



Report of the Director of City Development

Development Plan Panel

Date: 15th January 2008

Subject: West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan Preferred Options

Electoral Wards Affected:

Farnley and Wortley, Armley and City
and Hunslet

☐

Ward Members consulted

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity ☒

Community Cohesion ☒

Narrowing the Gap ☒

Eligible for Call In

☐

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Work on the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan started in 2005 and the stage has now been reached where, following public consultation, preferred actions/proposals have been identified and summarised under the term, "Preferred Options".

In Autumn 2006 the Council published an Issues and Alternative Options Paper, "A new future – your choice", which set out 3 broad options for the future of West Leeds, which were dependent upon different levels of intervention/actions. These can be summarised as: Minor, Moderate and Major Change.

The local community, businesses and other relevant stakeholders were consulted over a 6 week period on these options and the comments received have been used to help prepare this "Preferred Options" for the WLGAAP area.

Following consideration of this report Development Plan Panel is asked to approve the Preferred Options for public consultation under Regulation 26 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. It is proposed to commence consultation on 26th February 2008 for a period of 6 weeks.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to obtain approval of Development Plan Panel to consult on the Preferred Options for the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan (WLGAAP) is a statutory plan which will guide the way the area develops over the next 15 -20 years. It looks at the future needs of people in the West Leeds area for new housing, economic and commercial development, open space, recreation, access and transport. It will complement other initiatives taking place in the area. The plan aims to build on the many positive aspects of the area but also to promote action to alleviate its problems.
- 2.2 The Lower Armley and Upper Wortley area of Leeds has suffered from high levels of deprivation over a number of years. Compared to the rest of the city, the area has more than double the number of workless households, has less than half the levels of educational attainment, has more crime, more empty properties and higher levels of sickness. More recent evidence, including the 2004 multiple deprivation data for "Super Output Areas", has confirmed that the area is within the 4% most deprived parts of the country. The latest NOMAD analysis of housing (2005) has identified the West Leeds Gateway area as "in serious decline".
- 2.3 The case for prioritising West Leeds for regeneration lies not only in its levels of deprivation, but also in the realistic opportunities for sustainable intervention by the Council and other agencies. To ensure that the Plan can achieve its aims, it has been prepared by the city council in consultation with local communities, businesses and other local organisations.
- 2.4 The West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan area is located within close proximity to the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods such as Holbeck Urban Village. This close proximity gives it the potential to make a significant contribution to the future long term growth and success of the City.
- 2.5 Leeds City Council and Yorkshire Forward have recently published an Urban Renaissance Strategy for the city. This strategy recognises West Leeds as one of the renaissance 'spokes' – driving the growth of the city centre into inner west Leeds in order that the local people can share the wealth of Leeds, the regional capital.
- 2.6 The West Leeds Gateway area is also described as part of a 'Rim of Disconnectivity', owing to the way in which the area is severed from the city centre by motorways, other road systems and railways. A collaborative project on the 'Rim' is therefore being carried out as part of the Renaissance Leeds project. This Area Action Plan will be able to inform, and be informed by the study and contribute to the wider Renaissance objectives.
- 2.7 The West Leeds Area Action Plan covers the eastern section of the Leeds Bradford Corridor, an area where Leeds City Council, Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Metro have jointly funded a study to consider joint regeneration opportunities in the corridor.
- 2.8 The Plan has been prepared with an understanding of the other Area Action Plans and Regeneration areas in Leeds. In this Plan, the approach has been to maintain a strong awareness of the existing and potential linkages with these neighbouring areas. Existing linkages include the Kirkstall Valley Park and the West Leeds Country Park, but the Plan promotes the creation of linkages across the River Aire from the Kirkstall Renaissance area, and linking New Wortley with development areas in the City Centre, Holbeck and Beeston. The aim is to ensure that emerging proposals complement rather than conflict with those which are proposed in these adjoining areas.
- 2.9 The preparation of Development Plan Documents such as the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan divides into 3 main stages:

- Issues and Alternative Options (Regulation 25)
- Preferred Options (Regulation 26) – **this stage**
- Submission of Draft Plan and Public Inquiry (Regulation 28)

- 2.10 On 15th August 2006 the Development Plan Panel gave approval for informal consultation to commence on the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan 'Issues and Alternative Options' document. This followed an earlier report to the Panel, on 5th July 2005, which set the scene for the preparation of the WLGAAP and provided the strategic planning and regeneration context within which it was being drawn up. This document also raised awareness of the issues affecting West Leeds, and sought views from stakeholders and the local community.
- 2.11 Leeds City Council published its Issues and Alternative Options – 'A New Future - Your Choice' consultation document in Autumn 2006. This presented a wide range of key issues facing the area, based on evidence and research across a number of different aspects of community life and economic conditions. It became apparent that the options for change, based on different levels of intervention and change could be grouped under 3 headings, referred to as Options 1 to 3 below.

