

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 4 October 2022

Review of Bolsover Town Centre Regeneration Framework

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth / Economic Development

Classification	This report is Public
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Contact Officer	As above

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To review the effectiveness of the Regeneration Framework adopted in 2017 for Bolsover and surrounding villages and hamlets including Bramley Vale, Doe Lea, Scarcliffe, Shuttlewood, Stanfree, Palterton and Glapwell

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2015, the Economic Development Team commissioned BaumanLyons Architects, Camun Lonsdale, and others to produce “Sharing Bolsover! Bolsover District Regeneration Framework”, a strategy for each of the four market towns and their respective surrounding villages.
- 1.2 It was intended that the Regeneration Framework would form an important part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, informing its place specific policies and proposals; the Local Plan would embody the spatial elements of the RF helping to deliver their key priorities and projects in a co-ordinated manner and critically form the basis for external funding bids.
- 1.3 The project design team, led by Bauman Lyons Architects, were appointed in autumn 2015 and commenced consultations with a variety of local stakeholders, agencies, businesses, community groups and thematic interest groups to develop both town specific and district-wide proposals around emerging themes
- 1.4 The regeneration framework is intended to:
- Prioritise investment providing the framework for targeted and coordinated public/private sector interventions;
 - Inform funding applications for town centre investment and regeneration;

- Address the key priorities identified in Joint Economic Development and Housing Strategy;
- Form the basis of work to deliver economic growth and for aligning the district's priorities to maximise inward investment;
- Form an important part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, informing its place specific policies and proposals;
- Highlight the importance of “place-making”, in matching the pace and nature of growth within the district, aligned with the physical characteristics of each discrete part of the District; and
- Raise public awareness of place-making proposals and place marketing leading to improved quality and perception of place.

1.5 The four Regeneration Frameworks were accepted and endorsed in January 2017. The Bolsover town Regeneration Framework is included as Appendix 1.

2. Initial Review

2.1 The Regeneration Framework for Bolsover identified four main project areas:

- Development of Sherwood Lodge site
- Reinvigorate Market Place and New Market Place (Cenotaph area)
- New connections
- Bring forward development of infill sites

2.2 There were also some ‘Stepping Stone’ projects for the town centre:

- Provide public WC's
- Gateway improvements
- Temporary interventions and more events on Castle Street
- Shopfront refurbishments
- Enhancement of existing parks facilities

2.3 The extent to which these projects have been completed or funded would be one key measure of the effectiveness of the Regeneration Framework to date and a scorecard is presented overleaf.

2.4 Unfortunately, the review illustrates that five years on from their adoption, the Regeneration Framework has had little if any impact on the regeneration of the town centre and whilst promoted in bids for the High Streets Fund and Town Deals, it has been ineffective in attracting inward investment or funding.

2.5 Although the bid for Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund picks up on some of the proposals the Framework is of limited utility in the absence of costings and detailed design noting the generic nature of some of the proposals. The Regeneration Framework was therefore not relied upon to support this bid and a significant amount of additional was commissioned to support the application.

PROJECT NAME	SUMMARY	OUTCOME
BOLSOVER TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS		
Development of Sherwood Lodge site	Potential options for mixed use development including retail led or housing led.	Redevelopment completed but not in accordance with the design led approach in the Framework.
Reinvigorate Market Place and 'New Market Place' (Cenotaph area)	Building on existing improvements to Cenotaph area, the project aims to create better civic spaces that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and establish distinctive characters for each of the two spaces.	Not progressed but partially included in Levelling Up Fund bid
New connections	Enhancement of routes to create Town Links connecting to greenways & enhance route between Castle and St. Mary & St. Laurence Church.	Not progressed
Bring forward development of infill sites	Bring forward BDC owned sites for alternative development	Not progressed
STEPPING STONE PROJECTS		
Provide public WCs	Trial public WC provision at new BDC Contact Centre on Cotton Street, and potential to pilot Community Toilet Scheme with local businesses	Town Council have tried to launch a Community Toilet Scheme and the WC is made available in the contact centre but the absence of public toilets is highlighted in recent public consultation event.
Gateway improvements	Five sites identified at key entrances into the Town Centre, including the illumination of Bolsover Castle mount cliff face and productive greening/artwork/attractive signage on other small sites.	Not progressed / castle no longer illuminated and it may be said that this may now be seen to be inappropriate / unviable unless powered by a renewable energy source.
Temporary interventions and more events on Castle Street	Experimental projects to reclaim public space back for pedestrians from vehicular use e.g.	Not Progressed albeit a number of events do take place in the town including

