

Cabinet – 22 April 2009

Willenhall: the plan: 'The Vision'

Portfolio:	Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader Regeneration
Service:	Regeneration: Development and Delivery
Wards:	Willenhall South and Short Heath
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 'Willenhall: the plan', is the brand name for the Willenhall Statutory Area Action Plan (AAP). It is intended that this will make the document more accessible to the wider public, as such it will be referred to as 'Willenhall: the plan' throughout this report.
- 1.2 'Willenhall: the plan' is being prepared by the Council in line with Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12 of the Local Development Framework (LDF), the successor to the Unitary Development Plan. The Plan will help guide investment and promote regeneration in central Willenhall. A point has been reached in the process where a key decision is required on the vision, objectives and spatial framework for the Plan before it is subject to a statutory 6 week period of public consultation, in line with regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development (England) Regulations, 2004).
- 1.3 It should be noted that this spatial framework will inform and be captured within the Joint Core Strategy being developed for the Black Country, which aims to set out the long-term Vision (up to 2026) and land use policies for the Black Country.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorse the recommendation of the Willenhall Project Reference Group to approve the 'Vision' document for 'Willenhall: the plan', including the draft vision, objectives and spatial plan as a basis for statutory public consultation.
- 2.2 That cabinet endorses the need to sustain / create the right mix of housing and employment land and jobs to maintain a sustainable economic base for the borough, which should become a key consideration of both the Willenhall 'Vision' and throughout the borough through the Joint Core Strategy.

- 2.3 That Cabinet receive a further report on the final submission 'Willenhall: the plan' document to a future meeting before the need to secure final approval by Council.

3. Background information

- 3.1 Willenhall is one of the projects identified within the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), which was approved by Cabinet on 22 March 2006. The SRF identified a number of key transformational projects to lead the regeneration of the Borough. In October 2006 Cabinet identified Willenhall as a priority within the first tranche of these regeneration projects. The SRF projects are a partnership between the Council, Walsall Housing group, key stakeholders such as the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the local community.
- 3.2 Cabinet also agreed that the governance of these projects should be managed through the establishment of Project Reference Groups (PRGs), made up of ward councillors and key community representatives and stakeholders. The initial role of the PRG's has been to oversee the preparation of a Framework Study to guide the regeneration of that area.
- 3.3 As part of that process consultants LDA Design completed an Issues Report for Willenhall in 2007. This considered a number of options for the future of Willenhall. The report also recommended that a statutory Area Action Plan (AAP) be developed to enable the redevelopment of the area over the next 10 – 15 years. The principle reason being that in providing a phased, comprehensive and sustainable approach to regeneration there would almost certainly be the need to consider significant land use change that would not currently be compatible with the policies of the current adopted Unitary Development Plan. On 16th January 2008, Cabinet endorsed a recommendation to support the principle of an AAP being developed for the Willenhall Regeneration area, including the retention of section 106 monies and other benefits from planning obligations arising from development to support the future regeneration activity within the AAP boundary.
- 3.4 The intention to prepare an AAP for Willenhall was included in the Councils Local Development Scheme (LDS) adopted in February 2008. Consultants LDA Design were appointed in September 2008 to continue work in developing the AAP (Willenhall: the plan). To date, the first phase of producing 'Willenhall: the plan' has been completed, comprising the gathering of baseline information; also, to comply with Section 39 (2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report has been developed, which will inform the policies of 'Willenhall: the plan'.
- 3.5 The first main element of 'Willenhall the plan' has been completed, the 'Vision', which sets out the key issues influencing the Plan, including the options to address them and a draft spatial framework, for subsequent evaluation. A summary of the vision is attached as **Appendix 1**. On 2 April 2009 the Willenhall PRG approved this stage of the 'Willenhall: the plan'. Should Cabinet endorse the document it will then be subject to a statutory 6 week period of consultation with relevant stakeholders, businesses and the local community.
- 3.6 It should be recognised that this work is looking to establish the longer term vision for Willenhall and to inform the wider visioning for the borough and indeed the Black Country through the Joint Core Strategy, up to 2026. This is vital if we

are to prepare and indeed enable, where appropriate the changes required by both businesses and residents, if we are to create sustainable communities with access to local jobs.