Option 1: Minor Change

This option set out the possibilities which could be brought about by limited development & investment. This could also be described as the 'business as usual option,' with minor improvements.

This broadly consisted of:

- Improvements to the vitality and viability of Armley town centre
- Completion of Housing Decency works in New Wortley
- Identification of development sites for new housing at Red Court, Far Fold, Town Street/Wortley Road Junction and the Wortley High School site
- Improved greenspace and streetscapes
- Improved pedestrian links around the WLGAAP area and to neighbouring areas and the city centre
- Retaining employment uses on Tong Road/Wellington Road
- Environmental improvements along the Canal side

Option 2: Moderate Change

Option 2 targeted investment and intervention with significant new development activity, but with the main thrust of regeneration activity still being primarily community-led in this option.

This option, building on Option 1, has the following additional proposals;

- More retail development in Armley town centre
- Replacing the existing leisure centre in Armley
- Carr Croft redeveloped for mixed uses
- Canalside employment premises converted or redeveloped for mixed use
- A 'Green Bridge' proposed to be built across Canal Street and improvements made to the canal towpath
- At Oldfield Lane further improvements to greenspace and pedestrian links and upgrading the quality of the general environment
- Additional development sites in and around the New Wortley Estate
- Increased intervention in the New Wortley Estate, involving selected demolition of poor housing stock, constructing some new housing and a reconfiguration of greenspace.

Option 3: Major Change

Option 3 suggested major or transformational development which would seek to maximise levels of inward investment.

This option, developing proposals further from Option 2 suggests:

- Introducing new residential development on Town Street
- Developing Canal Road as a 'gateway' to the WLGAAP area
- Redeveloping housing and tower blocks in New Wortley
- Considering new uses for the Gyratory and improve links over to improve connections to the city centre
- Consolidating Tong Road/Green Lane centre with new development and greenspace
- Developing a new local retail/service centre at Oldfield Lane, close to the existing Netto store.

- 2.12 During the 6 week consultation period on the Issues and Alternative Options (16th October to 25th November 2006), flyers were distributed and leaflets summarizing the 3 Options were made available at the exhibitions. Exhibitions were arranged with the majority manned by Council Officers so that people could discuss the options and put forward their views. Posters were also put up to advertise the events and press releases issued. More formal presentations and briefings were given to stakeholders, including a Forum of local businesses prior to and during the consultation period.
- 2.13 The overall conclusion following this consultation was that whilst people recognised that action is required to improve the area, a radical solution overall was not favoured and Preferred Options based around the Moderate Change Option would be most appropriate and deliverable in planning, community and commercial terms. The Preferred Options, based on a 'moderate' level of intervention, therefore sets out the Council's intended future planning policy for the area. However, it should be recognised that the opportunities for 'moderate' or 'major' change are not spread evenly across the WLGAAP and, in reality; the Preferred Options is a mix of these levels of intervention. Taking a view of the whole of the WLGAAP however, the 'Moderate Change' option best describes the preferred way forward.
- 2.14 The consultation exercise demonstrated that only a small minority of people support a radical change for the area (i.e. Option 3 - Major Change). This can be particularly illustrated by the response to development options in New Wortley. Option 1 – Minor Change will not provide any funding other than that available for housing decency works and due to the construction of the 'Wimpey No Fines' properties, this will be very expensive. It is unclear at present whether the funds for achieving thermal efficiency and adequate sound insulation will be forthcoming. There would also be no funds available to change the layout of the estate from its current Radburn layout which causes many of its inherent problems.
- 2.15 The same implications of a 'do-minimum' option apply equally to the rest of the West Leeds Gateway area. It is also recognised that if real and lasting improvements are to be made then a greater level of intervention is required than a 'minor' or do minimum' option. Given that there are no external funds available for WLGAAP, the ability to raise funding through redevelopment of Council land/assets is crucial to the successful regeneration of the area. On the whole it is considered that Option 2 – Moderate Change, will deliver the most effective and deliverable improvements to regenerate the area in that it will allow the generation of funding for wider improvements but avoid the widespread clearance of the New Wortley Estate and the destruction of the community there (a scenario which would represent Option 3 – 'major change'). The consultation demonstrated very clearly that there is a strong sense of community in New Wortley and that many residents would support estate improvement works with limited demolition of unfit property and re-building. It is considered that any Preferred Option should give residents a realistic option of staying in the area and provide a greater choice of tenures and house types.

