

## **3.0 PLANNING POLICIES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 This section highlights the relevant national, regional and local planning policies against which the environmental implications of the project should be considered.

3.1.2 The planning system has recently undergone significant change, intended to simplify the local planning process. Under the new planning system, the current network of Unitary Development Plans, Structure Plans and Local Plans will be replaced by the introduction of Local Development Frameworks. This environmental statement recognises this change but will refer to the existing policies set out in Wolverhamptons current UDP.

### **3.2 National planning policy**

3.2.1 As part of the changes to the planning system, PPGs (Planning Policy Guidelines) are being updated with PPSs (Planning Policy Statements). This process is not yet complete and we therefore refer to both PPSs and PPGs.

#### **3.2.2 PPSI : Delivering Sustainable Communities (2005)**

3.2.3 This sets out the government's overriding objectives for sustainable development. Paragraph 5 states that planning should promote sustainable and inclusive urban development by :

- making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life;
- contributing to sustainable economic development;
- protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;
- ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and

- ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

3.2.4 BUV has, from the outset, been driven by the need to regenerate the existing communities that surround the large derelict site. Once completed, it will help to reintegrate the neighbourhoods of Bradley, Highfields and Loxdale with Bilston itself. BUV will deliver a genuinely mixed use sustainable development on a redundant brownfield site which has excellent locational characteristics. The Illustrative Masterplan combines with the Design and Access Statement to demonstrate how design of the highest quality can be provided in a practical and implementable fashion. The site is in close proximity to the city centre and offers good access to jobs and services by quality public transport.

**PPG3 : HOUSING (2000)**

3.2.5 PPG3 promotes high density mixed use development on brownfield land with good access to public transport. Particular importance is placed upon the need for green and attractive living environments.

3.2.6 The Illustrative Masterplan meets these objectives, providing a strong practical framework of green infrastructure which is safe, supervised and usable. High density development focuses on the principle public transport and pedestrian access routes.

**PPS6 : PLANNING FOR TOWN CENTRES (2005)**

3.2.7 PPS6 recognises the crucial relationship between high quality mixed use development and successful inner city living. A principle objective of the Illustrative Masterplan has been to reinforce the importance of Bilston High Street by providing direct positive linkage. Although the High Street is currently the vibrant heart of the town, there is evidence of some decline, particularly towards the western end, which lacks the civic stature found to the east. The proposed High Street Link Boulevard will provide the catalyst to redevelop a particularly run down component of the High Street, creating a new commercial and retail route which attracts a high footfall towards the High Street.

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**PPS9 : BIODIVERSITY AND GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION (2005)**

3.2.9 PPS9 seeks to conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife. Inevitably, large brownfield sites have a tendency to produce disturbed environments which then encourage unusual habitats and species. However, they are often successional and unstable, and would usually be replaced in time.

3.2.10 The reclamation process required to remove contamination and provide an appropriate platform for the urban village will remove the majority of the sites successional communities. However, the Masterplan compensates for this disruption by establishing a permanent generous green infrastructure framework where the delivery of biodiversity will be a key objective. In particular a sustainable drainage strategy will provide a wetland spine of shallow ditches, pools and a large central lake within the Neighbourhood Park. There will be strong connectivity established to the Bradley Canal Arm and Ladymoor Pool.

**PPG13 : TRANSPORT (2001)**

3.2.11 PPG13 focuses on the need to promote sustainable transport choices, easy accessibility to jobs, shopping and leisure facilities by public transport, cycling and walking, and to reduce car dependency. BUV is excellently placed to meet these aspirations in view of its close proximity to Bilston High Street and the adjacent Metro providing access to both Wolverhampton and Birmingham. The Masterplan capitalises on these opportunities.

**PPG15 (PLANNING AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, 1994), AND 16 (ARCHAEOLOGY AND PLANNING, 1990)**

3.2.12 These PPGs combine to protect the historic environment and archaeological remains. Unfortunately, the legacy of heavy and extractive industries which dominates the site results in there being little opportunity for significant surviving heritage resources.

### **PPG 17 : PLANNING FOR OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION (2002)**

- 3.2.13 This promotes the importance of open space in its broadest sense in improving the quality of life and healthy living, and achieving viable urban renaissance. The green infrastructure network proposed by the Masterplan provides an excellent basis for healthy multi-use activity across the urban village, encouraging walking and cycling. Extensive liaison with relevant City Council officers and Bilston High School has resulted in a strongly focussed Community Sports facility being integrated with both the existing High School and the new proposed Leisure Centre. This significantly enhances the existing disjointed and isolated playing field, connecting the new facilities to the Neighbourhood Park and Central Green Spine Boulevard in a single resource which is readily supervised and managed on a joint use basis.

