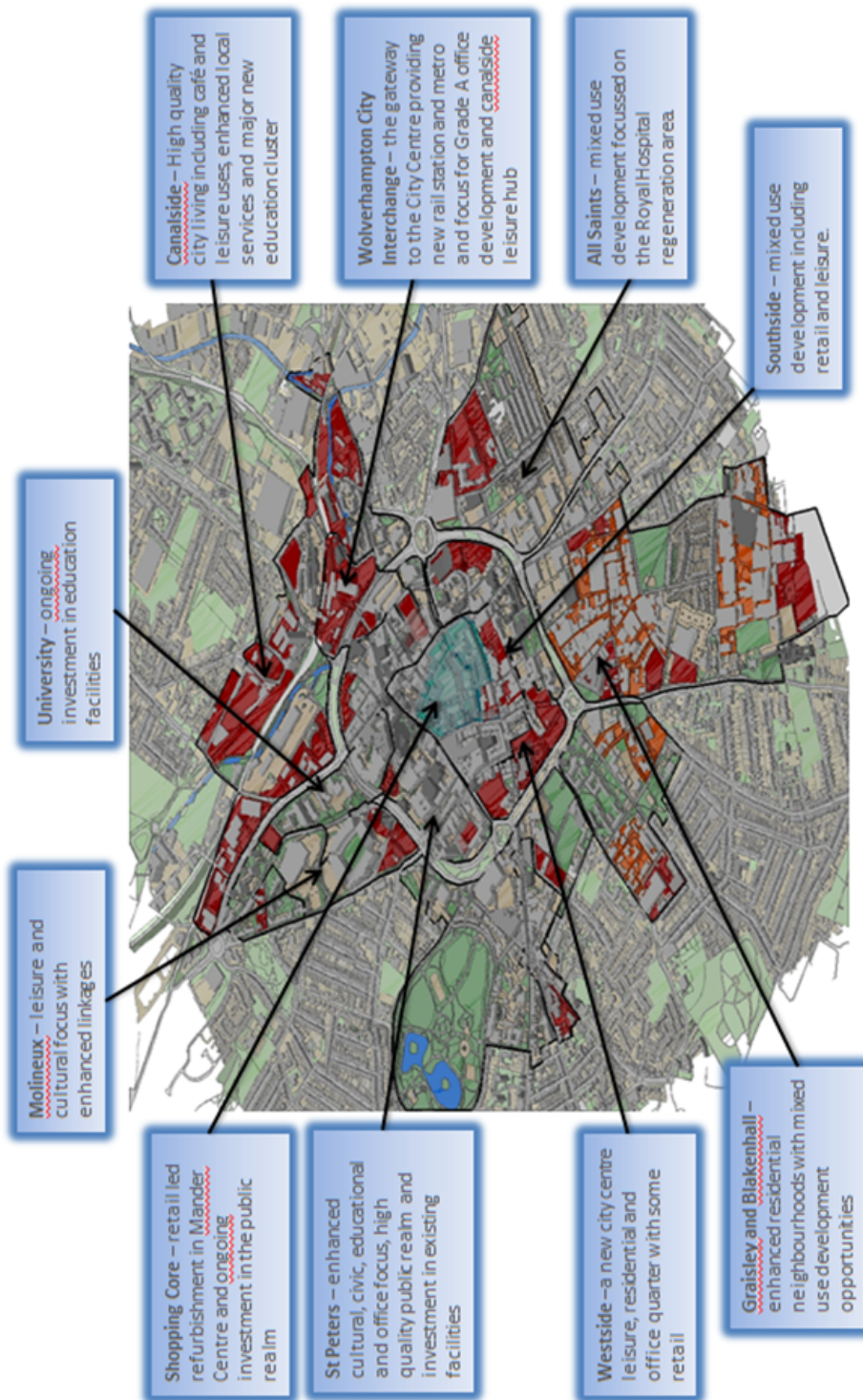
4.0 Objectives of the draft Plan

4.1 The main aim is to provide a positive and flexible plan to secure investment, regeneration and jobs in the City Centre. This will be achieved by focussing on the following objectives, under three 'key drivers':

1. Delivering a more Prosperous and Cohesive City Centre
 - Diversifying the City Centre economy - consolidating the retail function, reducing vacancy rates and encouraging more leisure, office, residential and education uses
 - Recognising the significance of the city centre as a focus for visitor and cultural activity and maximising the benefits from existing and future visitor and cultural assets
2. Creating Sustainable Communities
 - Supporting existing communities and looking to grow the resident population
3. Transforming and Protecting the Environment
 - Improving accessibility, connectivity and public realm
 - Preserving historic and local character
 - Improving green infrastructure