- 2.16 Option 3 was therefore considered unsustainable in a community-sense but, in addition, development appraisals also demonstrated that it would be unaffordable in strictly economic terms. The cost of property acquisition (those privately owned through 'Right to Buy'), demolition costs and rebuilding would be prohibitive.
- 2.17 The New Wortley example described above is representative of the general approach taken by the Council throughout the WLGAAP area.

3 The Preferred Options

- 3.1 The Preferred Options have been prepared having regard to the following considerations:
- National, regional and local policy
 - The Statement of Consultation which tables the responses and views received on the three alternative options from stakeholders, including the ALMO, Area Management, Education Leeds and Armley Prison, and the local community. This also summarises the Council's response and what action is to be taken.
 - The Sustainability Appraisal which details how the alternative options scored in terms of key sustainability criteria and baseline information which consists of facts and figures on a wide range of local issues.
- 3.2 In order to meet the strategic objectives of the Vision for Leeds and the objectives of the Area Action Plan to bring about long lasting change in the West Leeds Gateway Area, the key objectives within the Preferred Options for West Leeds Gateway Area are to:
- Provide a framework for the regeneration of the West Leeds Gateway area and a sound foundation for the implementation of key improvement works over the next 10 years.
 - Provide a catalyst to promote improved joint working between public and private agencies that have a responsibility to improve the health, prosperity and well being of the people of West Leeds.
 - Maintain, improve and increase the safety, quality and usability of greenspace and green corridors for the enjoyment and improved well being of the local community.
 - Raise educational achievement and employment skills
 - Maintain and provide an improved variety of employment opportunities.
 - Make the West Leeds Gateway Area a safer and more attractive place in which to live, work and play.
 - Promote and support the provision of appropriate and accessible neighbourhood facilities for example, health care provision, and education, training and leisure opportunities.
 - Improve the vitality and viability of Armley Town Centre.
 - Improve the quality of the existing housing stock and provide opportunities for the provision of new housing to provide a variety of tenure types.
 - Provide greater accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users within, into and out of the area through traffic management measures and links to green corridors.

- Improve the built environment, through high quality design initiatives and by promoting a sustainable future, whilst preserving and, where appropriate, enhancing the area's heritage and reinforcing its distinct identity.

3.3 In order to fulfill the key objectives set out above overarching policies have been prepared for the area on the following 7 themes;

Design and the Environment, Landscape Biodiversity and Sustainability

This theme sets out the key principles in the design and implementation of development proposals in the WLGAAP which will be used to guide development and assess all proposals in the area.

Greenspace, Linkages and West Leeds Country Park

This theme identifies the importance of access to greenspace for recreational use and the role it can play in regenerating an area and providing an attractive environment. It also links accessible greenspace to improved health and well being.

Outdoor Advertising

This theme addresses the need to improve the image of the WLGAAP area through removing or bringing under control unauthorized advertisements.

Designing Out Crime, Signage and Badging

This theme details how the design of the built environment can play a very significant part in reducing crime and disorder and reducing the fear of crime.

Transport and Movement

This theme promotes active and healthy lifestyles through the provision of safe and accessible walking and cycling routes in addition to widening choice by encouraging more sustainable options to the private car.

Health

Following the construction of the LIFT scheme, the WLGAAP seeks to encourage healthy lifestyles through the provision of greenspace and green links for cycling and walking.

Employment and Training

West Leeds has retained much of its traditional industrial heritage and the large number of small to medium sized enterprises who are engaged in manufacturing and distribution are highly valued. There is a need to protect and support these businesses. In addition, West Leeds is a fairly sustainable community in that there is a high proportion of people living and working within the area. However there is a high percentage of people in the area with either no formal qualifications or below average qualifications when compared to Leeds as a whole. This theme therefore seeks to support existing businesses, promote new enterprises in the area, and assist in addressing the need to improve people's ability to access employment opportunities. It also seeks to safeguard the site of Wortley High School to enable a feasibility study to be carried out into its future use for new community training facilities.

