

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet

21<sup>st</sup> January 2020



**Subject:** Adoption of Birmingham Urban Centres Framework for Inclusive Growth

**Report of:** Interim Director - Inclusive Growth

**Relevant Cabinet Member:** Councillor Ian Ward, Leader

**Relevant O &S Chair(s):** Cllr Tahir Ali, Economy and Skills

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: <b>006918/2019</b>		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the outcomes of the public consultation undertaken on the draft Urban Centres Framework during November 2018 - March 2019 and seeks authority for the adoption of the final document, attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The report also sets out the proposed approach to further stages of the Framework which will identify additional urban centres that are considered to meet the criteria set out in the Framework.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Adopts the final version of the Birmingham Urban Centres Framework as the City Council's vision to guide investment and development decisions in urban centres, attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Endorses the strategy set out in the Urban Centres Framework and agrees that this can be applied, where appropriate, to further centres.
- 2.3 Delegates to the Leader with the Interim Director Inclusive Growth the approval of documents for further centres prepared in line with the strategy set out in the Urban Centres Framework.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Urban centres are a focal point for communities. They form vital hubs for local activity as places to shop, meet and for employment. Birmingham has a network of over 70 urban centres and more than 100 parades. They range in size from the city centre, which attracts millions of visitors and is home to major economic assets; to Sutton Coldfield as the second largest centre in the city with shops, restaurants and offices; to smaller clusters in centres like Kings Norton, Balsall Heath and Cotteridge.
- 3.2 Urban centres have a central role to play in delivering the city's agenda for inclusive economic growth. Over the next 15 years the city is set to see significant growth with 51,100 new homes, over a million square metres of new floor space for commercial uses and billions of pounds of investment in infrastructure. This growth is driven by an increase in Birmingham's population from 1.1 million to 1.25 million, the continued success of the city as the key centre for investment and the arrival of high speed rail via HS2.
- 3.3 As the city seeks to deliver new development, its urban centres will need to evolve to offer a diverse range of uses, activities, spaces and environments. This Framework has been produced to support this evolution, setting out the strategic principles that all urban centres and parades can utilise to become successful multifunctional places. These principles focus on securing diversity of activity, excellent connectivity and high quality design that celebrates local identity to create places that stand the test of time. The approach adapts the success achieved in the city centre through the Big City Plan of setting clear strategic direction and identifying opportunities for change and investment.
- 3.4 A Toolkit sits alongside the Framework to support all stakeholders who are looking to deliver improvements in their urban centre. This provides links to information and resources, including updates of funding opportunities and best practice. The Toolkit can be applied to all centres and parades regardless of whether they are identified as a priority in the Urban Centres Framework.
- 3.5 Within the Framework, 10 Centres for Transformation are identified for targeted actions as places that can evolve to meet the city's growth agenda. These

centres were selected as the initial focus for the strategy, based on the following criteria:

1. Scale of opportunity for investment and development linked to the growth potential set out in the Birmingham Development Plan;
2. Investment in public transport infrastructure enabling local communities to better connect with economic growth; and
3. Focus at the heart of a wider neighbourhood, with potential to adapt, allowing centres to remain relevant and resilient for the future.

3.6 From November 2018 to March 2019 a public consultation was carried out on the draft framework seeking views from the public and stakeholders. Six public drop-in sessions were held across afternoon and evening periods in community venues in Northfield, Stechford, Erdington, Stirchley and Small Heath with a combined total of 185 attendees. Officers attended Ward Forum meetings in Perry Barr and Sutton Coldfield.

3.7 There were approximately 250 respondents to the consultation (including the comments from the public drop-in sessions), of which approximately 15 were from businesses, 10 from partner organisations and the remaining from local stakeholders. The Consultation Statement (Appendix 2) contains further details on the engagement that was carried out, the main issues raised and how they have been addressed in the final framework. Many of the responses were positive about the Framework and agreed this was the right approach to provide a strategy that supports the changing nature of centres. There were a number of suggestions for alterations to the Framework and the main points are summarised below:

- A number of requests were made to understand the criteria used to select the centres covered by the Framework.
- A number of representations also sought clarification over the status of the document.
- Some respondents felt that more detail should be included in the document around the health of centres and the challenges they face.
- The Environment Agency requested that the Framework makes reference to flood risk and that cross-references are made to policies within the Birmingham Development Plan. They also suggest a drainage strategy is developed for each centre and consideration is given to blue (waterways) and green (parks, woodland, open space) corridors to reduce the risk of flooding and support wildlife.
- The Council for British Archaeology raised the issue that a number of the sites identified as opportunities in the Framework are likely to have

archaeological remains and Historic England made representations on the need to protect and enhance the historic environment in centres.