5.0 The strategy

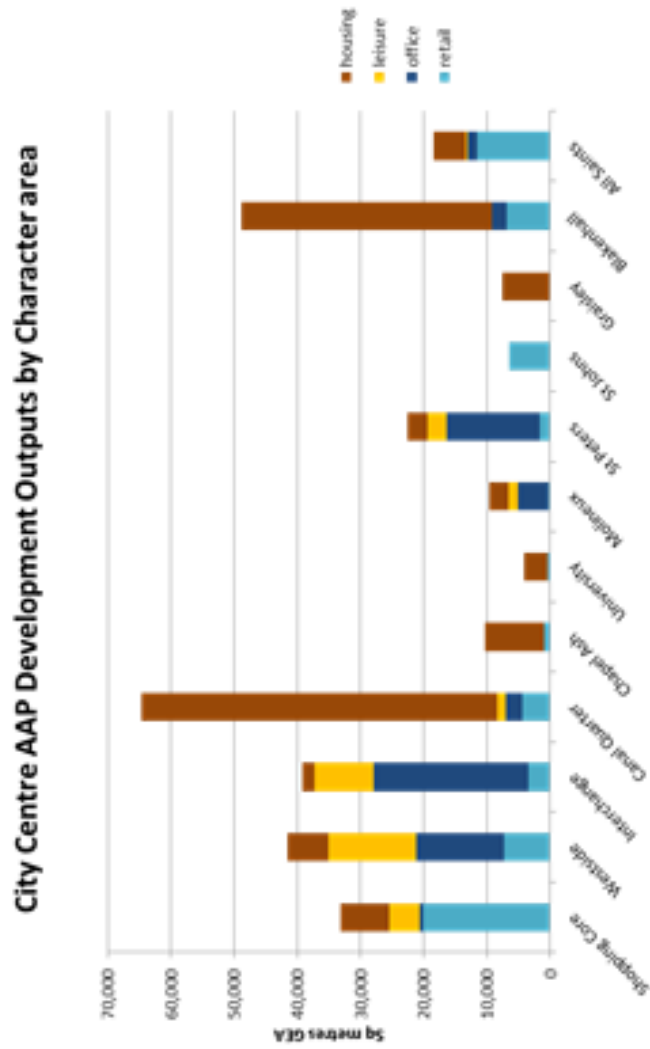
5.1 Building on the evidence and objectives the proposed spatial strategy and development outputs are shown on Plan 2 and Fig. 1 and are summarised below:



© Crown copyright and database rights Ordnance Survey 100019537 (2014)

Plan 2 – Spatial Strategy

The Spatial Strategy and Development sites - outputs



Wolverhampton. Making it happen

Fig 1 - Development Outputs

- Large scale office and commercial leisure with modernised retail offer within:
 - The Shopping Core – retail-led refurbishment in Mander Centre and some expansion in Southside
 - Westside – the opportunity to create a new leisure, residential and possible office development
 - Interchange – new Rail and Metro Station and a new Grade A office-led Quarter
- City living and education focus in:
 - Canalside
 - University
- Enhanced visitor and cultural focus in:
 - St Peters
 - Molineux
- Enhanced residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods in:
 - Chapel Ash & West Park
 - St Johns & St Georges
 - Blakenhall & Graiseley
 - All Saints

6.0 Structure of draft Plan document

6.1 The draft Plan document has a similar structure to the adopted AAPs for the Stafford Road Corridor and Bilston Corridor comprising a Vision, a set of thematic Policies to guide regeneration, and details on the proposals for the Character Areas & Development Opportunities. There are also sections on Infrastructure, Delivery & Monitoring and information about the public consultation and next steps.

7.0 Next Steps

7.1 The draft Plan is scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on 10th December to approve the document for public consultation from December 2014 – February 2015. This will build on on-going stakeholder and community engagement, and will include:

- AAP documents and information about how to give feedback being provided on the council website
- Public consultation events in January and February 2015, including a public exhibition and community and stakeholder meetings

7.2 Following public consultation further adjustments to the Plan will take place prior to publication, submission, public examination and adoption of the Plan by mid-2016.

8.0 Financial implications

8.1 The AAP is one of the key mechanisms to support on-going financial investment, economic growth and regeneration in the City Centre. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any staffing costs will be met from the approved Planning budget 2014/15. [Finance Code: JR/04112014/N].

9.0 Legal implications

- 9.1 Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare, publish and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS) including Local Development Documents. In accordance with Section 17 of the 2004 Act the AAP will become a Local Development Document which forms part of the Local Plan for Wolverhampton.
- 9.2 The procedure to be followed to prepare the AAP is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/767) which came into force on 6 April 2012 and revoked the 2004 Regulations (SI 2004/2204).
- 9.3 The 2012 Regulations are now being used to guide the preparation of the AAP. It is worth noting that the Regulations (Regulation 38) provide a 'saving provision' to ensure that work done by the Local Planning Authority under the 2004 Regulations are treated as 'done' under the corresponding provision of the 2012 Regulations. [Legal Code: RB/04112014/Z].

10.0 Equalities implications

- 10.1 A screening has been carried out for equalities implications. The draft Plan itself is not envisaged to have any specific equalities implications, but this will be tested during the public consultation on the draft Plan, which will include engagement opportunities with local people with protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010).
- 10.2 The AAP is at a strategic level to attract investment in the city and brings together a number of projects and proposals from other service areas. For example, the AAP reflects transport priorities and the city centre public realm improvements work. Although these in themselves are not expected to have any equalities implications there will be an opportunity for all levels of comments to be received, both detailed and strategic.
- 10.3 When the detail of these projects are developed and the projects actually delivered, they will need to ensure that equality issues are fully considered in their detailed design and implementation.
- 10.4 As stated, this report is supported by an Equality Analysis which has not highlighted the potential for any equalities issues that would prevent Councillors from approving it. It is important to note, however, that the basis of outline approval will be conditional on future consultation work generally and in particular in relation to equalities, supporting this initial view.
- 10.5 The results of engagement work will be included at the Submission Stage of the Plan's preparation. In this way Councillors' final approval can be obtained via a process that has demonstrated "due regard" to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty as created by the Equality Act 2010.

11.0 Environmental implications

- 11.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been carried out throughout the plan preparation process, including on the draft Plan. SA is a process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed policies and proposals to ensure sustainability issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage. The overall aim of the SA process is to inform and influence the development of the AAP and maximise its sustainability value.

12.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 12.1 The policies and proposals in the AAP will apply to any Council land and property in the AAP area which is subject to a development proposal.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

City Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) Draft Plan

The Draft Plan document is available electronically as a background paper to this report and hard copies are available for Members on request from the report author (Simon Latham ext. 5639).