

11 Crescent Avenue,
Brierley Hill,
West Midlands,
DY5 3QL

15th January 2010

Dear Ms Dale,

Brierley Hill Civic Society Representation on Brierley Hill Area Action Plan

I have been asked by Brierley Hill Civic Society to make the following representations on the Area Action Plan for the town:

High Street

The Civic Society supports all of the proposals for the High Street area, in particular the sections which deal with conservation and archaeological matters. Members of the Society are particularly pleased that previous requests to include St Michael's Church and Marsh Park within the boundary of the town centre have been acted upon, and delighted at the commitment in Policy 8 towards Marsh Park.

With respect to the retail issues on the High Street there is a concern about non-retail usages being established prior to the receipt of planning consent. We would urge that the policies set out in the plan are rigorously enforced.

Should development take place at the Moor Centre and Asda sites such development should be integrated into the town centre. The solid wall of the Moor Centre which faces onto Moor Street shows what a negative impact such developments can have on a town centre. Similarly the face of the ASDA superstore onto Level Street is ugly and adds little to the town centre. We are very supportive of the policy on active frontages.

We would also ask that any such developments take account of the needs and potential of neighbouring buildings. For example, some of Brierley Hill's most historic buildings, St Michael's and the Glass Centre, are adjacent to the car parks by the Moor Centre. The Society is aware of the need to find future sustainable uses for these buildings, and would urge that any development should make provision for car parks to support potential usages - perhaps by including a direct walkway. This would be a great help.

Transportation

The Society has had lengthy discussions on transport links to serve the area. It accepts that in the medium to long term a rapid transit link to the other centres, and in particular to the inter city railway line, is very important - particularly in attracting new office development to the area.

However, the local community and the issues arising from the retail developments proposed at Merry Hill will, in the Society's opinion, best be served by the proposals to improve bus services as suggested in the draft Area Action Plan. The Society therefore supports a bus based solution to transport issues in the area. It also recognises the urgency of improving the economic welfare of local residents and the town centre. We would therefore urge that any tests on further retail development be realistic and achievable in the short term. There is a strong feeling amongst the local community that the talk has been going on for too long and there is now a need for action.

The introduction of car park charges at Merry Hill is a requirement of the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Society accepts this and would make two points: firstly that no further delays should be put in place to slow down the regeneration of the area - and so there may need to be some flexibility on how and when the charges are introduced; and secondly that plans need to be put in place to mitigate the effects of any displacement of car parking at Merry Hill to surrounding residential areas. There are already problems with parking on many of the local estates - the Society does not wish to see this worsen.

Strategic Wildlife Corridors

The Society has had the benefit of a presentation by planning officers on this point. All members of the Society were very impressed with the proposals in the Plan and strongly support its implementation. Brierley Hill already has an almost secret green infrastructure and would wish to see this enhanced and developed as a real benefit of living in the area. The Society would also urge that existing green areas - such as that outside of the police station should be preserved.

Design

The Society is supportive of the design proposals in the plan and look forward to engaging with the council on the production of supplementary design guidance. The provision of new routes through the town and new public areas are very positive steps. In particular a comment about the desirability of the change of use to housing of the industrial sites adjacent to the canal on Mill Street was well supported by members.

In conclusion the Society is highly supportive of the plan, believes that it needs to be implemented as soon as possible for the benefit of the town and its residents, and looks forward to working with the council and its partners to secure the healthy and positive future of Brierley Hill.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Sunter

Brierley Hill Civic Society