

Scrutiny Review of The Strategic Direction of the Edgar Street Grid Project

**Report by the Community
Services Scrutiny Review
Group – January 2011**

**People
Excellence
Openness
Partnership
Listening
Environment**

Scrutiny Review of the Strategic Direction of the Edgar Street Grid Project

Contents

	Page
1 Introduction	1
2 Next Steps	1
3 Method of Gathering Information	1
4 Background to the Review	1
5 Review Findings	2
6 Recommendations	7
Appendices	
Appendix 1 Scoping Document	9
Appendix 2 Interviewees	11
Appendix 3 Map	13
Appendix 4 Chamber of Commerce Representation	15
Appendix 5 Design Evolution And Integration With The Historic City Centre	17
Appendix 6 Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme	19
Appendix 7 Representation from local businesses	21

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 11th October 2010, Members of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee agreed to conduct a Review of the Strategic Direction of the Edgar Street Grid project.
- 1.2 A scoping statement for the Scrutiny Review (Appendix 1), including the Terms of Reference was approved at the meeting on 11th October 2010. The key aim was to consider the future strategy of the Edgar Street Grid project as part of Hereford Futures Programme. It was agreed that the Review Group would include all available Members of the Committee, and would be chaired by Councillor TM James, with Councillor KG Grumbley as Vice Chairman.
- 1.3 A report was presented to the Community Services Committee on 13th January. It was the view of the Committee that the report did not fully answer all of the questions posed in the original scoping statement. It was agreed that a sub group of the Committee should meet to address the weaknesses and a revised report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 7th March 2011. This revised report summarises the findings, concluding with recommendations to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.4 The Review Group would like to express its thanks to all internal and external officers and organisations who were interviewed at part of this review.

2 Next Steps

- 2.1 When approved by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, this report will be presented to the Cabinet member for consideration.
- 2.2 Following receipt of the report the Community Services Scrutiny Committee would then expect the Cabinet Member to respond to the Committee indicating what action the Cabinet proposes to take, together with an action plan.

3 Method of Gathering Information

- 3.1 The Review took place on the afternoon of the 15th and the morning of 16th November 2010. The two half days, open to the public, included a presentation by and an interview of, the Chief Executive of Hereford Futures, representatives from Stanhope and the Sanctuary Group, the developers. This was followed by interviews of interested and related parties (Appendix 2), which enabled an exploration of the key issues concerning the scheme, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1). A subsequent informal meeting was held on 6th December for Members of the Scrutiny Committee to formulate recommendations. The sub group of the Committee then met on 27th January to agree revisions to the original report.

4 Background

- 4.1 The ESG area is a 100 acre redevelopment site to the North of the existing Hereford City Centre. A map of the ESG area is attached at Appendix 3.
- 4.2 ESG Herefordshire Ltd was a joint venture company set up, following Cabinet approval on 15th July 2004, by Herefordshire Council and Advantage West Midlands (AWM) to coordinate the redevelopment of the site. The Company's remit has now been replaced by Hereford Futures Ltd. Since its inception there has been close liaison between the Company, Herefordshire Council, and AWM.

- 4.3 The options for the development of the site as a whole were considered as part of the Unitary Development Plan process conducted by Herefordshire Council, following a masterplanning exercise by a consultancy team appointed by Herefordshire Council and Advantage West Midlands (AWM). Further advice was sought out in a Supplementary Planning Document in 2007. The original Masterplan was reviewed by ESG Herefordshire Ltd in 2007/8.
- 4.4 The principal development sites consist of a Retail and Leisure development, located on the current livestock market site, and an Urban Village comprising residential development sites, new canal basin, and realigned Widemarsh Brook. Additional development will occur within the New Area, a mixed use development site centred on Catherine Street, and the Transport Hub, a new interchange between the various forms of public transport within the city, located at the Railway Station.

5. Review Findings

- 5.1 The Committee based its key lines of enquiry around the following 13 questions, the answers to which gave an insight into the current situation with the ESG project and informed the recommendations for the review.

5.2 What is the current and long term strategy of the ESG project?

- 5.2.1 The long term strategy for the ESG project is reflected in the broader ambitions for Hereford City Centre set out in "Hereford City Centre Regeneration Strategy, A Ten Year Vision". This document was a collaborative production between Herefordshire Council and the then Hereford City Partnership, published in 2008.

- 5.2.2 In the document, the overriding theme is for Hereford to be "the centre of a thriving County and a place where people choose to live, work and spend time". The ESG project is one of several initiatives identified as achieving this. The key ambition is that in 10 years – "Hereford will have a thriving City Centre that residents are proud of, people choose to visit and where private enterprise prospers. A City Centre where rich heritage is evident in a well designed environment that marries well with contemporary lifestyles".

- 5.2.3 Key elements of the ESG project are provided for within the Unitary Development Plan, and are being incorporated within the emerging Core Strategy, as part of wider proposals for the city centre as a whole which reflect the Regeneration Strategy.