3.7 This may require in the longer term the restructuring and indeed the change of use / relocation of some businesses, together with infrastructure improvements and improved transportation. This re-structuring will be guided by the Joint Core Strategy, which is currently under development. Recognition must be given to sustaining our employer base and subsequently jobs for local people. Where proposals may include the potential for land use change, strategies will be required to enable the successful and affordable movement of businesses to appropriate new locations or to sustain them where they are in harmony with their neighbours before any change can be implemented.

3.8 The approach taken to the vision focuses on translating the strong strategic direction given by a combination of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), the draft Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the SA/SEA into a vision, objectives and spatial framework for future development in Willenhall. The draft Vision document has been completed in line with the following principles:

- The overall aim of 'Willenhall: the plan' is the delivery of homes, in line with housing objectives of the JCS. Following a comprehensive consultation process the objectives of the JCS have been approved.
- The Vision document confirms the intention for 'Willenhall: the plan' to make provision for 2,500 – 3,000 new dwellings up to 2026 and for sufficient land, buildings and infrastructure to deliver a total employment number at least one job per new dwelling equivalent as headline, sustainable outcomes of the Plan.
- The 'Vision' document suggests a preferred spatial distribution of these new dwellings across the area and the key features of their mix of housing types, densities and tenure in accordance with the Plans vision and objectives.
- The Vision document will seek to revise land use allocations within its boundary, the document will supercede the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policy framework, but until approval by the Secretary of State of 'Willenhall: the plan' the UDP framework will remain relevant as the up-to-date development plan.
- There will be an emphasis on Willenhall centre, key sites around the centre and Ashmore Lake. There will be the need to explore options for change in the Ashmore Lake area in relation to new housing development and support facilities such as education provision.
- A strategy will be required to look at how where necessary the issues associated with land use change are taken into account and how we are to keep local employers effectively trading either in Willenhall or elsewhere in the borough in appropriate locations without effecting their long term viability.

- The report also indicates the preferred blend of employment types and their distribution across the area and will recognise the need to sustain employment opportunities within the area.
- The report highlights a series of options for how these housing and employment objectives and targets can be achieved through a combination of supporting infrastructure investment, preferred delivery agencies, development phasing and sources of funding.
- There are clear connections between 'Willenhall: the plan' and other key programmes including Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the Primary Capital Programme. In particular, the rebuilding of Pool Hayes School is proposed as part of BSF wave 6a. It would be prudent in considering how the new school is to be delivered to explore the locational options. The current school campus is not particularly accessible located within a residential area with its playing fields somewhat dislocated from the main school buildings. Should any options appraisal suggest that an alternative location be promoted then it would be appropriate for that to be pursued as part of this plan process.

3.9 In addition, alongside 'Willenhall: the Council is obliged to publish an Initial Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA), plan' to inform its policies and proposals. The SA/SEA provides a sustainability framework with measurable objectives against which the sustainability performance of the options identified in the Plan have been evaluated as one important means of shaping the Plan as it goes forward

3.10 Should cabinet support the draft Vision it will then be subject to a 6 week period of statutory public consultation before work on the final submission 'Willenhall the plan' document commences. This document will again be subject to Cabinet approval before being reported to Council. The current timetable for the JCS involves submission of the strategy in February 2010. Following submission of the JCS 'Willenhall: the plan' will be submitted to the Secretary of State for determination in May 2010.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

4.1.1 A sum of £190,000 has been approved to assist with the development of the Willenhall AAP. Funding is being provided for this work from:

- Walsall Housing Group (whg) £14,789.00
- VIEW Fund £ 20,000
- The Council's Regeneration Walsall, Capital Programme £155,211.00

4.1.2 A budget for the proposed 'Examination in Public' will need to be earmarked from the Regeneration Capital Programme in 2010 / 11.

4.1.3 A budget will need to be identified in the longer term to facilitate, develop and then implement the required strategies to either protect or relocate any businesses effected by any agreed proposals arising from this work.

4.2 Legal:

- 4.2.1 'Willenhall: the plan', is a statutory Planning document to be completed in line with the government's Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 4.2.2 Prior to submission to the Secretary of State, a statutory 'Examination in Public' of the proposed 'Willenhall: the plan' will be required, which will involve the commissioning of legal representation.

4.3 Staffing:

- 4.3.1 Consultants LDA Design has been commissioned and are working with Regeneration Officers to complete the 'Willenhall: the plan'.

