

## STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### MEETING BETWEEN ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS AND STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

**DATE OF MEETING: 8 MAY 2008**

*Officers in Attendance:*

Paul Chatwin - Advantage West Midlands  
Jean Buxton - Advantage West Midlands  
Alex Yendole - Principal Planning Officer, Stafford Borough Council

- AY gave a brief update on Stafford Borough's Local Development Framework's process, development requirements through the Regional Spatial Strategy process and the Growth Point bid. Advantage West Midlands currently has no feedback concerning the Growth Point announcement. The next scheduled meeting with Government Office West Midlands is July 2008. Advantage West Midlands and Stafford Borough Council agreed to keep in contact regarding the Local Development Framework and Growth Point announcements. Advantage West Midlands does not have any landholdings in Stafford Borough.
- The Community Infrastructure Fund Round 2 is aligned with the first set of Growth Points announced. There were far more bids put forward than money available. The Growth Points likely to secure funding are those that can deliver developments in the timescales allowed (spend by 2011) to enable or benefit growth. A key component is how the transport infrastructure will be linked to housing delivery. There is no certainty that there will be a Community Infrastructure Fund Round 3. South Staffordshire District is currently resisting development growth south of Stafford although this is referred to in the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Advantage West Midlands have recently completed a logistics study which shows that the West Midlands is a primary distribution location and demand in this sector is forecast to increase. Three areas have developed as distribution nodes: M42/A5 Tamworth and Atherstone, M6/M69 Coventry and Rugby, and M6 Birmingham and Solihull. Employment in the logistics sector offers a wider range of jobs, in terms of skill levels and value, than is often perceived. Average employment densities based on recent figures are now higher than in manufacturing.
- Advantage West Midlands recently completed Office Locations study found that inward investment was generally weak in some locations, particularly in the north-west of the region, and that locations in the south and east of the region e.g. Warwick and Worcester, had many out of centre locations that had been very successful at attracting inward investment.

- The new West Midlands Economic Strategy is focused upon three main components: Business, People and Place. The spatial interventions of the strategy will focus upon 3 primary areas: Regeneration Zones, High Technology Corridors, and Birmingham as an economic driver. More limited resources will be focused upon market towns and locations facing economic change or responding to opportunity (this would include the Growth Points). In the future, in line with the Sub National Review, there will have to be an emphasis on programmes of funding, as funding is to be delegated to the local authorities for delivery. It is possible that some of this funding may go to Growth Points. Clearly it is important to demonstrate added value to employment from funds provided to economic activity. Master planning activity will also be crucial in order to receive funding and support, which must show clear links to increasing Gross Value Added (GVA) support to meet Advantage West Midlands' objectives.
- Key documents from Advantage West Midlands to be linked to the LDF process are:-
  - 1 The Regional Economic Strategy;
  - 2 The Delivery Framework;
  - 3 The Corporate Plan (currently in draft)

These documents set out future intentions for the next few years including new delivery mechanisms such as a re-launched Market Town Initiative.

- Advantage West Midlands will shortly be launching new criteria in terms of being consulted on planning applications. The Sub National Review process will lead to a change in the role of Advantage West Midlands as the Regional Development Agency (RDA). The organisation will take on a more structured policy lead at the regional level and further develop working relationships with local authorities. The consultation deadline for the Sub National Review is the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008. In due course Advantage West Midlands will have work transferred from the West Midlands Regional Assembly up to and following legislation expected to come into effect in 2010. Currently work is progressing on establishing a Regional Forum, Regional Transitional Group and Members Forum as well as a Regional Integrated Strategy. Discussions with key policy decision makers within the West Midlands Regional Assembly and local authorities are progressing.
- Through the Regional Economic Strategy and the future Regional Integrated Strategy economic development will play an enhanced role in policy decision-making. The Regional Economic Strategy will be required to have a higher profile in Local Development Frameworks not just in terms of addressing deprivation but also contributing to GVA targets. Economic activity will be facilitated through regeneration schemes in the Local Development Frameworks. Across the West Midlands region Advantage West Midlands will focus on programmed initiatives such as new Growth Points rather than individual projects as in the past. The local authority's Development Plan will

have to have an economic focus. Local authorities could receive more economic delivery funding through the Sub National Review although this will only amount to a total of 40% of the total budget.

- Significant challenges will arise over the next few years as increased housing targets are sought across the West Midlands region whilst maintaining and improving economic prosperity. Housing will conflict with economic development for land resources, although economic activity is vital to deliver new housing. Furthermore there are population projections of a 10-15% increase across the West Midlands region over the Plan period.
- In terms of St Leonard's Avenue in Stafford, Advantage West Midlands position concerning off site infrastructure which might support development is being investigated by the legal team. It is important to consider next steps in terms of implications for development appearing to be state aided. Stafford Borough Council's key contact for this matter is Ted Manders.
- Date of next meeting September 2008 subject to ongoing dialogue.