- 5.2.4 Therefore in ten years time the ESG project (as part of Hereford Futures) will see:

- Delivery of additional city centre housing
- Extended and complementary retail offer, with associated leisure and catering offer
- HE gateway provision
- Supported infrastructure, including flood alleviation, link road, parking provision, sustainable transport solution

- 5.2.5 This will result in additional jobs, additional affordable housing, and access to skills and a stronger reason to visit and live in Hereford (specifically for younger generations). This will in turn support the wider economy that as part of the circular flow of income will enable Hereford to retain key services.

5.3 How does the project meet the economic development ambitions of the city and the wider County?

- 5.3.1 The ESG project is one of the delivery projects in the City Centre Regeneration Strategy. It specifically meets Objective 1: Create a Vibrant City Centre that offers a whole day experience; and Objective 2: Create a comprehensive solution for transportation and parking.

- 5.3.2 In terms of the wider Economic Development Strategy (produced in 2005) the ESG project is also a key scheme to deliver the Council's ambitions for the economic development of the County as a whole.
- 5.3.3 The strategy states that the long term ambition is that by 2025 Herefordshire will be an exciting place to live and work, offering its residents and business communities unrivalled education, health and business opportunities. The ESG project is listed as one of the key projects as "Town Centre improvements, development of the Edgar Street Grid and the enhancement of the public realm, together with better use of heritage assets, which make Hereford a genuinely attractive visitor destination".
- 5.3.4 The Committee supports the regeneration of Hereford City Centre as a key pillar of the County's economic sustainability that will create opportunities of employment, refocus spend in the County (i.e. spending locally rather than travelling out of County and attract additional spend by visitors), and address some of the imbalance between wage levels and house prices.

5.4 How has the financial climate had an impact on a change of strategy?

- 5.4.1 In summary, construction of the Link Road and Urban Village has been delayed whereas the Stanhope scheme has been reduced in size.
- 5.4.2 Whilst the funding for Phase 1 of the link road was endorsed by Advantage West Midlands, they were unable to enter into a legal commitment for the funds due to loss of budget following the Coalition Government's decision to abolish Regional Development Agencies. This has caused general uncertainty over the programming of land acquisitions required for the scheme as well as the construction.
- 5.4.3 A bid for funding for the Link Road has been included in the Marches Local Enterprise's submission to the new Regional Growth Fund (RGF) to be included in the first round of bids for the RGF. Additionally proceeds from the eventual sale of Merton Meadow are intended to be used to fund aspects of the Link Road.
- 5.4.4 The slowing down of the housing market and reductions in house prices has affected the values of housing land. Uncertainty over the timing of the Link Road and affordable housing grants have increased risk to delivery of the Urban Village by Sanctuary Housing, delaying the planning application by about 18 months. The original proposal for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency towards later stages of the Link Road is no longer an option as a result of significant reductions in their budgets.
- 5.4.5 Announcements of new funding sources (New Homes Bonus, Business Increase Bonus, Tax Increment Financing, Community Infrastructure Levy, and Regional Growth Fund) and changes to affordable rents have considerably improved the outlook but detail on the operation of these is awaited.
- 5.4.6 As the housing market recovers, it will underpin residential land values which will also support delivery since 65% of the Urban Village comprises open market housing.
- 5.4.7 The Stanhope scheme is largely proceeding to programme with an outline Planning Application for the first phase of the scheme registered as valid on 3rd December 2010. Interest from potential tenants remains strong.

5.5 How will the strategy going forward be financed?

- 5.5.1 New financial instruments including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the New Homes Bonus will shortly be available to Local Authorities for the promotion of economic growth.
- 5.5.2 TIF will introduce new borrowing powers to enable authorities to borrow against future additional uplift within their business rates base. Councils can then use that borrowing to

fund key infrastructure and other capital projects, which will further support locally driven economic development and growth.

- 5.5.3 Starting in 2011-12, the New Homes Bonus scheme will match fund the additional council tax for each new home and property brought back into use, for each of the six years after that home is built.
- 5.5.4 Herefordshire is part of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (MLEP), collaboration between the County, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. The MLEP is one of 24 approved by the Coalition Government and as such will be in a position to bid for Regional Growth Funding. This funding is one avenue / opportunity to finance the schemes within the emerging strategy. However, there will be significantly less public sector funding, with future delivery being led and financed by the private sector who will seek a return on their investment.
- 5.5.5 The role of the local authority and the wider public sector is to create an environment for enterprise – this includes having the right infrastructure such as transport and broadband that creates a wider benefit for the economy and community.
- 5.5.6 In terms of the specific ESG related projects the New Livestock Market is being financed by Herefordshire Council; the retail project and upgrade of Newmarket Street is being funded by Stanhope; and the Flood Alleviation by AWM.

