

 <b>Executive Committee 3 December 2008</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b>
<b>Title</b>	Proposed Strategy for the development of Warwick Town Centre.	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Paul Pinkney, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (Housing and Development) (01926) 456016 paul.pinkney@warwickdc.gov.uk	
<b>Service Area</b>	Economic Development and Regeneration	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	All Warwick wards.	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006</b>		
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>		
<b>Background Papers</b>		

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	Yes

<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Relevant Director	19/11/08	Bill Hunt
Chief Executive	19/11/08	Chris Elliott
CMT	13/11/08	
Section 151 Officer	19/11/08	Mary Hawkins
Legal	19/11/08	Peter Oliver
Finance	19/11/08	Mike Snow, Melanie Gillman
Portfolio Holder(s)	20/11/08	Cllr Hammon
<b>Consultation Undertaken</b>		
As part of the preparation for this report to members outline discussions have taken place with the Warwick Chamber of Trade, the Warwick Society and Warwickshire County Council officers. An additional report will be presented to Members as proposals emerge.		

Final Decision?	No
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)	

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the opportunity for Warwick District Council (WDC) to take a leadership role in establishing a partnership approach to the economic development and regeneration of Warwick town centre. A number of strategic sites within the town centre are in public ownership; the development of these and other sites coupled with environmental improvements in the public realm would significantly increase the vitality and viability of the town centre. Failure to work in partnership to create a strategic framework may mean that the opportunity for the enhancement of the town centre as a whole is at best diluted (i.e. through piecemeal development) or at worst lost.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Executive agrees to:

- Establish a strategic partnership with key stakeholders who have an interest in the redevelopment of Warwick town centre;
- Establish a Member working group, similar to the Kenilworth Member working group which over saw development in Kenilworth town centre;
- Develop a strategic framework and comprehensive programme of projects to bring forward development opportunities to enhance the vitality and viability of Warwick town centre.

## **3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Through the adoption of a comprehensive programme of projects Warwick District Council will take a proactive leadership role in the economic development and regeneration of Warwick town centre.
- 3.2 Through a strategic partnership the Council can ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are represented and that land assembly issues are managed proactively and effectively.
- 3.3 Through the development of a strategic framework the District Council can ensure that sustainable and appropriate town centre development is identified for the appropriate sites, that there is a clear plan for environmental improvements in the public realm and that key attractions (e.g. Warwick Castle, the racecourse, etc.) are well linked, accessible to pedestrians and integrated.
- 3.4 The Kenilworth Member working group, which brought forward the development of Kenilworth town centre, was an effective mechanism for bringing forward town centre development. It is considered that a similar Member group would be beneficial to the delivery the programme of projects proposed for the town centre of Warwick.

## **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The alternative approach open to members is to take a less proactive approach, relying on the private sector to take the lead and bring forward development of sites.

## **5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 No additional budgetary requirements have been identified at this stage. In the short term the proposals can be financed from existing Economic Development and Regeneration revenue budgets and officer time.
- 5.2 Should the Executive approve the recommendations (see 2 above) there may be costs associated with the delivery of specific projects, in which case there will be a further report to Executive. However, the Council is in a position of diminishing revenue resources, so it is important not to raise expectations that cannot be realised.

## **6. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 6.1 The proposal looks to progress the policy set out in the Corporate Strategy 2008 - 2011:

Vision: "Warwick District: a great place to live work and visit."

Development

Create thriving town centres, keep pleasant villages and make the district an attractive place to live and work

- To support the development of thriving town centres
- To exploit the appropriate opportunities for new business growth
- To ensure the high standard and quality in new developments and promote regeneration, where needed, in our towns and villages.

Leadership

- Provide clear community leadership and effective management of resources whilst delivering responsive public services in an open and transparent manner.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 A unique opportunity has presented itself to enhance the vitality and viability of Warwick town centre through the relocation of services and potential land assembly options. This would enable the redevelopment and intensification of use on a number of key strategic sites. A significant number of the sites are in the public ownership (either Warwick District Council or Warwickshire County Council), are of poor architectural quality and do not have active ground floor use. The District Council proposes to establish a comprehensive programme (which is sensitive to the enhancement of the historic townscape) to bring forward development opportunities for the sites, this will have a positive impact on the quality and offer of Warwick town centre. The proposals will be focussed on enhancing and promoting the unique historic centre and built environment in the town centre.
- 7.2 The Council is aware of developer interest in a number of sites within the town centre, which would have a positive but limited impact on the overall vitality and viability of the town centre. The risk of piecemeal development of sites within the town centre would be that the opportunity to release the development potential of other sites would be lost.

- 7.3 It is essential that the current usage, such as office space, which adds to the local town centre economy, should not be lost. This approach offers the opportunity to rationalise office use within the town centre through the redevelopment and intensification of existing sites. This, in turn, will enable other key strategic sites to be recycled for commercial ground floor use which enhance the historic environment, create active, vibrant and a more attractive place. The establishment of a comprehensive programme for the development of the town centre through the use of land in public ownership could act as a catalyst and tool to assemble land and achieve this unique opportunity.

## **8 PARTNERSHIP**

- 8.1 This is clearly an ambitious and complex programme of projects and it is essential that an effective delivery vehicle is established for it to achieve quality economic development and regeneration in the town centre. It is, therefore, proposed that the renaissance of Warwick town centre should be delivered through a similar vehicle as the Member steering group which was successful in bringing forward development in Kenilworth town centre.
- 8.2 In addition to this, a wider strategic partnership will be established. It is anticipated that this partnership would be composed of key stakeholders, such as:
- the local authorities;
  - private sector;
  - property owners;
  - infrastructure agencies;
  - Chamber of Trade;
  - Warwick Society; and,
  - Representatives of the local community.

Warwick District Council already has significant experience of delivery of actions through town centre partnerships (such as management and promotion).

For this structure to be effective in delivering positive change in Warwick town centre the responsibilities and roles of each organisation in the partnership will have to be clearly understood and identified at the outset. Flexibility will also be built into the strategic partnership to ensure that the membership of the group can change as the programme moves between phases and through the life-cycle of the individual projects.

- 8.3 A 'vision' for the development of the town centre should be captured at the very start of the partnership with clear objectives established which can then be 'bought into' by all stakeholders. It is proposed that Warwick District Council take on the key role of being the programme 'promoter' through its commitment to the economic development and regeneration of the town centres in the District and as the local planning authority. This will give greater confidence to partners that opportunities to enhance the historic environment and the wider development and design principles for the town centre have been considered. It will also enable any bids for funding to be made from a more solid base: where a clear link between strategy, objectives and delivery is established and transparent.
- 8.4 This ambitious programme for the regeneration of the town centre will be delivered through phased projects and within a realistic timeframe. It appears appropriate that the timeframe of this programme is aligned with that of the emerging Local

Development Framework (LDF) which WDC, as the local planning authority, has the statutory responsibility to progress to adoption. It is proposed, therefore, that the programme timeframe is established to 2026. This longer-term view of the delivery of change in Warwick town centre should give partners the confidence that WDC is committed to the delivery of a programme of regeneration and not just the delivery of one or two projects.