5. Citizen impact

'Willenhall: the plan' will provide for the comprehensive regeneration of the area and address locally identified 'needs' for social, environmental and economic improvement which can be met through a comprehensive regeneration programme. Individual citizens and community bodies have been and will continue to be engaged throughout the process of the Plan's development.

6. Community safety

In conjunction with the Supplementary Planning Document 'Designing Walsall', 'Willenhall: the plan' will provide for new buildings and estate layouts to incorporate Secured by Design Standards, to ensure that crime is designed out of new developments.

7. Environmental impact

'Willenhall: the plan' covers a comprehensive range of themes of which environmental impacts are integral. There is a clear expectation of high quality design for new buildings and the public realm, whilst making the most of the natural assets of the area. The regeneration strategy will help to transform the environment of the area by redeveloping vacant sites, creating high quality new dwellings, removing eyesores and improving open spaces.

- 7.2 A key principle of 'Willenhall: the plan' is to create an environmentally sustainable, low carbon community, in line with national policy.
- 7.3 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) will be prepared alongside the Plan to inform its policies and proposals. In line with Government Guidance the SA also aims to meet the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and will ensure that social, economic and environmental considerations are taken into account in an integrated way.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk 1: GOWM (the Secretary of State) does not approve Willenhall: the plan:

'Willenhall: the plan' has to be submitted to the Secretary of State (via Government Office) for approval. The Secretary of State will be concerned to ensure the council promotes a realistic and deliverable programme and if not there is a risk that the Secretary of State may find the document unsound.

8.2 Risk 2: Delays in the Black Country Core Strategy jeopardise 'Willenhall: the plan':

The dates for the key milestones of the Black Country Core Strategy have been delayed, reflecting changes to the LDF process (which introduced a new stage of consultation, in addition to the issues and uncertainty introduced by the RSS Phase 2 Revisions). The changes have been agreed between officers of the four BC Authorities but the timetable remains very tight and there are significant risks. This has also impacted on 'Willenhall: the plan', and timescales have been put back accordingly.

8.3 Risk 3: The community is not continually engaged and kept informed of progress reducing local ownership of the project:

The Willenhall PRG and local community has already been engaged in developing 'Willenhall: the plan' from the outset. This will continue through all phases of the development of the Plan and its implementation.

8.4 Risk 4: The business community are not continually engaged and kept informed of progress resulting in mixed messages:

Businesses will be effectively engaged throughout the next stages of the process and where appropriate strategies will need to be developed to respond to any changes that effect them, including land use or developments nearby etc.

9. Equality implications

9.1 The preparation of the Plan will need to be as open and inclusive as possible, to ensure that the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community are taken into account. One way in which this is being ensured is through the implementation of the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) at an early stage of the process. Government guidance recommends that the sustainability appraisal Plan document should include an Equality Impact Assessment.

9.2 The SA includes in its objectives, baseline information, key issues and framework the themes of equality and diversity and of health and well-being, which should ensure that the identification and assessment of equality and health impacts will be properly incorporated into the Plan.

10. Consultation

10.1 A Project Reference Group was formed from representation from the local community, key stakeholders and ward members. The role of the group is as an overall project steering group for 'Willenhall: the plan' and associated development issues within Willenhall.

- 10.2 Regular updates on the Plan have been given to Willenhall Local Neighbourhood Partnership (LNP). A written report is prepared for each LNP meeting and presentations have been made at key stages in the development of the Plan. The Chair of the LNP is also represented on the Willenhall PRG.
- 10.3 Initial consultation events were held in October and November 2008. Further consultation has recently been held in March 2009. These events have successfully sought the opinions of the local community, partners, stakeholders, developer and landowners.
- 10.4 Following Cabinet approval the draft Plan will be subject to the statutory 6 week period of public consultation. Consultation will be in the form of public exhibitions throughout Willenhall which will be widely advertised through local media, workshops and individual meetings with businesses, documents published on Walsall Councils website and letters to all stakeholders, partners and landowners. Other consultation will be completed before the final document is submitted to the Secretary of State for approval, this will include workshops with partners, landowners and members of the public, further presentations to Cabinet and the Willenhall Project Reference Group (PRG).