5.6 What is the role of private business?

- 5.6.1 The strategy set out in the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) of March 2007 is to support vital and vibrant town centres (3.2.4) with a balanced network of town and city centres acting as service centres for their rural hinterlands (3.2.5). Particular emphasis is placed on Hereford's need for new investment to support wider regeneration (3.2.6); to maintain and enhance its role as a major shopping centre (7.2.1); and to ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment, services and facilities (7.2.2).
- 5.6.2 A wide range of private businesses is accordingly central to the wider regeneration of the City and County in general and hence to the ESG site.
- 5.6.3 The Committee was grateful for a written submission from the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire (Appendix 4). This supported the Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme (see below and Appendix 5) and noted that consultations were in progress over the retail quarter. Concerns and reservations were also included on:
- connectivity between the historic City core and the new development;
 - traffic volumes and flows on Newmarket Street and Blue School Street;
 - the supply of available employment land and premises for consideration by businesses facing relocation; and,
 - Car park provision and means of access to the Cathedral and river.

These points are reflected below.

5.7 What are the predicted outcomes and impacts?

- 5.7.1 The **Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme** (Appendix 6) will by March 2012 reduce significantly the risk of flooding, particularly in the Northern part of the City. Completion of the Scheme will afford direct relief to 110 commercial and residential properties in the relevant areas, aid their insurance arrangements, and provide a flood-free environment for other sites and infrastructure.
- 5.7.2 The **Urban Village** will provide 800 sustainable homes including 280 affordable dwellings, close to the City's combined centre, thereby contributing to achievement of the strategic aims (paragraph 5.6 above). Car parking provision has yet to be determined.

RECOMMENDATION 1: At the appropriate stage of development the Committee should be informed of the proposed scale of car parking provision in the Urban Village.

- 5.7.3 The Committee was informed that £80M of private sector investment would be brought to the new **Retail Quarter**, creating 1,400 new jobs in a leading sustainable development. Pre-lettings were proceeding well. The provision for rooftop car parking had been extended.
- 5.7.4 A new **Higher Education Centre** would be developed on the Blackfriars site, also offering facilities for business use (conferences etc) and with remote linkages to other colleges to enable distance learning.
- 5.7.5 **Hereford United** FC would have the opportunity to develop its site. The Committee heard mention of possible fast food outlets and accommodation such as a student hostel or budget hotel.
- 5.7.6 **Broadband** provision throughout the site was included in the project as all developments were required to be 'future proofed' to ensure that they had the requisite cabling/connectivity.

5.8. Are there any viable alternatives for the site?

- 5.8.1 Alternative options for the site had been considered during the UDP consultations but were discounted. No viable alternative uses for the site area were suggested or drawn to the Committee's attention. Rather, the careful evolution of planning and design had enabled an increasingly sharp focus on optimum use and development whilst leaving scope for the accommodation of necessary changes.

5.9 Was sufficient public debate given to site uses in the early years of planning the project?

- 5.9.1 Preparation of the Council's UDP was subject to extensive public consultation throughout, including two periods of statutory public consultation period in 2002 and 2004 and a five month public inquiry in 2005. This included the key development land use principles which are now being taken forward. Development of the ESG Masterplan had initially included consultation through a local advisory group, website, the media and a school and further consultation exercises were undertaken in 2003. The Masterplan was publicly reviewed over a twelve month period in 2007/8. The Committee endorses the finding of the Audit Commission (Annual Audit Letter 2009/10) that the regeneration plans had been regularly updated to reflect consultation findings and that communication of the ongoing work programme was improving.
- 5.9.2 The Committee agreed with the Audit Commission view, as expressed in paragraphs 58 and 59 of the Herefordshire Council Annual Audit Letter 2009/10 that the Council should review the adequacy and clarity of reports on the project to Members, in order to enable Councillors both to respond to queries from the public and to ask probing questions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Council should review the adequacy and clarity of reports to Members on progress of the project. Regular updates to the Committee should include financial information giving details on how much had been spent on the project to date, by whom and to what ends.

- 5.9.3 The Committee was unconvinced by arguments advanced on behalf of the Hereford Civic Society that recent consultation in the context of the evolving Local Development Framework had been inadequate.

