



brierley hill town centre partnership

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14 January 2010

Ms Nicki Dale  
Principal Planning Officer  
Dudley MBC  
3, St James's Road  
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Dear Nicki,

**Brierley Hill Area Action Plan Publication Document (November 2009)**

The Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership is a cohort of organisations, key stakeholders and community groups who reside within and around Brierley Hill. The Partnership was formed in July 2009 to build on a strong tradition of partnership work in Brierley Hill for the best interests of the area and to act as consultees for council or private investor developments and projects. The Partnership is supported by Dudley council and has representation of many organisations including business, community, residents, schools, faith and voluntary groups; alongside police, fire, ambulance, job centre plus and other public bodies, all meeting together to discuss and address local issues and sharing in each others agenda to bring forward positive outcomes.

As the Brierley Hill Area Action Plan will steer the growth and direction for the Town's future development as a strategic centre and given the impact this will place on the Town's population, our Partnership is keen to comment on the document's vision. Members of the Partnership have engaged in the preparation of the Area Action Plan throughout its process and support the vision and overall strategy for regeneration.

In debating our representation the Partners were keen to emphasise the need to press ahead with delivery of the plan. Perhaps this regeneration need for local residents was illustrated when examining local health statistics for the area. Residents in Brierley Hill ward have an average life span (six years for women and seven years for men) LESS than the equivalent figure in more affluent wards of the Borough. Given the ward population of c10, 000 that would imply residents will have an aggregate lifespan of seventy thousand years less than the residents in affluent areas. This is a shocking statistic.

Other statistics on education, housing, teenage pregnancy (1 in 8 teenage girls get pregnant), income and employment are equally grim. The adoption of the Area Action Plan (already delayed) is crucial in dealing with these issues and we would urge its adoption as a matter of some urgency. Given the statistics alluded to above we would even go so far as to describe the delivery of the Area Action Plan as a moral imperative.

This is not to say that progress is not being made. Great steps have been taken. The delivery of the new road, the LIFT building and the food court at Merry Hill have given a sense of momentum to the regeneration of the area. Efforts by Carillon, Dudley Infracare Ltd, Westfield and local colleges to work in partnership with each other to ensure that the jobs created are focused on local residents demonstrate a strong record of partnership working which is enviable. That partnership working is in place and will be a key to ensuring the Area Action Plan can be delivered as a practical regeneration project for the benefit of the local communities.

Schemes in the pipeline – the new Stourbridge College phase one build and a new proposal for community facilities plus further investment in the High Street offer is further evidence of the willingness of our investors to contribute towards the delivery plan.

We would also highlight the work of the National Youth Theatre in the area. Young aspiring actors in Brierley Hill have trained with National Youth Theatre members (acceptance is only awarded after rigorous auditions) and proven to themselves to be as good as any other in the country. With these training initiatives in place and with the support of a wide range of partners in delivery, there is evidence to support the strong belief by our Partnership that the Area Action Plan is deliverable in regeneration terms. The Partnership has been made aware of some issues surrounding the Area Action Plan and wish to comment on the following areas:

#### **Retail Growth**

The Partnership has reviewed the above document and I have been asked by its members to submit our response:

The Partnership particularly welcomes the distribution of retail growth on the High Street in balance with Merry Hill Shopping Centre and sees this as the best solution for the High Street to grow and prosper with key developments at gateways to the Town. Growth at the Moor Centre and ASDA sites will need to integrate with the new High Street rather than be seen as isolated developments.

#### **Transport**

As Centro are not in a position to be able to commit to Metro this gives us grave concern for the future expansion of Brierley Hill to proceed, as there is too much emphasis on the commitment for Metro being in place as the preferred solution for the major transport link.



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Any test of improvements in transport must be realistic and achievable. Whilst we fully support Metro and believe it is an important mode of transport for Brierley Hill and the region, we believe a bus based option should be strongly favoured until the Metro is decided and that this bus solution should be sufficient to meet the Regional Spatial Strategy pre-conditions for retail growth at Merry Hill.

### **Green Proposals**

Our members recognise the importance of creating a new urban centre whilst protecting and improving our wildlife habitat and wish to emphasise their support, within the Area Action Plan and its proposed developments for green open spaces and a strategic wildlife corridor between Saltwells Nature Reserve and Fens Pool Special Area of Conservation. It is considered that green spaces and wildlife friendly landscaping are essential elements in a balanced and successful town centre.

As key stakeholders our members are totally committed to the regeneration of Brierley Hill and the benefits this will bring. Our business and community members are keen to work with the council and planners to expand and develop their own businesses that will provide an array of new investments for the Town.

The regeneration need in Brierley Hill is all too clear. The Partnerships to deliver regeneration are in place. We fully support the adoption of the Area Action Plan and urge its speedy delivery.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "pwood". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

**Mrs Paula Wood**  
Secretary  
Brierley Hill Town Centre Partnership