Background papers

1. Strategic Regeneration Framework Delivery Priorities – Cabinet Report 18 October 2006
2. District Centre Strategic Regeneration Framework – Cabinet Report 22 March 2006
3. The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, 2004.
4. Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning, June 2008
5. Walsall Council – Walsall Local Development Framework, Local Development Scheme – Draft Submission March 2009.
6. Walsall Council – Willenhall AAP - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

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Tim Johnson
Executive Director
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7 April 2009



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7 April 2009

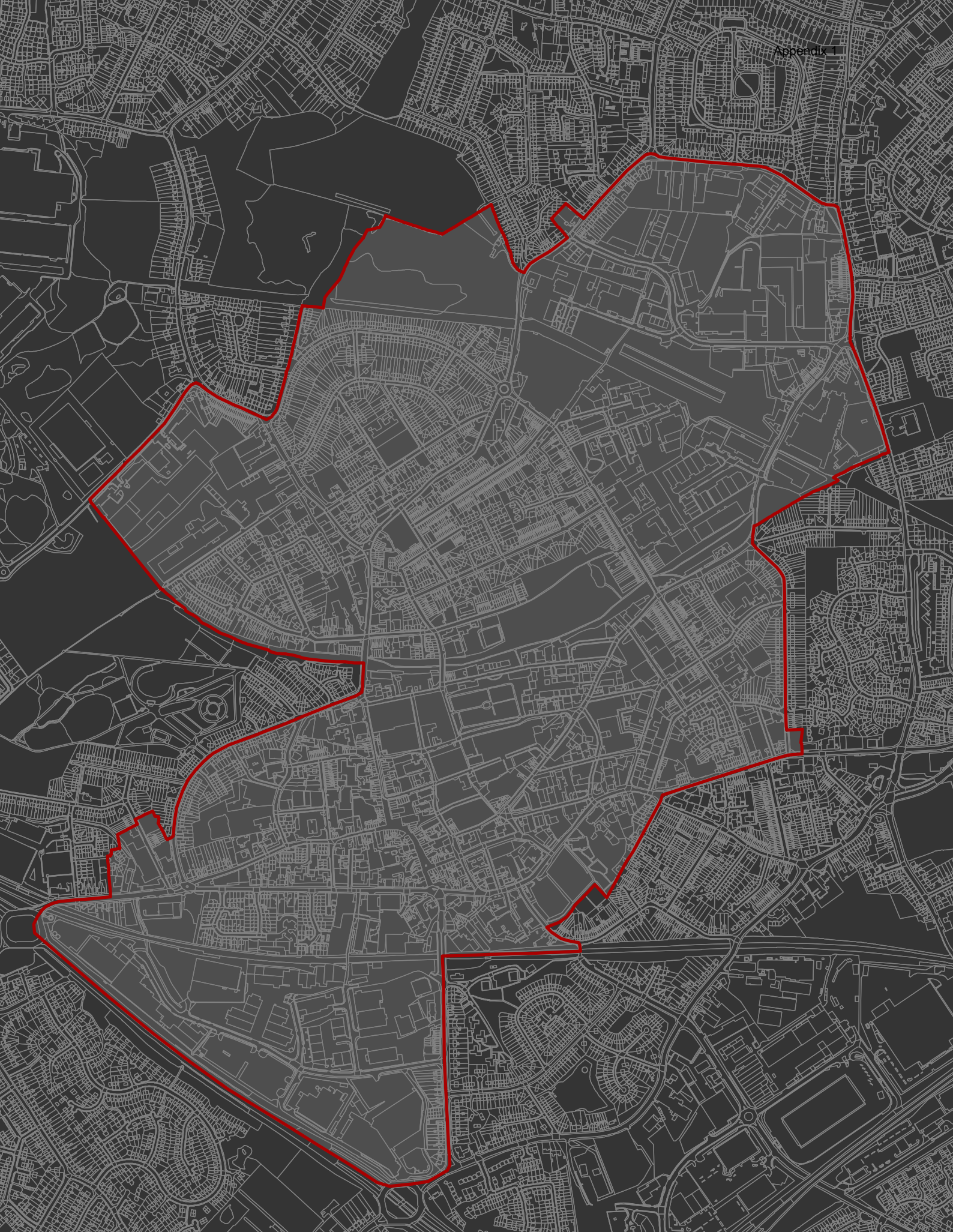
LDĀ DESIGN

Willenhall:

the plan, the vision



extract of second draft - april 2009



A clearly established vision for the future of a place will generate confidence within the local community, interest potential investors, set common objectives and align agendas to build and maintain momentum

Foreword

Why vision is important?