- 5.10 What precise data is available to demonstrate public support to the current ESG project in order to justify its continuance?**
- 5.10.1 Public support would be insufficient in itself to justify continuing with the project if financial, commercial and/or other significant material factors indicated otherwise. However, the latter is not the case.
- 5.10.2 The Committee was informed by Stanhope Plc of the recent further consultation exercises that had been undertaken in the City:
- An exhibition and public consultation exercise in October 2010 in High Town drew 3,000 people, 75% of whom supported the Retail Quarter proposals and 79% supported the underlying design principles.
 - Stanhope plc had sent 12,000 flyers to homes, letters and emails had been sent to stakeholders, and advertisements had been placed in local newspapers.
- 5.10.3 The Committee remained unconvinced that this had been sufficient and noted that no evidence had been provided to indicate the extent of public support for the project beyond the City.
- 5.11 How have the plans which promised large private investment for many facilities now changed?**
- 5.11.1 The current financial climate had delayed the construction of the Link Road and Urban Village, and a new library building was no longer a practical proposition. Major components of the original scheme and of the Retail Quarter are otherwise unchanged but the Committee heard from Stanhope plc that the retail scheme would be reduced from between 400-500,000ft² to about 300,000 ft², now comprising 30 units and 20 new retail outlets.
- 5.11.2 However, one effect of this reduction would be to encourage purchasers to include the City centre in their shopping. Further, the scheme would now be further to the South of the site, i.e. closer to the historic centre.
- 5.12 Have the businesses currently located on Edgar Street Grid been fairly and professionally treated?**
- 5.12.1 The Committee received comprehensive and compelling written and verbal evidence on this aspect of the project (Appendix 7). Business representatives felt strongly, in some instances very strongly, that their interests had been neglected and adversely affected. The Committee recognised and fully endorsed these views.
- 5.12.2 For example, Reprodex Printers had been told in 2006 that the company would be required to move in mid-2010. The Council's formal terms were not received until November 2009, following which surveys and contracts were undertaken. However, in June 2010 the company was informed that no funds were then available in compensation and the relocation was hence on hold.
- 5.12.3 Representatives of businesses on the route of the proposed Link Road reported that they had been obliged to contend with 4 years of inadequate information and consultation, yet were now facing the likelihood of a further 5 years of uncertainty. Under the shadow of a potential Compulsory Purchase Order, business development and planning and hence business viability were said to have been frustrated and undermined and staff retention and recruitment had been prejudiced. The Committee was told that, in the view of the businesses concerned, the Council's actions in these respects had breached the terms of its Equality & Human Rights Charter 2010-13, notably paragraphs 4, 5 and 7.
- 5.12.4 During the process of the review the cabinet member took a decision to allocate funding to support the relocation of two of the businesses in phase 3 of the proposed link road. Negotiations were currently underway with these businesses.

RECOMMENDATION 3: A coherent, coordinated and open approach to the businesses concerned should be adopted without delay. Businesses should be treated pro-actively as partners and not as potential litigants.

- 5.12.5 Businesses also expressed deep concern at the potential impact on traffic disruption and congestion, and thereby on their profitability, if works on the Retail Quarter and Newmarket Street were to start before completion of the Link Road. Lastly, concern was expressed over the availability of suitable employment land for consideration by businesses obliged to relocate.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Arrangements for the construction and highways works must be so planned as to minimise the impact on traffic flows in the City.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Urgent consideration should be given to the provision of suitable employment land North of the City for relocated businesses.

- 5.13 Can the retail quarter be developed in isolation of the link road given the effect this will have on the connectivity of the quarter with Hereford's historic centre?**

- 5.13.1 The Committee concluded that the Retail Quarter could certainly be developed in isolation from the Link Road, albeit recognising that there would be a need to carefully manage construction to minimise impacts on traffic. It is highly desirable that the Link Road should be an early priority and if possible that it be opened before development starts on the Retail Quarter or elsewhere, although the Committee recognised that the Stanhope planning application proposes a phased development which assumes no link road in place.

- 5.14 How will access by vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian be facilitated to and between to and between the old and new city centres?**

- 5.14.1 The Committee was grateful for a paper (see Appendix 5) which addressed these important issues in broad terms, and for the Stanhope plc written and verbal evidence which addressed the issues in more detail including the specific proposals, and was broadly content. The Chamber of Commerce submission stressed the importance of measures to restrict traffic volumes and flows from Newmarket Street/Blue School Street; of adequate car parking provision to the East of the City; and to facilitate pedestrian access to the Cathedral and river. The Committee endorses these views.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Car parking to the East of the City should be included in the Councils' priorities for early infrastructure improvements.

6 Summary of Recommendations

The Review Group recommended that:

- 1 The Committee should be informed, at the appropriate stage of development, of the proposed scale of car parking provision in the Urban Village.**
- 2 The Council should review the adequacy and clarity of reports to Members on progress of the project. Regular updates to the Committee should include financial information giving details on how much has been spent on the project to date, by whom and to what ends.**
- 3 A coherent, coordinated and open approach to the businesses concerned should be adopted without delay. Businesses should be treated pro-actively as partners.**

- 4 Arrangements for the construction and highways works must be so planned as to minimise the impact on traffic flows in the City.**
- 5 Urgent consideration should be given to the provision of suitable employment land North of the City for relocated businesses.**
- 6 Car parking to the East of the City should be included in the Councils' priorities for early infrastructure improvements.**

REVIEW:	Review of the Future Strategy of the ESG Project	
Committee:	Community Services Scrutiny Committee	Chair: Cllr TM James
Lead support officers:	Penny Jones	

SCOPING

Terms of Reference
This review covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future strategy of the Edgar Street Grid project as part of Hereford Futures Programme.