PROJECT NAME	SUMMARY	OUTCOME
	painting road surface on Castle Street, hold specialist markets/fairs on road etc	market days and the lantern parade.
Shopfront refurbishments	Implementation of existing strategy and suggest that funding is set aside for independent shopkeepers and addressing existing priority shopfronts.	Not progressed but partially included in Levelling Up Fund bid
Enhancement of existing parks facilities	Improved youth provision at Hornscroft Park & Dykes Fields. Back Hills gateway improvements and greening projects to better utilise clearings and enhance viewing points	No progress beyond the Town Council's proposals for skatepark on Hornscroft Park

3. Reasons for Recommendation

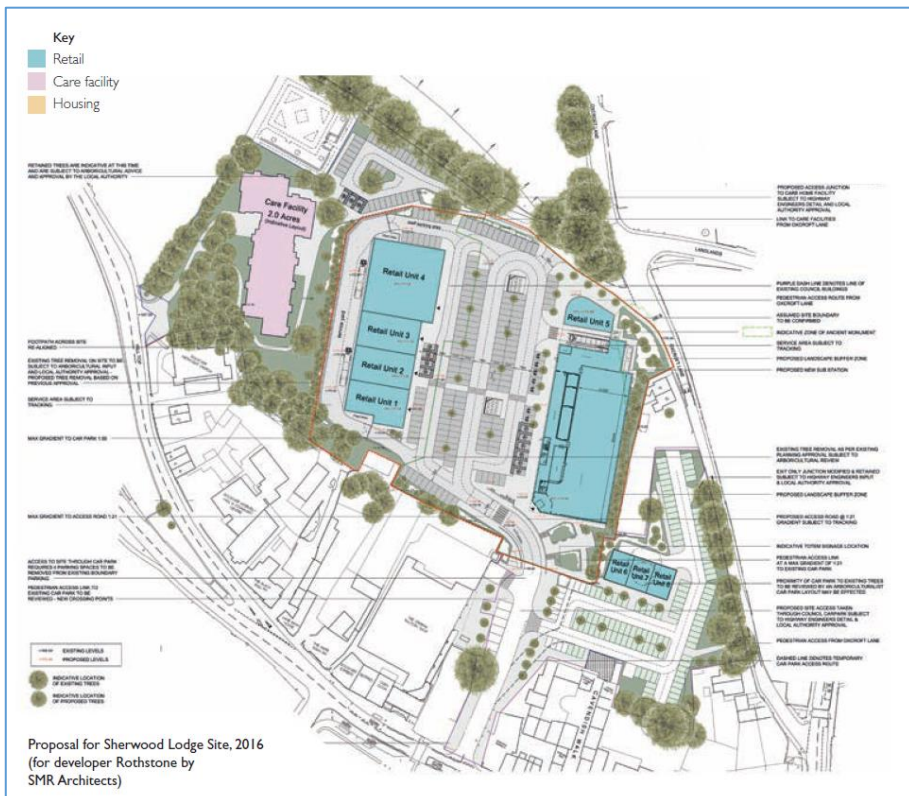
- 3.1 On its own terms, the Regeneration Framework has not been successful because very little has been achieved and it can be seen five years since adoption:
- there has been no successfully targeted and coordinated public/private sector interventions in Bolsover's town centre;
 - there has been no successful funding applications for town centre investment and regeneration to date;
 - no evidence the key priorities identified in Joint Economic Development and Housing Strategy have been addressed;
 - inward investment appears to have been limited to the re-development of Sherwood Lodge and a significant amount of house building; and
 - with specific regard to Sherwood Lodge, the Regeneration Framework has not informed the site specific policies and proposals in the recently adopted Local Plan.
- 3.2 The Sherwood Lodge case study also provides further detail of where the Regeneration Framework may have been unsuccessful:
- 3.3 Firstly, the Framework says *The historic grounds and the remaining building of Sherwood Lodge has a high amenity value and its central location offers an opportunity for a high quality mixed use development to enhance integration of the residential neighbourhoods with the Town Centre and enhancement of Bolsover's character as a historic market town.*
- 3.4 An indicative drawing of what was envisaged is shown overleaf. The actual outcome was very different and at its core, the layout of the new Morrison's and

associated retail unit reflects the indicative drawing shown further below, which reflects the developer's proposals as they were in 2016.