Historically, people have settled in locations where the features of the land and its natural resources provided them with shelter, movement and easy trade. Over time, settlements evolve and adapt to changing circumstances and often many of the natural qualities that originally shaped the place as a desirable location are lost under layers of development and infrastructure. The resultant picture is confusing; places are hard to distinguish; the pattern of settlement is difficult to read.

The visioning process provides an opportunity to rediscover the properties of a place and the strong link between physical nature and the way in which it is built. Realisation of this can reveal where change is needed and what adjustments should be made. A physical understanding of the place and its original relationship to the natural setting provides the basis on which decisions of future development and community revitalisation can be made.

The need for a whole-town vision is now widely considered an essential element of planning for the future. Government planning policy states that authorities should “set a clear vision for the future pattern of development with a clear objective for achieving that vision and strategies

for delivery and implementation”. Beyond this, a clearly established vision for the future of a place will generate confidence within the local community, increase participation and retention of young people, interest potential investors, set common objectives aligning multiple agendas, and help build momentum.

The vision for Willenhall, known as “Willenhall: The Plan, the vision” is published as part of the Willenhall Area Action Plan and will form part of the Walsall Local Development Framework.

The purpose of this document is to present an understanding of the issues that will shape the development of the Area Action Plan and provide a vision for the town, demonstrating its potential.



Salus Populi Suprema Lex
 "The welfare of the people is the highest law"
 (Willenhall town motto)

Understanding the Place

The Community

Identity

Willenhall, "workshop to the world" is famous for its lock and key manufacturing industry, which began in the 16th Century in small workshops and sheds behind homes. The industry was vital to the growth and prosperity of the town in the 18th Century and the UK division of Yale Locks was founded in Willenhall in 1929. Curry combs, door bolts, and other hardware items were also produced in Willenhall until the late 20th Century when many factories were closed down.

Willenhall is a market town which has evolved not through ancient charter, but due to its popularity as a place of trade. The market is still held three days a week in the town centre and draws shoppers from Willenhall and surrounding towns.

Population

The AAP Area has a small population of approximately 1600 residents. This is due to the majority of land within the AAP boundary being occupied by industrial businesses. On land where there is housing, the average residential density is less than 10 dwellings per hectare, which is low compared to current design standards.

The civic pride and community spirit of Willenhall is strong and is reflected in municipal buildings such as the Town Hall (now the Library) built in 1866, public baths built in 1938, and the opening of Willenhall Memorial Park in 1922 honouring World War I soldiers.

Employment

Willenhall has an above local average unemployment rate and low income. A substantial proportion of residents are employed in the manufacturing sector and there is a high representation of hand skilled trades, machine operatives, and elementary occupations. Willenhall has a long history of industrial and manufacturing trades, specifically in the lock-manufacturing trade. Currently, many long-term, manufacturing businesses serve local and regional markets, and are loyal to the town. The preference of most of these businesses will be to remain close to their customers, suppliers, and /or workforce.

Under-represented employment categories include financial services, business, public administration and education.



Safety/Crime

Willenhall has a medium level of crime overall, however incidents of burglary of commercial buildings are relatively high. Concerns reported by residents focus on criminal damage, vandalism, litter and youth anti-social behaviour, issues that are common to many communities.

Housing

The supply of flats and terraced accommodation in Willenhall is higher than the Walsall average and house prices are on average higher than other western parts of the Borough. Affordability of housing is becoming an increasing problem for some local buyers.

Education

There are three primary schools but no secondary schools in the AAP Area. A number of primary schools recently underwent a series of mergers and a continuing investment is expected. Surrounding secondary schools are at capacity in terms of places for the foreseeable future. The Local Education Authority will therefore need to consider the increase in demand for places as a result of development in Willenhall through the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme and other strategic developments. There are also three Youth Clubs and one private nursery.

Health

There are two GP surgeries, two dental surgeries, two opticians, and four pharmacies in the AAP Area. The Gomer Street GP surgery is currently looking to increase its capacity. Accessibility

to healthcare facilities from the north of the town is poor. The nearest A&E services are in Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Local residents have lower 'good health' and higher 'long term illness' rates than the UK average.