Desired outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create an understanding of current and long term strategy for the ESG project. • To identify how the future strategy will be resourced and implemented. • To understand how the future plans contribute to the wider regeneration of Hereford City and the county. • To reflect on priorities in relation to the current financial climate.

Key questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current and long term strategy of the ESG project? • How does the project meet the economic development ambitions of the city and the wider county? • How has the financial climate had an impact on a change of strategy? • How will the strategy going forward be financed? • What is the role of private business? • What are the predicted outcomes and impacts? • Are there any viable alternatives for the site? • Was sufficient public debate given to site uses in the early years of planning this project? • What precise data is available to demonstrate public support for the current ESG project in order to justify its continuance? • How have the plans which promised large private investment for many facilities now changed? In other words, what are we not getting from what was originally promised during early consultation? • Have the businesses currently located on the Edgar Street Grid been fairly and professionally treated? • Can the Retail Quarter be developed in isolation of the link road given the effect this will have on the connectivity of the Quarter with Hereford's historic centre? • How will access by vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian be facilitated to and between the old and new City centres?

Corporate Plan Priorities

Economic and Enterprise

Timetable	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Suggested Timescale</i>
Pre-meeting with scrutiny members	Mid November 2010
2 review days with partners and stakeholders	Beginning December 2010
Discussion Session	End December 2010
Scrutiny Meeting – report presented	January / February 2011

Scrutiny Review of the Strategic Direction of the Edgar Street Grid Project

Interviewees

Commissioners and Developers

Hereford Futures Ltd	Jonathan Bretherton, Chief Executive Gerrard Williams, Development Director
Sanctuary Housing	Gareth Scannell, Senior Development Manager Andrew White, Head of Development, Midlands and North
Stanhope Plc	Gary Bourne, Development Director Alistair Shaw, Development Director