- A number of general comments were made about the need to prioritise public transport and in support of sustainable modes of transport, walking and cycling. This includes support for the Framework from West Midlands Trains and Transport for West Midlands.
- There were also a number of respondents who made an argument for additional/improved car parking in centres in order to support businesses.
- A number of representations focussed on the need to support local identity. This included supporting independent businesses and supporting cultural uses in centres.
- A number of representations focussed on the need to have safe and secure centres that reduce crime.
- Sport England made representations supporting the overall approach but requested inclusion of sport and recreation as an activity that should be encouraged within centres. They also made a number of detailed comments around guidance and schemes they support.
- Some respondents raised concerns about the lack of detail on delivery and the lack of committed funding.

3.8 For each of the centres covered in the Framework, comments were received from their local communities and from land owners/businesses operating within the centres. General themes included sites that people identified as needing investment, links that need improving and the lack of certain uses within the centres. Some of the centres had specific issues that generated a number of responses such as the need for a bus station in Sutton Coldfield and concerns over disruption caused by the proposed changes to the road network in Perry Barr. The comments have now been analysed and considered in the preparation of the final Framework, which has led to some changes to the initial draft documents (set out in Appendix 2).

3.9 In June 2019 the City Council declared a Climate Emergency, cementing tackling climate change as a major Council priority. Subsequently the Framework has been amended to set out how the transformation of Urban Centres can play a role in mitigating against climate change and creating resilient centres that can adapt to changes in the environment. This will be further supported by additions to the online Toolkit to signpost best practice and updates on the outcomes of the Climate Change Tasks Force. This will provide a practical source of information for officers, developers and communities, ensuring a united approach in tackling climate change.

3.10 The Framework has also been amended to include more reference to cultural activities, updates on public transport schemes, and increased references to linking centres with open space and other leisure activities. Furthermore, a new

section has been included in the introduction, with cross references throughout the document, to set out how the Framework will support wider Council priorities. These include addressing air pollution and supporting communities' health and wellbeing.

- 3.11 In addition to the comments on the centres included in the draft framework, a number of representations requested additional centres to be covered by the document. The centres proposed and the City Council's response is included in Appendix 2. As a result of a number of these representations, it is proposed that the strategy set out in the Urban Centres Framework should be applied to further centres that are considered to meet the agreed criteria and that are not covered by another appropriate strategy. At present it is considered there is need for additional documents covering:
- Centres that will benefit from new railway stations following the reopening of the Camp Hill passenger line. This would cover Kings Heath and Moseley, looking to maximise the potential benefits of the improved connectivity. A planning application for a new train station at Kings Heath was received in September 2019 and it is anticipated that a planning application for Moseley will be received later in 2019/early 2020.
  - Centres within Hall Green, including Hall Green Parade, Highfield Road, and Robin Hood Island. This will provide a strategy to maximise on the improved connectivity and capitalise on the links to the surrounding residential developments.
- 3.12 A scoping exercise of Dudley Road Neighbourhood Centre is also currently being undertaken to establish if the framework would be an appropriate format for producing a strategy to support the transformation of this urban centre due to its position in the Greater Icknield growth area and the potential for improvement.
- 3.13 Following the endorsement of the overall strategy set out in the Urban Centres Framework attached to this report, it is proposed that further centres are added in consultation with the relevant key stakeholders and approval for their addition is delegated to the Leader with the Interim Director Inclusive Growth. This is to allow for flexibility in the approach towards the styles of plans produced in order to reflect the nature of individual centres and also to enable plans to be produced within shorter timescales in collaboration with stakeholders and the community. This approach is considered crucial in allowing the City Council to respond proactively to the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of urban centres.
- 3.14 In addition to covering centres that the City Council identifies, it is proposed that where there is a demonstrated commitment, officers will support the community and stakeholders in the production of their own additions to the Framework. This is on the proviso that there are sufficient Council resources available at

that time and that the plan for the centre adheres to the overall strategy as set out in the adopted Urban Centres Framework.