The key issues:

- Willenhall has a strong identity linked to its industrial heritage. However, as industry declines, the town is at risk of weakened links to the past.
- Willenhall's residential density is less than rodph, compared to current urban design standards of 35dph.
- Willenhall has a relatively high unemployment rate, with financial, business, public administration and education employers being particularly underrepresented.
- Willenhall has a medium level of crime overall, however incidents of burglary of commercial buildings are relatively high.
- Affordable housing is an increasing problem for local buyers.
- Primary and secondary schools are currently at capacity for the foreseeable future. New development plans will need to account for increased capacity.
- Two existing GP surgeries may need expanded facilities in order to have capacity to take on patients from new residential development.

Willenhall will be the address of choice in the Black Country for those wanting great houses, good schools, local shops, competitive business premises and accessible green spaces and convenient public transport services

A vision for Willenhall

The objectives

1) To create a new cohesive community by delivering up to 3,000 new homes

Housing will provide for families and high end property owners as well as first time buyers, key workers, low income households, continuing care and retirement communities. House types, size and tenure will be mixed to encourage a diverse community that is able to accommodate households through all stages of their lives. Affordable housing will be distributed across the town. A mix of shared equity and rented accommodation will be provided in equal measure.

2) To transform local economic performance by delivering up to 3,000 new jobs

Employment will be integrated with the public transport network and mixed with other neighbourhood uses across the town through innovative building forms to create a high quality environment that attracts businesses to the town. Logistics and B8 uses will be concentrated close to the strategic road network with direct access on to routes to avoid quiet residential areas. 'High tech' infrastructure and business hubs will be introduced to facilitate home working and live / work accommodation. New railway links will

connect Willenhall with adjacent neighbouring towns and Birmingham and walking and cycle routes will link Willenhall with the Strategic Development Area to the south in Darlaston.

3) To create a vibrant town centre by delivering new retail units and cultural facilities

Improved public spaces, streets and alleyways will create attractive safe routes through the town centre. Strong physical links to the new Morrison's store will improve both pedestrian and vehicular movement to the eastern side of the town centre. The new station and Little London community centre will create two key destinations to the south and north of the town centre encouraging pedestrian movement through the Market Place. Historic buildings and landmarks will be restored and enhanced to preserve Willenhall's historic identity, providing a rich mix of architectural styles. New buildings and public realm improvements will be of a high quality to reflect the historic environment in which they sit.

Improved appearance of market stalls and shop fronts will unify the retail core of the town. Initiatives to support and encourage existing and new independent retailers will be fully endorsed to ensure the town centre remains a popular destination. Convenient drop off points and short stay car parking will make the town centre, train station and public transport accessible to all.

High quality new housing, improved restaurants, pubs and new entertainment venues will support Willenhall's evening economy making the town centre a safe destination both in the day and evening. Reuse of some of the existing historic buildings for community uses will breathe new life into underused buildings. Strong physical links from the town centre will extend to existing residential areas supporting local services and complimenting built form. Housing close to public transportation hubs will encourage people to live and work in the town centre supporting local retailers and businesses.

4) To transform accessibility in and out of Willenhall by delivering major new public transport services

A new station, transport hub and park and ride facilities will benefit new and existing communities and link a number of major centres and help to alleviate east west movement by road which is difficult and unreliable.

Frequent, high quality, low emission buses will serve the town. Bus stops will be located along strategic routes within a five minute walk of the majority of neighbourhoods and existing local centres. Real time information and signal priority will be installed as appropriate to ensure that public transport becomes the cheapest and quickest way for people to travel.

Better ways for people to move around the town will be provided. Walking and cycling will be made convenient and public transport will be of the highest standard in order to create an environment that is safe, clean and less congested.

A network of pedestrian and cycle routes will link amenities and destinations. Important streets will be improved to create an attractive and safe walking and cycle environment. New cycle routes will be introduced to create a comprehensive network through Willenhall.

Car dependency will be reduced across the town through initiatives such as a managed car pool club, a car sharing scheme, cycle hire and repair facilities and providing each new house with a bicycle and storage facility.

5) To transform the perception of the town of potential investors by delivering high quality, accessible schools, health facilities and green spaces

The vision will deliver a diverse range of land uses that complement not compete with those already existing in the town.