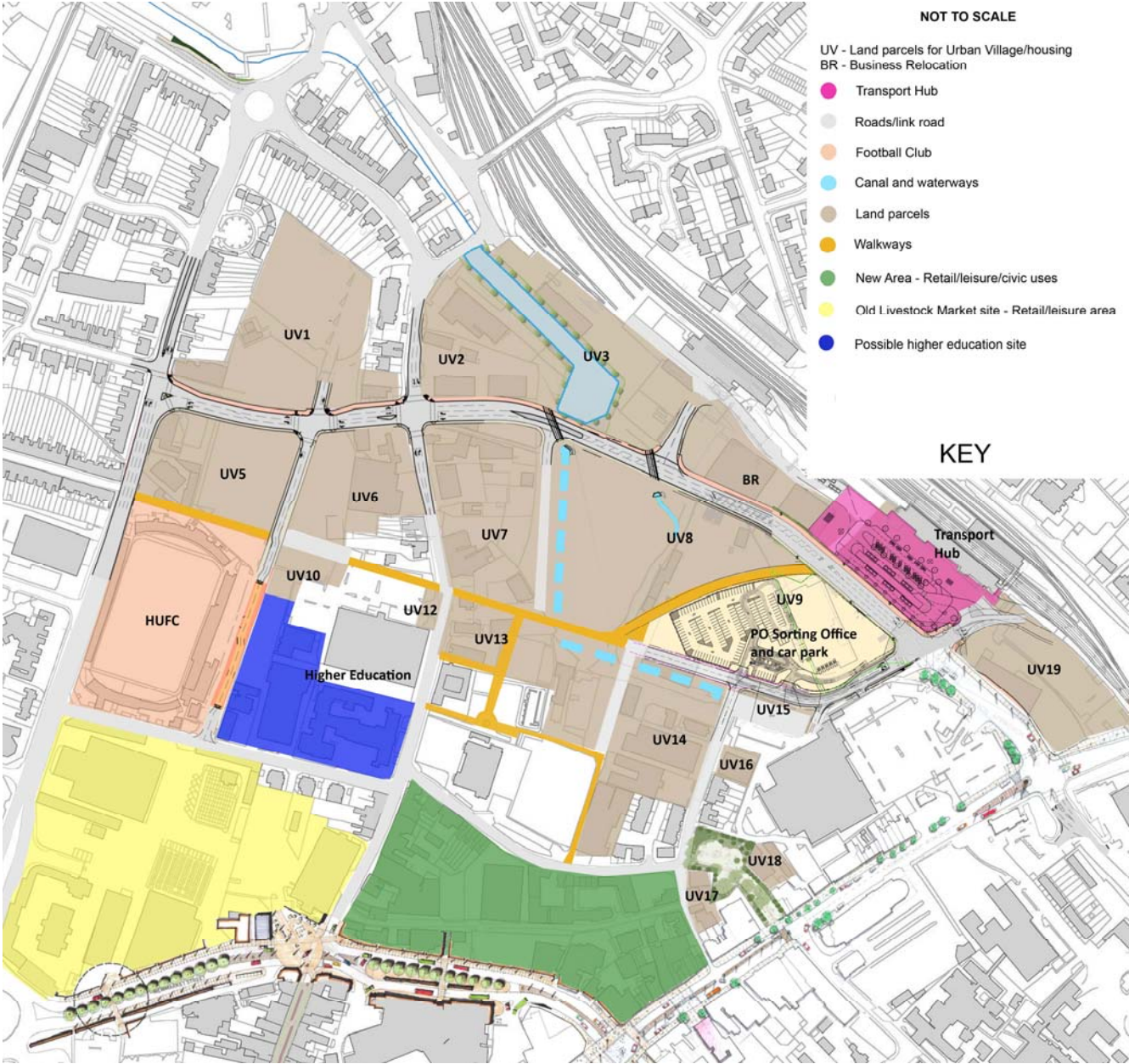
Herefordshire Council

David Nicholson, Strategic Delivery Manager
Mairead Lane, Construction Manager

Stakeholders

Hereford City Council	Steven Kerry, Town Clerk.
Hereford Civic Society	Garry Thomas, Chairman
Rockfield DIY	Leon Wolverson, Chief Executive
Reprodux Printers	Alison Holmes, Chief Executive
ESG Business Association	Andrew Sanders, Chairman

A statement was received from Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce



Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 16 November 2010.

Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire

The Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to give its views on the ESG development within the Hereford Futures project. We regularly meet with businesses who want to know about the progress of the development and work with a range of businesses whom are located across the county and of various size and in all sectors. We have also developed a strategy of engagement with businesses related by sector and geography and are networked with other business representative organisations. In terms of the city we currently operate a City Centre Forum, which brings businesses together in the city centre to discuss issues of common concern. This engages with numerous businesses, however we can only represent our member's views.

Progress on the ESG development

Such a development takes a long time to get off the ground and we have actively encouraged business people, no matter where their business is located, to get involved with the consultation process. The Chamber aim has been to get information out the business community, allowing them to ask questions, respond to facts and form their own views of the benefits and drawbacks of the development. We have facilitated a number of events and meetings, which have achieved this objective.

Flood Alleviation Scheme

In 2007, we consulted the whole membership on the ESG masterplan consultation. A strong message back from the membership was that the development should focus on early phasing of the infrastructure. This means that less disruption of the building process will effect developers and leaseholders in future phases and allow for smaller investments to plan and come forward. We believe that giving such an opportunity to local entrepreneurs and developers is key to the success of the scheme. An important part of this is to solve the flooding in the grid area, not just for the development, but also at times of flooding when the city's infrastructure then grinds to halt, giving the impression that the city is closed for business. The Chamber therefore supports the flood alleviation and this investment.

The Chamber has no questions under this section.

Design Evolution and integration with the historic City Centre.

In terms of the design evolution, by encouraging members to give their views and also by working with the businesses involved, we have fed in practical issues of delivery, access and opportunities for the Hereford Futures team to consider. We believe this has influenced the proposals and changed the plans in an incremental way. The City Centre forum has questioned Hereford Futures and the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways on the access into the city and location of car parks. Members remain concerned about the connectivity between the historic core and new development and the location of the city's car parks. These concerns are specifically related to the traffic volumes and flows on Newmarket Street/ Blue School Street, which if too great will lead to a separation between the historic core and the new development. Members are also concerned about the lack of car parking to the east of the city and the access to the cathedral and River, with pedestrianisation leading to a significant distance that customers will have to walk.

Questions

1. What are the plans on the link road and the current timelines of delivery and therefore the removal of traffic volumes on Newmarket Street/ Blueschool Street?
2. Access and car parking remains a key concern of Chamber members? Where are Hereford Futures and Herefordshire Council with plans for pay on exit and pay by mobile car parking?
3. What plans are there to accommodate extra car parking capacity on the east of the city centre?
4. What plans are being developed to increase access to the Cathedral?
5. What schemes are planned and deliverable in order to encourage longer stay and shopping and leisure time in the city centre?
6. What is the current status of the Hereford City Centre Strategy?

The Retail Quarter

In the past, we believe that we have had an impact on the project and the changes that have been made to the plans. However, at the time of the Committee, it is difficult for us to give detailed feedback as we have not specifically consulted with members to discuss the plans that were presented in the public consultation (end of Oct 2010). As a Chamber we have encouraged members and the business community to feedback into Stanhope questionnaire and view the plans.

There are a number of specific consultations that we need to get businesses of the city involved in. During the next three weeks we hope to organise this consultation and feedback. The Chamber has no questions under this section at this time.