3.4 It was further concluded that attention should continue to focus on the following 7 key areas:

- 1) **Central Armley** is the hub of the area and critical to its continued prosperity.
- 2) Armley Mills is a Listed Building and Conservation Area with a unique setting and considerable architectural and historic value. It has housed Leeds Industrial

Museum since 1982. However parts of the site such as the car park and Dunkirk Hill can be off putting to the visitor. Although it is only 800m from Armley Town Street, the Mill does not connect well with Armley area. As a result, the numbers of visitors have fallen. The Mill has great potential due to its architectural and heritage value to the City, its close proximity to the City Centre, and its unique position on the Leeds Liverpool Canal (part of the Sustrans Route 66 cycle link) and the River Aire. Investigations are currently underway to realise the full potential of the site and it is recommended that a planning brief be prepared in consultation with the local community and the Council's Museum Service to guide any further development.

- 3) **Canal Road and Ledgard Way** is a major gateway into the area. Despite having much visual and historic interest, it is currently run down and makes a poor impression. Major environmental improvements are proposed through the WLGAAP.
- 4) **Canalside** is a thriving area of employment/industrial uses with good access to the road network. The WLGAAP will support the continuing success of the area for employment use and resist residential development to ensure that good quality employment/industrial land remains available.
- 5) **New Wortley** is located close to the City Centre but is cut off from direct pedestrian access due to intervening roads, mainly the gyratory and the railway. Whilst stable in terms of tenancies, New Wortley has deteriorated over the years and is in need of regeneration. This is considered to be achievable through selective demolition, reconfiguring of greenspace, environmental improvements and improving pedestrian links to the surrounding area. Three proposals have been shaped in partnership with West North West Homes and Neighbourhoods and Housing.

The British Gas training centre is an important facility in the area. However based on discussions with the company it is anticipated that it may relocate during the period of the plan to an alternative location. The WLGAAP therefore needs to take a view on new uses for the site.

Armley Gaol is an imposing building located in the New Wortley area. There are opportunities for assistance in reducing the level of re-offending through, education, community work, training for employment, financial inclusion and enterprise creation which should be explored further through the multi-agency partnership which has been established in West Leeds.

- 6) **Oldfield Lane Centre**, whilst identified as an important facility, has a negative impact on the surrounding area as a result of its physical appearance and hard surfaced car park. Environmental improvements are therefore proposed for the centre along side the development of sites identified for residential and employment use in the Oldfield Lane area.
- 7) **Tong Road/Wellington Road Corridor** is a major route through the area and a gateway to the city centre. The corridor is the focus of employment activity in the area. At present its visual appearance makes a poor impression and there is scope for improvement.

4. Delivery, Phasing and Monitoring

- 4.1 No specific funding has been allocated to the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan but the Council is a significant landowner and is able to generate funding from land/property sales which can be re-cycled in the area to assist broader regeneration objectives.