- 3.15 The Council will revisit the production of further stages of the Urban Centres Framework or other appropriate plans for urban centres as part of the annual monitoring process for the Birmingham Development Plan. This will allow progress towards producing appropriate plans for urban centres to be reported back to Cabinet on an annual basis.
- 3.16 In delivering the actions required to create thriving urban centres and parades, it is recognised that communities, businesses, local groups, landowners, the public and private sector will all have a key role to play. The Toolkit will provide a source of inspiration and information, empowering communities and businesses to transform their local centres. The use of the City Council's property assets in urban centres will be informed by the City Council's Property Strategy. Links will also be made to the localisation agenda that the City Council is bringing forward.
- 3.17 The adopted framework will play a crucial role in securing funding for the identified centres. In July 2019 the City Council was advised that the Erdington expression of interest in the Future High Street Fund had been successful and that Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) would make available up to £150,000 to support the development of a full business case. This business case will be submitted in April 2020, helping to inform the MHCLG decision on awarding funding to Erdington. In addition, Stirchley has been selected to participate in the High Streets Task Force pilot programme and as a result could benefit from dedicated products and services provided by the Task Force. In both instances, the Urban Centres Framework was crucial in providing a clear strategy upon which to build the business case and it is anticipated the framework will provide a similar sound basis for future funding opportunities.

#### **4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal**

- 4.1 Option 1 – Do not adopt the Framework. The Framework provides a clear vision and strategy for the evolution of urban centres that have been identified as key to delivering the growth agenda set out in the adopted BDP, and without it there is a risk that development on these sites will not meet the requirements and expectations of the City Council, communities and stakeholders.
- 4.2 Recommended Proposal: Option 2 – Adopt the Urban Centres Framework. Adopting the Framework will provide a clear vision and strategy for the urban centres - uniting stakeholders, directing investment and helping to unlock funding opportunities.

## **5 Consultation**

- 5.1 Extensive external consultation on the draft Framework was carried out during November 2018 to March 2019 as outlined in 3.7 and 3.8 of this report and further details can be found in Appendix 2.
- 5.2 All contacts on the Planning Consultation database, including Ward councillors, local Members of Parliament, West Midlands Combined Authority, Sutton Coldfield Town Council, neighbouring local authorities, Chambers of Commerce, BIDs, GBSLEP, residents' associations, local businesses, community groups, landowners and others.
- 5.3 The Framework has been revised following feedback from internal City Council teams including Highways, Transport Policy, Neighbourhoods, Cultural Development Services and area planning teams.

## **6 Risk Management**

- 6.1 The programme for the adoption of the Framework has allowed time for the large number of comments to be processed and for areas of disagreement from stakeholders to be discussed and addressed.
- 6.2 Once adopted there is a risk that the Framework is not effective in delivering the desired outcomes. In order to mitigate this risk and to provide early indicators, the development and evolution of identified centres will be closely monitored.
- 6.3 A full risk register is attached at Appendix 4.

## **7 Compliance Issues:**

### **7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

- 7.1.1 The Framework will contribute towards the vision contained in the City Council's Plan 2018-2022 (2019 Update) outcomes, specifically: Outcome 1 "Birmingham is an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in" and Outcome 4 "Birmingham is a great city to live in". It has been prepared in the context of the policies of the adopted Birmingham Development Plan (2017), including policies TP21 "The network and hierarchy of centres" and TP24 "Promotion of diversity of uses within centres".

### **7.2 Legal Implications**

- 7.2.1 The City Council has general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and it is using this to undertake the production of the Framework. Whilst not a statutory planning document, the Framework will provide guidance to support the Birmingham Development Plan, and the consultation has followed the principles set out in the Birmingham Statement of Community Involvement (2008).

### **7.3 Financial Implications**

7.3.1 The costs for preparing the Framework, including consultation, were funded from the Inclusive Growth Directorate's approved revenue budgets. There are no direct financial implications arising from adopting the Framework. Further work on additional centres will be funded from the Inclusive Growth Directorate's approved revenue budgets.

7.3.2 Any schemes delivered by the Council as a result of the Framework will be subject to the Council's Gateway and related Financial Approval Framework, which will include the identification of financial implications (both capital and revenue) and associated resources.

#### **7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)**

7.4.1 No implications.

#### **7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

7.5.1 No implications

#### **7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

7.6.1 An Equality Analysis has been undertaken of the framework and is attached at Appendix 3. The assessment has not identified any specific impacts the framework will have on the protected characteristics. The growth of the urban centres and parades will lead to improvements for the local population including new homes, job opportunities and infrastructure delivery.

7.6.2 Any projects identified in the Framework will need to be subject to their own Equalities Analysis as part of their development where the City Council has involvement in delivery. Equalities issues will also be assessed in relevant ways as part of the determination of planning applications for developments in the centres.

### **8 Appendices**

1. Urban Centres Framework
2. Consultation Statement
3. Equality Analysis
4. Risk Register

### **9 Background Documents**

Birmingham Development Plan 2031 (January 2017)