

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION MARCH 2009: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

1. Introduction

This document reports on the results of the second stage of consultation conducted by Colin Buchanan (CB) as part of the consultation process relating to the Quarry Bank Local Centre Regeneration Strategy. The aim of the consultation was to receive feedback on the ideas for regeneration and to explore further possible measures for successful regeneration of the Local Centre.

The study is being undertaken by CB on behalf of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. The aim of the strategy is to provide an implementation plan to deliver social, economic and environmental improvements, in accordance with the objectives set out in the Council's relevant policies and strategies. The strategy also aims to ensure that local needs and the interests of specific stakeholders and the wider community of Quarry Bank Local Centre are fully taken into account.

This report summarises the key conclusions relating to the ideas for regeneration that were presented to local groups and officers at the workshops held on 16th March 2009. This information will be used to review and amend the design concepts to form a preferred option, which will later undergo consultation as part of the Draft Regeneration Strategy in early summer 2009.

2. Key conclusions emerging from the Local Groups' Workshop

Apart from the feedback received on the environmental enhancements of the proposed options, the local groups consultation also identified a range of wider issues that were deemed to be vital to getting the regeneration strategy to work. The key issues identified were:

High Street as Community focus

A strong message that came out of the consultation was the need to reinstate the High Street as the focus of the local community. This role of the High Street has been challenged because of the recent loss/downsizing of community services along the High Street. It was identified that measures to re-introduce these services, wherever feasible, will be key to the regeneration of the study area.

Accessibility to Quarry Bank Local Centre

Key to successful performance of a regeneration strategy for Quarry Bank Local Centre is ease of vehicular and pedestrian access to the facilities. It was identified that while it is important to correct footway widths where it is currently too narrow, excessive widening of footways (as in Option 2) might make an impact on the traffic flow and cause congestion. Suggestions were also made to investigate possibilities of rear access to shops for loading in order to free the space from the High Street.

Supporting services

Participants were of the view that any environmental enhancements to the study area will need to be well complemented with measures to ensure its appropriate maintenance and perception of safety. Vandalism in the area and especially around the community centre was mentioned as a major concern. The participants were of the opinion that any environmental improvements to the area will create more potential spaces for anti-social behaviour unless sufficient policing is provided to create a safer environment. Also, concerns were raised about illegal parking along the High Street which is left unchecked because of insufficient enforcement. The need to clean up the High Street more frequently was also raised.

Environmental Improvements

There was general agreement on the proposal to create a new public space near the Community Centre and further suggestions were made to link this visually with another new space near the former Library. It was also suggested that the Council's support in the form of grants to improve shop-fronts and shop signage will help the businesses perform better and make the High Street a welcoming place.

3. Key Conclusions emerging from the Officials' Workshop

The key conclusions drawn from the comments made during the session are summarised as follows:

Funding sources

The group helped identify possible options for funding the various improvements proposed in the regeneration plans. These included:

- Shop-front grants such as the one by Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership
- Money from Local Transport Plan (LTP) for public transport improvements along the Bus Showcase Route
- Smart Routes funding

Environmental Improvements

There was general agreement on the proposal to create new public spaces that focuses near the key community services ie. the community centre, former library and school. However the participants expressed concern over the proposal to widen footways significantly (as in Option 2), since this might have an impact on movement of public transport, HGVs and emergency services. This might need a sensitive approach in order to get the right balance between making space for pedestrians and allowing ease of traffic movement. It was also noted that widening footways will help reduce air pollution at residential properties by creating a wider buffer between the carriageway and residential units.

Other Suggestions

The following additional action points were suggested that would help the regeneration of Quarry Bank Local Centre.

- Improve/optimize junction signals layout with Pedmore Road.
- CENTRO to investigate real time bus information for the bus shelters.
- Improve pedestrian/cycle links to/from surrounding area.
- Identify key opportunity sites and opportunity areas for improvement/development that could also contribute towards funding for other improvements along the High Street.
- LTP funding opportunities for improvements along Bus Showcase Route. Interchanges and public transport information to be provided at key locations.
- Gradient of the hill is an issue for accessibility and a possible solution would be to reduce bus spacing from 400m.

4. Key conclusions emerging from the Public Exhibition

Following is a summary of the key issues that were raised during the Public Exhibition:

Vitality of the High Street

A clear message that came through during this session was that maintaining and improving the vitality of the High Street is key to its success. It clearly identified that the need to attract more footfall on the High Street should be a major focus of the Regeneration Strategy. Locals are keen to have more shops and local services such as post office, banks, estate offices on the High Street. Comments were also made about exploring possibilities to encourage retail chains to set up their outlets at the High Street.

Movement

Another major concern that locals have expressed during the event is the ease of movement of vehicles and pedestrians. The need to introduce more crossing provisions along the High Street and measures to reduce congestion was highlighted. People felt that the proposal to widen footways significantly throughout (as in Option 2) might cause more congestion along the High Street and hence is not preferred.

Quality of public space

While there were various suggestions for the location of new public spaces, the need for good quality public spaces that are well maintained was clearly agreed upon. The need for pedestrian amenities such as good seating was also highlighted.

5. Next steps

The results of the consultation have provided a better understanding of the aspirations of locals and stakeholders for Quarry Bank Local Centre and will guide the consultants in developing a preferred strategy for regeneration. This will be included in the Draft Regeneration Strategy which will undergo consultation in summer 2009.

6. Where can I get more information?

This summary report, and the full reports of the workshop and public exhibition, are available on the project website www.quarrybank-regeneration.com.

The website will be updated from time to time with details of the next consultation exercise. Any other queries or comments may be sent by email to consultation@cbuchanan.co.uk or by post to:

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