Secondary and primary school provision and nursery facilities will be enhanced in line with the phasing of new development to serve different development areas as the town grows. Schools will be within walking distance of neighbourhood and local centres and within close proximity to other community facilities and amenities.

Neighbourhood and local centres will integrate public transport, community uses, primary care services and leisure facilities. Existing businesses within the town centre will be supported and new shops that meet current retail requirements and needs will be provided.

Existing green infrastructure will be improved and increased to provide convenient areas of amenity and encourage greater biodiversity within the town. Sensitive ecological areas will be retained to enable habitats and species to be enhanced and protected. A network of 'green' corridors will link new and existing green spaces and provide access to different types of amenity which will include greens, squares, allotments, formal and informal play areas, health trails and playing pitches.

Planting and new water bodies will be introduced in areas where there is currently limited wildlife. Existing watercourses will be enhanced to create environments with greater biodiversity and encourage new habitats.

6) To help mitigate and adapt to climate change

The town will be designed to facilitate a low carbon lifestyle with homes next to jobs to make it easier for inhabitants to live sustainably.

Car dependency will be reduced through the delivery of high quality buses, in advance of development to serve new and existing neighbourhoods. A network of pedestrian and cycle routes will link amenities and destinations and streets will be designed to create an attractive and safe walking and cycling environment. A new station, transport hub, park and ride facility will benefit new and existing communities.

Buildings will be designed to achieve high levels of sustainability. Designs will minimise energy responding first and foremost to the microclimate of the town. Buildings will be constructed to reduce heat energy loss and prevent the transfer of heat out of buildings through high levels of thermal mass and air tightness. Energy requirements will be further reduced through the use of combined heat and power (CHP), ground source heat pumps, solar thermal water heating, roof mounted wind turbines and solar power. Opportunities exist to identify demonstration projects within the town to educate the public and exceed sustainability standards.

Opportunities for reducing waste to landfill are being explored to reduce road transportation, improve hygiene and enhance health and safety standards. All gardens will be provided with a composting bin and land for communal composting will be set aside. Social enterprises that promote the reuse of commercial and domestic 'by-products' will actively be encouraged to locate in the town.

The production of food locally to reduce food miles will be encouraged through the provision of allotments and community orchards. Private gardens will be adequately sized to ensure that residents can grow a small amount of fruit and vegetables. Businesses that sell local produce will be actively encouraged to locate in the town centre.

Water will be conserved across the site through the use of sustainable urban drainage systems for water supply and storm water drainage. The topography of the site and the location of existing watercourses and water bodies will be used to form a network of swales, gulleys and rills that feed into balancing water bodies. Buildings will be fitted with facilities for grey water recycling and run off from buildings will be reduced through the use of green roofs and water storage tanks.



Development Areas

Town centre

A revived historic town centre focused around the market with a high quality physical environment and a prosperous day and evening economy

Principles for the town centre are:

- Increased residential development to assist with improving footfall and generating an evening economy
- Improved physical links and connections to Morrisons especially Union Street and Angel Passage.
- The reuse of vacant historic buildings as retail, business and residential premises.
- The creation of a new market square and destination in the town centre.
- Improved junction arrangements on New Road / Walsall Street to facilitate pedestrian movement into the town centre from the south.
- Provision of new mixed use development surrounding Morrisons car park, fronting on to Walsall Street.
- Provision of short term convenience parking to assist with increasing footfall and accessibility into the town centre.
- High density housing, some apartment living.
- The creation of a 'green' pedestrian / cycle route from Gipsy Lane in Darlaston to Morrisons

West End

A new western gateway and neighbourhood centre

Principles for the West End are:

- The creation of a gateway into the town from the west.
- Provision of mixed use development along key frontages to serve local neighbourhoods.
- Medium density housing.
- The creation of a 'green' link following the Tame watercourse.
- The creation of a landmark building on the corner of Wolverhampton Street and New Road.

Longacres

A business park focused on logistics businesses with good links to the town centre

Principles for Longacres are:

- Improved access from The Keyway.
- Logistics businesses located along the periphery of The Keyway.
- Contemporary architecture set within an ecological park.
- The creation of a green roof strategy for all buildings to reduce environmental impacts.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle access to the new station and town centre.