- 4.2 Other sources of funding and investment in the area will occur through other programmes such as;
- The Quality Bus Initiative on Armley Road,
 - Schools for the Future will provide a new combined school on the West Leeds High School and consideration is also being given to 16+ education provision in the area,
 - LEGI will provide a Catalyst Centre helping new businesses to start up.
 - A new Leisure Centre is to be built at Carr Crofts through the Private Finance Initiative. The Town Centre Improvement Programme is providing funds for works on Town Street to improve the appearance and pedestrian environment of the Town Centre.
 - The recently designated Conservation Area will attract monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund (a bid has now been submitted).
 - Additionally, it is considered that planning gain will result in additional funds through Section 106 Agreements for the area as development happens.
- 4.3 It is considered vital that any finance arising in the area is retained for spending within the area to support its successful regeneration. The principle of this has already been agreed with Asset Management regarding Council Land/Property Sales. There will be different models to be explored for delivering different elements of the plan, i.e. Armley Town Street, Armley Mills, New Wortley and Business and Enterprise.
- 4.4 The scale of investment required to achieve sustainable and beneficial change in West Leeds is beyond the availability of public sector resources, so the City Council will need to work with the private sector to ensure that long term investment in the area is secured. The regeneration of West Leeds will therefore be mainly funded through the private sector, with public funding acting as a lever for private sector investment, not least through the City Council's land holdings. The development of effective partnerships with the private sector will therefore be a crucial measure of success.
- 4.5 As well as working with the private sector (developers/investors) to deliver positive changes, the West Leeds Area Action Plan will require a sustained partnership between the City Council, West Leeds Homes, local businesses, the local community and other organisations who have a 'stake' or interest in the area. Delivery of the preferred options will be secured through the development or improvement of land and property in both private and public ownership. Whilst the WLGAAP has identified the broad direction of change, many other opportunities for the beneficial development or improvement of land and property will arise during the plan period. It is therefore important that initiatives that contribute to the implementation of the plan and the renaissance of West Leeds are encouraged and supported following the adoption of this Plan. The ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the Plan will be achieved through the coordinating role that the West Leeds Area Management Team and the West Leeds Regeneration Board.
- 4.6 West Leeds Area Management and the Council's Renaissance Unit are currently embarking on the preparation of a Delivery Plan which will address, in more detail, how the plan will be implemented, focusing on key areas/projects, such as Armley Mills.
- 4.7 Regular monitoring is an important part of the new planning system. It will allow the City Council to update parts of the Local Development Framework and to respond quickly to changing priorities in the city. Monitoring will be vital to reviewing the effectiveness of policies within the WLGAAP area following the Plan's adoption.
- 4.8 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) also requires local planning authorities to produce an Annual Monitoring Report. This will be the main means of reporting on the WLGAAP's performance and effects.

5 Sustainability Appraisal

- 5.1 It is a requirement of the new planning system that Development Plan Documents are subjected to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The purpose of this is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the proposals from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with the objectives of sustainable development. The SA complies with the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 5.2 A Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken at the earlier stage of plan preparation, on the In addition, posters, advertisements, leaflets, and press-releases will be used to publicise the proposals and to let people know about where the plans may be inspected. Officers will also provide details of the WLGAAP consultation to Local Forums, Neighbourhood Area Committees, Tenants Associations and hard to reach groups, which meet during the consultation period.
- 5.3 Over the 6 week consultation period consultation drop-in exhibitions will be held at various venues where large scale display plans will be available and a summary version of the Preferred Options will be prepared to accompany the full document. Staff from City Development will be on hand at pre arranged times to explain and discuss the WLGAAP proposals. It is proposed that these consultation dates be arranged early on in the consultation process to enable sufficient time for responses to be made.

6 Further stages in the WLGAAP

- 6.1 Following the public consultation, responses will be analysed and a consultation statement issued. The WLGAAP will be amended and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. At this stage there will be a further opportunity for public comment. The WLGAAP is likely to be adopted summer 2010. A Sustainability Report on the Preferred Options for WLGAAP will be published for consultation at the same time as the Preferred Options Report.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Proposed Public Consultation

- 7.2 National regulations governing the preparation of LDF plans requires a consultation period of 6 weeks and notification to be sent to those organizations who the Council considers will be interested in or affected by the proposals. It is also required that the documents be made available at public places and on the internet.
- 7.3 The proposed consultation complies with the City Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Formal consultation on the Preferred Options is proposed during a 6 week period (commencing on the 26th February 2008). A static display will be erected at the Development Enquiry Centre and Armley One Stop Centre for 6 weeks and the following locations for 1 week each, Armley Leisure Centre, Armley LIFT Health Centre, Netto at Oldfield Lane and New Wortley Community Centre. The display at the Armley One Stop Centre, Netto, Oldfield Lane and New Wortley Community Centre will be manned at specified times. Documents will be made available on the LCC website and in hardcopy at the Leonardo Building, the Central Library and Armley library.
- 7.4 Everyone who commented at the 'Issues and Options' stage will all be notified of the publication of the Preferred Options and given the opportunity to submit further comments.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The Preferred Options present a major step towards adopting the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan. It is therefore important that the public consultation is wide ranging, involving rarely heard groups and effective in raising awareness of the Plan proposals and

providing the opportunity for individuals and organisations involved to comment and help to shape the final draft for submission to the Secretary of State.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Development Plan Panel is recommended to:

9.2 Approve the West Leeds Gateway Area Action Plan Preferred Options for publication together with its Sustainability Appraisal Summary Report and other supporting documents and formally invite representation between 26th February – 8th April 2008.