## **3.3 Regional planning policy**

### **WEST MIDLANDS REGION SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS11)**

- 3.3.1 Bilston Urban Village is entirely in accordance with one of the key elements of the spatial strategy, namely the 'step change' which is aimed at stemming out-migration from the Major Urban Areas (MUA's) through urban renaissance and renewal in places like Bilston.
- 3.3.2 Significant environmental improvements, the provision of quality housing, improved job opportunities and better local services are prerequisites to attract new investment and people and to raise the quality of life of existing residents. All these components are part of Bilston Urban Village.
- 3.3.4 In particular Policy PA1: "Prosperity for All", stresses the importance of focussing employment growth on areas of high unemployment and disadvantage and on brownfield sites to help provide new employment opportunities within or close to the areas of need. Bilston Urban Village is located within the North Black Country and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone (RZ), one of the five urban RZ's in the region, where regeneration and investment activity is being focused.
- 3.3.5 Policy UR1 – Implementing Urban Renaissance seeks opportunities for increasing overall housing densities where appropriate; raising the quality of urban design in existing and new development; identifying areas for large scale change where existing stock is no longer sustainable; ensuring appropriate levels of quality open

space are provided; developing integrated renewal strategies for the most deprived communities; facilitating the provision of high quality health, education and other services, and the provision of mixed tenure neighbourhoods, incorporating affordable social and market housing. The masterplan accords completely with these important objectives.

3.3.6 Additional guidance backs this up with more detailed advice, notably:

- “By Design: Urban design in the planning system” (DETR and CABE, 2000), a companion guide to PPG1.
- “By Design: Better places to live” (DETR and CABE, 2001), a companion guide to PPG3 which advises on best practice in housing design.
- 'Places, Streets and Movement' (DETR, 1998), a companion guide to Design Bulletin 32 which details how highway design should be integrated into designs for residential and mixed use areas.
- The “Urban Design Compendium “ (English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation, 2000), which provides detailed best practice advice on urban design.

### **3.4 Local Planning Policies**

#### **WOLVERHAMPTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

3.4.1 The principle of the urban village is confirmed by its specific inclusion within the emerging UDP (April 2003) under Policy S1: Strategic Regeneration Areas, identifying BUV as an area which would be subject to major change. The key components of the masterplan are stated to be :-

- The creation of a new park at the heart of the development incorporating a significant area of open water.
- A mixture of land uses, predominantly for housing and employment.
- A network of new pedestrian and cycle links across the site and the improvement of existing links, particularly from Bradley to Bilston Town Centre.
- The development of quality public transport through the site with links to the Metro and the bus station.

- Residential development of a consistently high quality and at urban densities, incorporating the latest techniques in, for example, energy efficiency, and taking account of orientation, views across the site and easy access to facilities.

3.4.2 The principle aims are stated to be :-

- To transform a largely degraded environment area into a form of development of high quality and which encompasses the principles of sustainable development.
- To support economic activity within the adjacent Bilston Town Centre.
- To ensure that the benefits of the Urban Village are available to the widest number of people.

3.4.3 A public inquiry opened on 30 November 2004 to consider the objections that had been made to the UDP at both deposit stages and to those which had not been withdrawn on an unconditional basis. No objections were made to the substantive policies and proposals affecting the urban village. The weight attached to the relevant emerging policies which were considered by Planning Committee in May 2002 is now much greater.

3.4.4 The Masterplan has evolved in the light of the design criteria established at paragraphs 2.6.4 and 2.6.7 of the UDP, and consciously respects the Design policies listed below :

- DSI : Design Quality
- DS2 : Design Statement
- DS3 : Urban Structure
- DS4 : Urban Grain
- DS5 : Public Realm
- DS6 : Townscape and Landscape
- DS7 : Scale – Height
- DS8 : Massing
- DS9 : Appearance
- DS10 : Community Safety
- DS11 : Access for People with Disabilities

3.4.5 The City has already commenced work on its Local Development Framework, publishing its Local Development Scheme in March 2005. Whilst this does not go

into specific allocations such as BUV, it does reiterate the key government objectives for sustainable development, as follows :-

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- The prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

3.4.6 BUV scores highly in relation each of these principles. The applicants are committed to the delivery of an exemplar scheme for sustainable urban living which will serve as a catalyst for the ongoing renaissance of Bilston and Wolverhampton.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

It is considered that the proposed development fully embraces the National, Regional, Strategic and local planning framework. It embraces the principles of sustainable development and regeneration of land, providing a clear vision in which to satisfy key planning objectives