Regeneration Framework – Preferred Option



Developer's Preference



- 3.5 One key takeaway from this case study is that if the Council does not have control over the land and/or buildings; it will have limited influence over its future use, which will more often than not be determined by the commercial imperatives of the landowner and/or developer subject to the relevant party obtaining the necessary planning permissions.
- 3.6 In this case, the proposals were granted permission even though they did not strictly comply with the site specific Local Plan policy. There are two main reasons this happened: (i) the Regeneration Framework has no planning status and in its own right could not be used as a valid reason to refuse planning permission; and (ii) the benefits of approving planning permission were seen to outweigh the harm arising from the identified conflict with the Local Plan.
- 3.7 Therefore, the lessons that might be learned from this case study might be equally applied to the former co-op building in Bolsover's town centre: (i) unless the Council are prepared to take it on, we will have very limited control over its future; and (ii) the longer it remains vacant, the more likely a non-conforming or less preferred use of the site would be granted planning permission.
- 3.8 It is principally for these reasons that the former co-op building was selected as the focus for the recent application to Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund, which also provides a case study that illustrates issues with the existing Regeneration Framework.
- 3.9 The objectives for the Levelling Up Fund bid can be summarised as follows:
- “Levelling Up Funds will stimulate growth of Bolsover town's economic and social prosperity, delivering comprehensive physical regeneration. The proposal includes demolishing vacant buildings and constructing a multi-cultural venue providing a theatre / performing space, cinema, food court, and art gallery. Complemented by public realm uplift and connectivity to Bolsover Castle, a shop front improvement scheme and investment in digital connectivity, the town's offer will be enhanced and create a modern, safe, vibrant townscape that can be enjoyed by visitors and all parts of the local community. Environmental sustainability will be embedded throughout to drive forward our ambition for carbon reduction”.*
- 3.10 In part, this bid picks up some of the elements of the Regeneration Framework but goes far beyond including issues that are relevant today – digital connectivity and decarbonisation, which are not highlighted in the Regeneration Framework. It is not clear whether these issues have grown in importance over the last five years such that they may not have been expected to have been prioritised in 2016 or whether this is an omission – either way the Framework now feels out-dated in these respects.
- 3.11 In addition, the Regeneration Framework does not include any detailed designs, project plans, delivery plans or costings. This may be appropriate because where the Regeneration Framework is successful is in: [highlighting] *the importance of “place-making”, in matching the pace and nature of growth within the district, aligned with the physical characteristics of each discrete part of the District.* It is a very beautifully produced aspirational document that seeks the highest quality of design for the District for the benefit of its residents and to make the place attractive to visitors and the people who work here.

- 3.12 However, where this approach fails is that it offers no substance to support bid writing or funding applications. The relevant work had to be commissioned separately for the Levelling Up Fund bid and even if costings would need to have been updated having the basic DNA of how these projects may be achieved and how much they might have costed in the Regeneration Framework would have been particularly helpful.
- 3.13 Nonetheless, it is notable that the Regeneration Framework did *raise public awareness of place-making proposals and [to a certain extent] place marketing* and public consultation on the Levelling Up Fund shows there is still a tremendous appetite amongst public sector organisations, business and local residents to support place-based initiatives to improve the town and even follow up on some of the projects in the Regeneration Framework – see Appendix
- 3.14 In these respects, the problem with the Regeneration Framework is that it has not yet resulted in *improved quality and perception of place* and is unlikely to do so.
- 3.15 The biggest takeaway from the Levelling Up Fund justifies this conclusion insofar as the Framework simply does not address the fact that improvements to the public realm is not an investment proposition for the private sector and again, whilst the importance of return of social value may have grown over the last five years, failing to monetise the intangible benefits of public realm improvements means the Framework simply does not demonstrate how the various projects would represent value for money.
- 3.16 Therefore, members should very carefully consider the status given to this particular Regeneration Framework, which may be said to prioritise style over substance.
- 3.17 Finally, Bolsover town’s Regeneration Framework also includes proposals for the surrounding villages and hamlets of Bramley Vale, Doe Lea, Scarcliffe, Shuttlewood, Stanfree, Palterton, and Glapwell, but whilst these projects are out of scope of this report, an addendum will be provided that further evidences the identified issues with this particular Framework.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 To recommend a refresh of the Regeneration Framework for Bolsover: this option was rejected because the costs of addressing the points raised in the above review of the document would be unduly inhibitive.
- 4.2 To recommend that the Regeneration Framework for Bolsover is put forward as an adopted planning document to allow more weight to be attached to it: this option was rejected because the document is out dated and would not meet the necessary thresholds to be adopted as a supplementary document.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That members note the contents of this report
2. That members compare the findings in this report with the forthcoming reviews of the three remaining Regeneration Frameworks to inform next steps.

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details: The report is for noting

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details: This report is for noting and refers solely to documents in the public domain so does not raise any legal issues or any data protection issues.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes No

Details: This report has been completed as part of the service area's day to day work.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>BDC: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	Ault Hucknall; Bolsover North & Shuttlewood; Bolsover East; Bolsover South
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet / Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SAMT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes Details:

Links to Council Ambition (BDC)/Council Plan (NED) priorities or Policy Framework including Climate Change, Equalities, and Economics and Health implications.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title
1	Sharing Bolsover – Regeneration Framework for Bolsover town
2	Map showing Bolsover town regeneration proposals for Levelling Up Fund
3	Statement of Community Engagement
Background Papers	
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)</i>	
None	