

# Todmorden Pride Partnership Board

**27<sup>th</sup> October 2005, The Old Hall, Todmorden**

Present:

James Gregory (Chair)  
Stephanie Hiscott (Yorkshire Forward)  
Francis Boocock  
Sheila Tordoff  
Gareth Brooks  
Anne Lee  
Sheila Greenwood  
Mary Clear  
Cllr Ruth Goldthorpe  
Peter Cockcroft  
Cllr Myra Townley  
Ed Collins  
Cllr Michael Taylor  
Cllr Clare Townley  
Cllr Margareta Holmstedt

In Attendance:

Adrian Rose  
Clare Madders

Apologies:

Alan Darwin  
David Storah  
Cynthia Murray  
Jack Taylor  
John Bates

## **1. Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair informed the board that item 4 would have to be postponed as Duncan Hartley was unfortunately no longer able to attend the meeting today.

## **2. Minutes of the previous meeting (8<sup>th</sup> September)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

## **3. Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

## **4. Introduction by Duncan Hartley, Head of Regeneration & Planning**

As stated under item 1, this has been postponed until a future meeting.

## **5. Update on West Yorkshire Investment Plan & Upper Calder Valley** □ **Stephanie Hiscott, Yorkshire Forward**

The Chair stated that he was aware of the urgency for the board to discuss again the Halifax Road scheme but that, as shown on the agenda, he proposed that a specific additional meeting be held to enable all board members to be present. Cllr Taylor stated that it was an urgent matter and therefore needed to be discussed now.

Adrian Rose reminded the board of the background to the scheme and the board's resolution to support the acquisition of Halifax Road. This resolution was taken at the board meeting on 30.11.04 due to the acute shortage of employment

land, particularly in central Todmorden, and subsequent planning approval of a mixed use development on an adjacent site. It was therefore proposed to intervene to maintain the rest of this key gateway site (hereafter referred to as Halifax Road scheme) for 100% employment use. The Council would therefore seek to acquire the sites with Yorkshire Forward funding and ensure subsequent development would meet Todmorden Pride's objectives of high environmental quality. The buildings/land would be purchased at market value (via Compulsory Purchase Order if necessary), a tight and detailed design brief for the area would be developed; and then the land would be put back on the market (at potentially lesser value than purchase price) with this strict brief attached.

So far a number of assessments (flood risk, etc) have been undertaken in preparation for submission of an outline planning application.

Funding for the Halifax Road scheme is approved up to Stage 2 of the West Yorkshire Investment Plan programme. To progress the scheme it needs to be submitted for Stage 3 approval. Therefore the decision needs to be made now as to whether or not to apply for Stage 3.

If it is decided not to progress now, then the scheme will not be included in the current programme (which runs until 2008) and the case for appeal against recently refused mixed use application on part of the site could be undermined.

Following recent concerns of the Chair and others, a meeting was held and three other potential employment sites suggested. It is felt that only two of these have possible potential. Eastwood (Brisbane Moss site) is potential site for future longer term. Bacup Road is potential site too but has difficulties due to proximity of housing and the poor canal bridge.

The Council feels that, as part of the current WYIP, it is the Halifax Road site that has the most potential and securing it in public ownership will ensure 100% employment use. Owning the site will allow far greater control over design, etc than just using existing planning controls on other developers.

It was noted that, due to delays with the Investment Plan process and other interests in the land, that it may be too late already to purchase the whole area.

Steph Hiscott from Yorkshire Forward gave a brief introduction to her role. Yorkshire Forward are now able to offer increased capacity as sub regional managers are now in place. However they are concerned that Renaissance Market Towns (ie. UCVR) started a while ago (Vision document produced December 2003) and would therefore like to see work on the ground and thus are particularly keen to take forward asap those projects that can progress quickly e.g. 37 Rochdale Road scheme.

With regard to the Halifax Road scheme, Steph stated that Yorkshire Forward can only assist in the purchase of land or property where there has been a market failure and can only assist at market value purchase (and disposal) price. They fund the gap to make schemes viable by helping with elements and risks

that others can't or won't. This scheme would also fit their criteria in regard to job outputs. But, it is also important that it fits in with local aspirations and priorities.

