

Report to Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board

18 December 2023

Subject:	Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan Project and Developing the Public Realm in Wednesbury Town Centre Project Overview
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out the progress of the Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan and Public Realm Projects

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the WLUP Board input into the proposals for consulting on the Masterplan

3. Background

- 3.1 The Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan and Developing the Public Realm in Wednesbury Town Centre (Public Realm) projects aim to conduct a strategic review of the Town Centre (including a review of its current uses and future opportunities) to provide a solid base for future intervention.



- 3.2 Wednesbury Town Centre has recently benefitted from public realm improvements and the relocation of an outdoor market to the traditional Market Place. However, this investment (Heritage Lottery Fund) was geographically constrained to the Conservation Area, which is a small area around the Clock Tower on Market Place.
- 3.3 One of the key strategic benefits of Wednesbury Town Centre is its connectivity; with a Bus Station in the centre, and a Metro Station a few minutes' walk away. Some improvements have already been implemented to improve the quality of the access arrangements from the Town to the Metro, including a new cycle way.
- 3.4 Wednesbury Town Centre does not currently have a Masterplan in place. A strategic review of the Town Centre, to include a review of its current uses, constraints, and future opportunities would provide a solid base for future intervention. The Masterplan would also provide a public realm and urban greening strategy identifying the best locations for urban greening initiatives. Funding from the LUP would be used to implement some of the proposals in the masterplan.
- 3.5 A budget of £160K revenue has been allocated for the Masterplan and £4.5m capital has been allocated for the public realm improvements and intervention on key sites (where possible).
- 3.6 Project work to date has included commencement of the Masterplan with the appointment of consultants and initial engagement with members of the public on priorities for the Masterplan. In relation to the public realm project, topographical and utilities surveys are currently being undertaken to inform detailed design work and options analysis on key sites for intervention.
- 3.7 Following a capital appraisal undertaken by the Council as part of project assurance arrangements, the Council's S151 Officer has approved spend in relation to the masterplan. A further capital appraisal will be undertaken for the Public Realm Project (capital expenditure).

Consultation and Engagement



- 3.8 Initial engagement around the masterplan has taken place through the Safer 6 campaign activities and a bespoke survey was hosted on the Consultation Hub.
- 3.9 The views from the WLUP Board are sought on the proposals for the next stage of consultation which will be set out during the meeting.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- 3.10 Project output measures were submitted to DLUHC as part of a return made prior to the Grant Funding agreement being issued. The measures were proposed as follows:
 - Completion of masterplan for Wednesbury Town Centre
 - LUP Programme Management and Governance Arrangements in place
 - 14000m2 of improved pedestrian area
 - 3 problem sites improved
- 3.11 The outputs are on track for achievement.
- 3.12 The masterplan and public realm projects are expected to contribute to the LUP programme outcome measures of:
 - Resident satisfaction with their local area as a place to live
 - Business vacancy rate in Wednesbury Town Centre / Business Growth Measure / equiv.

4. Implications

Resources:	<p>£160,000 revenue has been granted for the Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan project.</p> <p>£4.5m capital has been granted for the Developing the Public Realm in Wednesbury Town Centre project (this includes funding for public realm works and improving problem sites).</p>
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	<p>A capital appraisal has been undertaken for the Masterplan Project and project spend approved by the Council's S151 Officer. A further capital appraisal will be undertaken for the Public Realm Project.</p> <p>The LUP Grant includes the requirement for all spend to be made by March 2025. This is on track.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>Procurement for the project will be in accordance with Sandwell MBC's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders for Contracts.</p> <p>Procurement to produce the Masterplan was undertaken via a full tender process.</p>
Risk:	<p>A project risk register is in place and this has been reviewed as part of the project capital appraisal.</p> <p>A significant project risk is associated with delivery timescales by the March 2025 deadline. Any slippage in public consultation or the masterplan approval will limit the time available for delivery of the public realm improvements. The risk is being controlled through regular overview of progress, and producing a detailed and costed landscape plan to enable procurement to commence following the masterplan approval.</p>
Equality:	<p>An EqIA screening will be undertaken during the masterplanning process to identify potential impacts on groups with protected characteristics and an assessment undertaken as required.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The underpinning objective of the LUP is to 'level up' and reduce inequalities. The proposed interventions focus on tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way and compliment public health programmes.</p> <p>Improvements to the public realm are expected to lead to improvements in residents' satisfaction with their local areas as a place to live.</p>



Social Value	<p>The proposed interventions will be delivered in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and will deliver social value in line with the council's requirements.</p> <p>The Council are working with the contractor to identify appropriate interventions.</p>
Climate Change	<p>Climate change impacts will be considered as part of the emerging proposals for the public realm improvements from the masterplanning work.</p> <p>The proposals will include an element of urban greening which will make a positive contribution to the natural environment.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>Young peoples' views and opinions (voice of the child) will be considered through the proposed masterplan consultation through engagement with the Corporate Parenting Board and any other relevant groups.</p>