Station

A transport hub that creates an exciting gateway to the town centre

Principles for the station are:

- Location of a new station building, transport hub and mixed use development on New Road / Bilson Street.
- Refurbishment of the Malt House to create a landmark for the town centre.
- Provision of ‘park and ride, hail, cycle’ facility south of the station.
- High density housing, some apartment living

Little London

A northern gateway to the town centre with a focus on community uses

Principles for Little London are:

- Refurbishment of existing historic buildings for community uses.
- Link new development with The Greenway.
- High density housing, some apartment living.
- Enhance the historic ‘fine grain’ street pattern of the area.

East End

A new neighbourhood where people can live and work

Principles for the East End are:

- High density housing fronting on to strategic routes.
- Retention and refurbishment of listed and locally listed buildings to create live / work dwellings, studios and start up units.
- Retention of the ‘fine grain’ historic character of the area.

Ashmore Lake

A new community with efficient public transportation, a new neighbourhood centre, open spaces and high quality housing

Principles for Ashmore Lake are:

- Mix of housing densities to create a balanced community.
- Location of a new neighbourhood centre on the edge of the neighbourhood to benefit existing areas and provide local shops and community facilities.
- Provision of a new linear park and water body to create a central spine linking the new neighbourhood with surrounding built form.
- Provision of new schools located next to key cycle routes and open spaces.
- Sufficient private and public open space suitable for family living.
- Provision of rapid and efficient public transportation to link the neighbourhood with the town centre and transport hub.

Delivery Plan

The means by which the AAP vision and objectives will be achieved will be set out in its Delivery Plan, an integral component of the final spatial strategy. Its primary task will be to demonstrate to investors that its spatial framework, planning policies and proposals are credible and robust to encourage and enable the right initiatives in the right place at the right time.

In respect of the process of the adoption of the AAP, this component is also crucial to the AAP being considered sound following its examination, and in particular to it being regarded as effective, i.e. deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored. The AAP must therefore win the support of all those key delivery partners on whom it will depend, based on a clear understanding of proposed delivery mechanisms, sources of funds and phasing, not just of the developments it proposes but also its supporting infrastructure.

Nowhere is this more important than in an urban regeneration context like Willenhall. What was already difficult before the recent credit crunch and recession in the UK has now likely become considerably more difficult as some traditional business models are no longer fit for purpose; private and public sources of funds dry up;

and risk aversion encourages capital to shift to perceived safer projects. And all this at the same time as the UK attempts to radically improve the environmental performance of its existing and new building stock and new communities, with all the short-medium term costs that this implies.

For Willenhall, if not for much of the Black Country, the challenge is greater still. The vision and objectives proposed in the emerging AAP represent a major departure from the town's past, not an incremental improvement. As such, they challenge market perceptions of the town and conventional wisdom about the limitations of making places like Willenhall attractive propositions to those seeking higher quality but convenient urban locations for their homes, families, businesses and leisure interests.

Prior to the current recession, the local market had not responded to this opportunity in Willenhall, although in relative terms, the town appears better regarded as an 'address' for housing compared to its neighbours. But the market will not yet have factored in the prospect of a new rail station, new schools, local health facilities, major retail development, relocated un-neighbourly businesses and significant investment in green infrastructure.

Nor will higher value-added West Midlands businesses or those potential inward investors currently consider Willenhall's economic development offer as competitive. But then they too will not yet have factored in the prospect of a significantly larger local population of professional and managerial households as a new labour pool and consumer base; new investments in local entrepreneurial facilities and workforce skills; the provision of world-class broadband capacity and lower utility costs; nor the new relationships to be built between local businesses and local universities.

The answer to each of these questions will be shaped by the current economic circumstances and to profound changes in the UK development sector likely to result, only some of which may become apparent during the preparation, examination and adoption of this AAP in the coming months.

All this has been done in other urban regeneration programmes in the UK and something equally visionary is planned for other parts of Walsall itself. The key to the success of this delivery plan – and the AAP more broadly – is for it create a new confidence amongst existing and new investors. To do this, it must learn from what has worked, and not worked, elsewhere and it must be genuinely owned by all the council's partners.

Key Delivery Issues

There are three main delivery issues that the AAP will need to address:

- Who will delivery housing, economic, retail and other development and infrastructure proposals?
- What sources of private, public and other funds will be required to invest in its delivery and how will they be secured?
- How will development and infrastructure be phased to deliver the plan objectives over 15 years or more?



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