The Chair stated the concerns of a number of board members about the Halifax Road scheme:

- Advised that likelihood of businesses on confidential list moving there is very low.
- No funding or support available under the recently published NRA options to support movement of businesses nor to implement changes to the current premises of such businesses.
- Both of the above therefore show low demand for industrial sheds.
- Unable to test demand as scheme on adjacent site (Derdale Street) that has planning approval has not been built yet.
- John Thompson UCVR Vision document stressed the importance of mixed use schemes as the way forward; combined with land-use research and use of development briefs.
- Scott Wilson Healthcheck of Todmorden □ need to cater for small businesses.
- Countryside Exchange Report □ need for affordable housing.
- UCVR Tourism Group □ need for canal side mixed-use development.
- Demand is for smaller units not large industrial space.
- Other sites available □ Bacup Road, Cornholme and Eastwood (Brisbane Moss).
- Vacant sheds in Littleborough.
- Industrial buildings in Mytholmroyd remain unlet.
- Esso now been sold □ therefore reduces scope of site.
- Planning appeal likely on recently rejected mixed use scheme for part of the site.

In light of the above concerns, the Chair also stated their proposals were as follows:

- To resist planning approval on recently refused mixed use scheme.
- To seek mixed use employment scheme □ i.e. heavily based in small work units.
- To draw up detailed designs before/at the start of the process.
- To create a landmark scheme □ to show this is one of the main projects of rural renaissance.
- To achieve this by negotiation.

Further discussion and counter argument continued and in particular it was noted that:

- There is no evidence of loss of demand for additional space from local businesses.
- Mixed-use proposals usually end up as predominantly housing schemes.
- Planning committee would not have refused mixed-use application on adjoining site if did not feel could be upheld at appeal.
- Once the site is lost for employment land it will be lost forever.

- It is not relevant to go into the detail of design of units, etc at this early stage □ this would be decided by the market at the time of marketing.
- The adjacent Derdale Street site (which already has permission for a mixed use scheme) has not been started yet as a Section 106 agreement is needed and therefore is tied up for legal reasons only.
- There are a number of industrial/employment users competing for the modern industrial premises at the Openshaws site. The liquidators of the site have accepted the need and demand for business/industrial space.
- Development Briefs □ these only have weight if they are in the context of current planning policy for the area. But, they do not have any statutory weight i.e. cannot make owners of land or buildings follow them (unless that ownership was within the Council). Having control of the site is therefore the best position to ensure that a scheme of high environmental enhancement is achieved. Intervention will bring control over how the site is developed.
- Yorkshire Forward could not provide any funding to the scheme if to be developed as a mixed-use scheme.
- Analysis and assessment of demand would be done again later in the process regarding size and type of units required/demanded, etc.
- On an EU wide scale much of the larger manufacturing is moving to Eastern Europe and therefore demand here will be for much smaller units, for small scale manufacturing and light industry.
- If there was no interest in the site in the future, then it would be put back on the open market and the cost of purchase, etc refunded to Yorkshire Forward.

It was reiterated that the Town Council are keen to see the site kept for employment and believe this needs to be done via intervention, but acknowledged that the Chair was right to ask these reality check questions.

Cllr Taylor moved that the previous view of the board be reiterated, that the site be retained for employment use but with a preference for smaller scale units and that the Council be asked to proceed with purchase of the site. The motion was carried seven for, five against and one abstention.

The Chair asked that it be noted that if examples of what could be on the site were produced it could lead to development by agreement.

## **6. Constitution & Membership of Todmorden Pride Partnership Board**

Due to the lengthy discussion at item 5, it was agreed to leave discussion of the constitution until the next meeting.

## **7. Update from Todmorden in Bloom**

Sheila Greenwood gave the board a PowerPoint presentation about Todmorden in Bloom and in particular their achievements over the past 12 months.

Background □ The group was initially formed in 2000. One particular initiative of the group that has been very successful is local sponsorship of barrier baskets. There are now 30 such sponsorships.

Volunteer groups have also aided the Todmorden in Bloom group with some of the larger tasks. HBOS volunteers have now assisted four times.

Recent projects - This year the main areas of work have been the outdoor market, birdcage walk, library walk, clean ups at Harley Bank and Fielden Wharf. On Fielden Wharf the group have been integral to the fish sculpture project and have also added a number of large planters to the wharf.

Yorkshire in Bloom □ this is the 6<sup>th</sup> time that Todmorden have entered the competition and this year came in 1<sup>st</sup> place in three categories.

Future Plans □ major project for next year is Patmos Gardens.

## **8. A.O.B**

8.1 The planning and conservation area consent applications for 37-39 Rochdale Road have now been submitted.

<b>Date of Next Board Meeting: Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005</b>
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