

# Report to Cabinet

18 January 2023

<b>Subject:</b>	Rolfe Street Masterplan – Approval to consult
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Growth, Councillor Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Regeneration & Growth, Tony McGovern
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Planning Regeneration Team Leader, Hayley Insley <a href="mailto:Hayley_insley@sandwell.gov.uk">Hayley_insley@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Planning Officer Kate Harris <a href="mailto:Kate_Harris@sandwell.gov.uk">Kate_Harris@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the consultation on the Draft Rolfe Street Masterplan for six weeks between end of January to March 2023.
- 1.2 That the Director for Regeneration and Growth be authorised to make minor changes to the Masterplan prior to consultation commencing if required.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Masterplan has been prepared following engagement with officers, Members and stakeholders.



2.1 Work to date has had regard to current policy as well as acknowledging future anticipated changes. Consultation with the wider public, businesses, community groups and other interested parties will enable the options being put forward to be further refined and developed into a final document that, once approved, will form the basis for future decision making that will assist in bringing forward regeneration benefits to the area.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?



	<p><b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b> The proposals will provide quality homes and safe open spaces with improved routes to local schools.</p>
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b> New housing proposed within the area will seek to address the needs of all members of the community and include improved public realm and green spaces, improved transport links and access to facilities and increase employment opportunities.</p>
	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b> New housing proposed within the area will seek to address the needs of all members of the community and include improved public realm and green spaces, improved transport links and access to facilities and increase employment opportunities. The consultation will enable the public to feel embedded in the area early on by seeking their views on the development in which they may live or pass through later.</p>
	<p><b>Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods</b> The Masterplan will seek to attract a range of house types and tenures that are sustainable, attractive and will meet the needs and demands of the future residents.</p>
	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b> We can utilise our council assets, in the form of our land, to drive forward regeneration in the area and show our commitment and capability through the successful delivery of our Towns Fund funding to enable similar funding opportunities to be gained in the future should they be made available.</p> <p>This site has strong locational links to the Midlands Metropolitan University Hospital and the site will benefit from the regeneration opportunities that will radiate from this building.</p> <p>Opportunities for local job creation will be encouraged at site preparation and at construction stage.</p>



	Improvements to transport connections will improve residents' ability to access key transport hubs and hence their access to employment and education prospects and will contribute to attracting and retaining businesses in Sandwell.
	<b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b> The Masterplan will identify a transport strategy that aims to consider current and future transport needs and promoting alternative safe and convenient modes of transport other than the private motor car, including new cycling and walking routes as well as identifying the potential location of a 'mobility hub' to encourage convenient access to these alternative modes of transport.

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Sandwell Council has been working with the other Black Country authorities under the Black Country Collaboration Agreement since 2014. In November 2020, Cabinet resolved to enter into the Supplemental Deed of Variation to the Collaboration Agreement which allowed Sandwell to bid for an allocation of £250k per annum business rates surpluses generated across the Black Country Enterprise Zones. Even though Sandwell does not have an Enterprise Zone itself, the Governance Principles of that agreement allow the authority to have a share for five years from 2020-21 to support the development of projects in the Black Country Pipeline.
- 4.2 On 1 July 2021 the Black Country LEP Funding Sub Group considered and agreed to the spend proposal put forward by the Interim Director of Regeneration and Growth for the financial year 20/21. One of the projects named within the funding proposal was to commission a Masterplan for the wider Rolfe Street area in Smethwick from the Railway Station to Bridge Street North/New Street junction.
- 4.3 This area, close to Smethwick High Street and Rolfe Street Station, has been allocated for residential led mixed use since 2008. However, due to the fragmented ownership across the area, comprehensive redevelopment to deliver a housing led transformation of the area has not materialised. Due to the nature of some of the uses that operate



there, and the condition of some of the buildings, piecemeal development is not considered appropriate.