The Urban Village

Refer to previous comments on infrastructure. The Chamber remains concerned about the businesses that are in the urban village area, especially those that will have to relocate. These businesses need to be communicated with, as the development has created uncertainty and businesses need to be able to plan. It is also important that key decision milestones are communicated to all businesses on the grid to allow them to understand when and how decisions are going to be made that will or may effect their business, in the past process have been started and not followed through.

If the timelines of the development are not to move these businesses for 3/5 years, then these businesses need to be offered leases to cover the period that they are not going to be relocated. This removes the uncertainty. Also, the remedial works need to be completed, in line with the landlords responsibility, if the relocation is not going in the short term.

The Chamber has supported businesses to identify sites for relocation, however, north of the river, there is a lack of employment land and premises. This search has proved very difficult, with sites such as Three Elms and Faraday Rd of poor quality and in need of refurbishment in order for them to give the impression of a place to do business. The Local Development Framework does allocate more employment land in the north of the city, but the timeline of such a development may not support these businesses in the short term.

Questions

1. Where are these businesses to be relocated to? And by what process?
2. How are these businesses going to be communicated with to ensure a positive two way flow of information?
3. What short term measures are being pursued by Herefordshire to sustain these businesses over this period?

	SUPPORTING PAPER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	NOVEMBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	DESIGN EVOLUTION AND INTEGRATION WITH THE HISTORIC CITY CENTRE
REPORT BY:	DAVID NICHOLSON, STRATEGIC DELIVERY MANAGER

Purpose

To provide background information for the Community Services Scrutiny Committee concerning the integration of the design for the site with the historic City Centre.

Background

- 1 The principle of ensuring integration between the ESG area and the historic city centre to the south, and addressing the barrier that the inner ring road represents, has been key to the consideration of the project since its inception.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

- 2 The UDP policies reflect the importance of securing effective integration within and outwith the ESG:
 - The Old livestock market sits within the wider Eign Gate regeneration area which also includes Berrington Street and the Tesco site, with key city centre uses including retail proposed for all these sites, and seeking safe, effective and attractive pedestrian/cycle links within and outside the area to, for example, High Town (as well as to the Courtyard);
 - Policy for the Catherine Street area also seeks pedestrian links to the south.
- 3 The ESG Supplementary Planning Document recognises the limiting effect of the inner ring road on the ability of the city centre to expand, and the need for ESG development to be well integrated through reducing the barrier effect of the road through new road links (link road), traffic management and design.

Core Strategy

- 4 The Core Strategy is Herefordshire Council's preferred option for the County recognises the need to secure effective integration within the expanded city centre.

ESG Masterplan

- 5 The ESG Masterplan emphasises the need for improved connections between the City core and the expanded City centre areas to the north of the inner ring road. These will be provided through "civilising the street" and redressing the balance between different modes of transport in order to reduce traffic speeds and encourage walking and cycling within the City.

- 6 The ESG link road between Edgar Street and Commercial Road, which has secured planning permission, provides the basis for removing a significant proportion of traffic from the inner ring road.

Shared space

- 7 There is potential in the new design for the inner ring road for innovative approaches, reflecting the Widemarsh Street design solution and the City Centre Streetscape Strategy.
- 8 Other aspects of scheme has also focused on integration. These include the complementary uses (eg, food/drink, leisure), sizes of the retail units and car parking provision.

	SUPPORTING PAPER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	15TH NOVEMBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	YAZOR BROOK FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME
REPORT BY:	MAIREAD LANE, CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

Purpose

To provide background information for the Community Services Scrutiny Committee concerning the Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Background

- 9 The Yazor Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS) comprises a 1.4 km long buried culvert to divert Yazor Brook flood waters, direct to the River Wye from Credenhill. The project will reduce significantly the instances of flooding downstream, particularly within the northern built-up part of the city. Flooding results from brook channel capacity being exceeded due to excessive rainfall.
- 10 The last major flooding in summer 2007 resulted in extensive damage to properties especially in Newtown Road and next to the A49.

Benefits

- 3 Beneficiaries of the FAS include housing and commercial/employment areas, public open space, allotments, and areas of car parking (including at the County Hospital). Transport links within the City including the A438 and the A49 trunk road will also benefit. Upstream, the flood risk to large areas of agricultural land and scattered property will also be alleviated.

Public Consultation

- 4 Key consultees during the evolution of the FAS have been the Credenhill Parish Council, Environment Agency, Natural England and landowners. Neighbouring parish councils and landowners have also been included in some of the events undertaken. The main consultation events, comprised a mixture of public workshops to discuss options and answer technical matters, briefings to Parish and City Councils, and later public information events in both Credenhill and Hereford.
- 5 The consultation events show that the FAS enjoys a broad degree of public support, linked to both the simplicity of the concept in its design and operation, and to the public benefits that it will bring in flood alleviation.

Planning Approval

- 6 A full planning permission for the scheme was granted on the 11th November 2009 (DCCE0009/1595/f).

CPO Process and Objections

- 7 Hereford Council made a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to support land assembly for the scheme in February 2010. Six formal objections were received and a public inquiry was held in August 2010, before which three of the objections were withdrawn. The Planning Inspector's report was completed and submitted to government (Communities and Local Government) in early October.
- 8 Government has confirmed that the Secretary of State's decision will be made as soon as possible, but by a target date of no later than 7 January 2011.
- 9 Negotiations on settlement terms with landowners continue. One landowner has declined to enter negotiations, whilst settlements with the remaining owners are anticipated before the decision regarding the CPO is made.

Contractor Appointment and Funding

- 10 The project is funded via AWM and its delivery is managed by Herefordshire Council's Highway, Transport & Community Services department. The contract for the design and construction of the FAS was notified through the Official Journal of the European Union. Following the tender evaluation process the contract was awarded to Dawnus Construction Ltd of Swansea on a two phase basis. Phase 1 was for the detailed design of the FAS and the delivery of planning conditions during 2010; Phase 2 is to construct the FAS over 2011, with a contract completion date of March 2012. Both phases of the contract are being supervised by the Council's service delivery partner Amey Herefordshire.

The Chairman and Councillors of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

The ESG project and businesses directly affected.

We would like to remind Councillors of the facts we presented at the recent Council Scrutiny Committee meeting.

As outlined to you, the businesses' affected have been treated appallingly over the last few years and should be relocated as a first priority to enable them to move forward and take them out of the "War Zone" that is the ESG project, we have all suffered so much already over the last four years. Whether the ESG project is right or wrong it would appear that the Council is determined to drive the project through, therefore support those affected before more damage is done.

I also brought to the attention of the Committee a document that is Herefordshire's Equality and Human Rights Charter 2010 – 2013. Apparently Herefordshire Council is the first authority to publish such a document. I highlighted throughout the document the stated Values and approach that should be observed by the authority when dealing with people and we outlined to you the way we have been treated, which is certainly not in line with this Charter.

We do not wish to get into any planning matters but the actions and behaviour of ESG regarding planning is having a massive negative effect on other businesses.

Stanhope will shortly be applying for planning permission for the new retail area on the old Cattle market site. When planning permission was granted for the proposed new link road from Edgar St to the Commercial road (not to be confused with the proposed outer distributor road or bypass) it was justified on the grounds that it was the important part of the infrastructure for the whole ESG project, and will take at least 50% of the traffic off the busy Blueschool St and Newmarket Street route thus allowing a much more friendly Newmarket Street for Pedestrians and to facilitate the essential linkage with the old City shopping area.

(see the video on the ESG web site unless it is removed)

Now there is No Money to build the Link road; so many businesses have been blighted for 4 years already face a further 5 years of uncertainty, but the important point is that Stanhope and ESG now intend to proceed with the Retail Area without the Link road. Imagine the gridlock that will ensue if roadwork's on Newmarket St to make it a street like the new surface in Widemarsh St;(This is what is proposed) this would lead to months of disruption. The total gridlock seen on Friday 19th November will be a common occurrence for what could be a year or more. Many local businesses suffered while the ASDA project was constructed and associated road works were completed, crossing the City will again be a nightmare.

We strongly believe that any planning permission for the retail area on the Cattle market should be conditional on the Link road being completed first to avoid gridlock and traffic congestion during the build period but also to allow access to the entire development site as originally proposed. If this is not a condition we will end up with a new shopping centre, no new route to cross the City a new Shopping complex cut off from the old City centre by four lanes of busy traffic throughout the day. If the new shopping area is a success it will obviously add even more traffic to the existing traffic chaos and Stanhope will have long gone to the next project.

If the ESG project is to go ahead the logical and correct sequence of events should be.

Move all of the businesses directly affected to sites that suit their particular business, and fully compensate them as Compulsory Purchase Legislation stipulates. Also deal with businesses whose lease is to be terminated properly as they provide employment and through no fault of their own are suffering the consequences of the ESG project.

End the uncertainty and stress for those affected as illustrated to the committee on the 16th November by taking them out of the whole question of lack of funds, if Council need funds sell other assets.

Deal with those affected in accordance with the Herefordshire Equality and Human Rights Charter which has not been the case to date.

Build an alternative route for traffic to reduce the usage of Blueschool St and Newmarket St. (The Link road as originally proposed in the ESG master plan). Start on Retail area buildings **but not Newmarket St.** Only when Link road is completed start the upgrade of Newmarket St into a Tree lined Boulevard as promised.

Build the Houses off the new through route.

Complete the Civic buildings as originally planned when funds permit.

Leon Wolverson - Rockfield

Andrew Sanders - Station Autos Hereford

Alison Holmes - Reprodex Printers.

Dave Llewellyn Hereford Boiler Services

Also representing many businesses affected by the ESG plan.