- 4.4 In February 2022 Cabinet approved the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework document which incorporates the land at Rolfe Street. The Framework contains guiding principles for this site and the others within the corridor area to assist in delivering the vision of creating a place where people wish to live, work and visit, which is well connected and providing sustainable transport choices.
- 4.5 In order to assist bringing forward the transformational change envisaged for this area, an application to Towns Fund to facilitate demolition of buildings and remediation of the land was submitted and approved by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The project centres on the Smethwick Enterprise Centre, central to the Rolfe Street area, which will act as a catalyst for further regeneration opportunities to come forward in due course.
- 4.6 To facilitate the wider regeneration of Rolfe Street, it was decided that a more detailed masterplan was required. This would take the principles of the Corridor Framework and develop a coherent and comprehensive masterplan that would provide clarity to developers on the aspirations for the area to deliver a well design community environment.
- 4.7 A tendering exercise was undertaken earlier this year for a multi-disciplinary consultancy that could prepare the Masterplan, also undertaking a heritage assessment since part of the area is within the Conservation Area and providing a transport strategy that would address the quantum of new development expected to be delivered over time.
- 4.8 Following the tendering process, the council commissioned Glenn Howells Architects as the lead consultancy, with assistance from Stantec for the Transport Strategy, Donald Insall to undertake the Heritage Assessment and RPS as the Planning Consultancy.
- 4.9 The consultants have been working on the Masterplan since September, gathering evidence, undertaking the heritage assessment and producing options for the design and layout of the area. This is an iterative process with weekly meetings between officers and consultants to discuss issues and ideas. The various options will be developed into one preferred option which will be subject to public consultation late January/early February 2023 for six weeks.



- 4.10 Following consultation the Masterplan will be refined prior to being presented to a further Cabinet meeting for adoption.
- 4.11 The ultimate outcome from this commission will be a well-designed and justified Masterplan that takes on the principles of the Corridor Framework and develops it further to show the layout, design and quantum of development that could be accommodated within this area.
- 4.12 A design code will be developed after the public consultation that utilises the characterisation study developed as part of the heritage assessment to provide additional guidance to developers on how buildings and spaces respond to the public realm based on the existing character of the area.
- 4.13 The Masterplan is being fully funded by the BCLEP Enterprise Zone Fund which needs to be spent by the end of financial year 2022/23. The programme for development of the Masterplan, consultation and approval will fall within that timescale.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Despite the area being allocated for residential use since 2008, no comprehensive redevelopment has taken place. Proposals have been discussed over the years, but they have not come to fruition. Piecemeal development has been refused as it would be inappropriate to promote development in an area predominantly occupied by industry.
- 5.2 Funding from the BCLEP has enabled us to prepare a more detailed masterplan which will assist in providing the housebuilders more clarity and certainty with regards the type of development the Council considers would be most appropriate. The Towns Fund project is now funded for the Smethwick Enterprise Centre which will act as the catalyst for future developer interest. Having a Masterplan in place will assist in the decision-making process for future proposals.
- 5.3 Not progressing with a Masterplan for the area would not create a platform from which to promote development opportunities in this area or provide a strong base to bid for further funding. The continued



regeneration envisioned for this area will not be achieved and it would prevent the potential development of up to 660 much needed homes, within one of the most deprived areas of Sandwell.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The Masterplan preparation is being developed by consultants funded by the LEP and supported by SMBC officers. The proposals contained within this document will assist in bringing forward some landholdings within public sector ownership.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	There are no direct legal implications in relation to this report. The Masterplan will be informal non-statutory documents.
<b>Risk:</b>	There are no direct implications with regard to risk in relation to this report.
<b>Equality:</b>	An EIA has not been carried out. The Masterplan does not create policy, it sets out the expected direction of travel of emerging policy, and can be a material planning consideration when determining applications
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The Masterplan will offer a range of health and wellbeing benefits through improving and developing new sustainable homes and public spaces, providing associated infrastructure to support new communities being created and assets and places for people to go and improvements to infrastructure including cycling and walking routes.
<b>Social Value</b>	The opportunities identified within the Masterplan will acknowledge how inclusive economic growth may be achieved.
<b>Climate Change</b>	The area is within a highly accessible location to allow future residents to make best use of sustainable modes of transport. The Masterplan will need to be



	read in line with both current local and national planning policy which includes policies on Climate Change such as encouraging tree planting within the street and a requirement to provide electric vehicle charging points.
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**7. Appendices**

Draft Rolfe Street Masterplan

**8. Background Papers**

Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Area Framework

[https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/32149/smethwick\\_to\\_birmingham\\_corridor\\_framework\\_document](https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/32149/smethwick_to_birmingham_corridor_framework_document)

