

5 Implementation and Delivery of the Urban Development Strategy

Introduction

The Urban Development Strategy outlines many measures, which should be actioned to take King's Lynn to the place it wishes to be over the next 20 years. In taking this forward it is important that these measures are translated into a programme of tasks which can deliver these aspirations on the ground.

The implementation and delivery strategy looks to provide an overview of key elements to this programme, and follows this up with a matrix for actioning progress. This has been prepared to provide BCKL&WN with a future plan, which provides key actions and timetables, to ensure momentum is sustained.

Endorsement

The first stage in delivering the desired future for King's Lynn, is endorsing the principles as outlined in the Urban Development Strategy. This will need to come from six main sources:

- (i) government layers
- (ii) residents
- (iii) landowners
- (iv) stakeholders
- (v) public agencies
- (vi) key partners

It is important to seek and gain this endorsement at an early stage, so that there is an agreed common approach to any further work which stems from the plan. The greater the number of parties that can be approached and support gained will enable there to be a joined-up approach in progressing any detailed proposals in the future.

Government layers

This category includes local and regional government, and to an extent national government. The Urban Development Strategy will need to be given Council approval, and all parts of the Council whose policy areas relate to the proposals in this document should be given the opportunity

to comment in securing this approval.

Support should also be sought at a regional level with EEDA and GOSE, and any facilitatory capacity they might be able to offer towards delivery engaged at the earliest opportunity.

Residents

Public consultation with groups including young people, has already been undertaken as part of the work feeding into the development of this Urban Development Strategy, but support should be sought of the final masterplan through presentation to the community and exhibitions of the proposals. This is likely to be required in any event as part of the process of adopting this document into more formal planning policy with statutory weight, but if early qualifications of support can be identified then a strategy for addressing these can be worked into the delivery and implementation plan.

Landowners

This group principally comprises those who have land ownings which either are, or are part of the specific development sites. Proposals should be discussed with these parties in the first instance. Support is likely to be more qualified from these quarters depending on the aspirations held for the future of their properties, but equally there may be partnering arrangements which could be explored on a co-operative basis. Operational landowners may be reluctant to discuss redevelopment opportunities due to their need to maintain ongoing operations. On the other hand, investors may well be interested to know where there could be opportunities to work to maximise the value of their assets and be prepared to engage to deliver some of the proposals to their mutual benefit.

There will also be a need to discuss proposals with landowners who have landholdings adjacent to any of the specific development sites, as any redevelopment is likely to impact on them.

However, as the Urban Development Strategy looks at proposals for uplifting the whole of King's Lynn and encouraging investment across the board, the proposals should also be publicised to any landowners who are known to have major landholdings in the town, such as the owners of the Vancouver Centre, Hardwick Retail Park, Del Monte factory and Associated British Ports. This list is not exhaustive and there are likely to be others.

Stakeholders

This includes a wide range of parties many of whom may have a specific interest geographically, or policy-wise. Parties include local education providers, community associations, sports clubs, civic societies, business associations, town centre partnerships, major employers, recreational groups, retail consortia, and market operators. Many have already been involved in a workshop to prepare this plan; their energies should be harnessed, possibly on the Yorkshire Forward 'Town Team' model. The stakeholder 'Town Team' would meet quarterly to review progress on implementation.

A list should be drawn up to include as many of these as possible, for contacting and informing of the masterplan proposals. This should be done through a combination of group presentations, either as a whole, or in interest groups, or on a site by site basis e.g. market operators/timber yard. A consultation strategy and programme for keeping parties informed and incorporating their contributions should be put together.

Public agencies

This category includes central government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies who may have a role to play in King's Lynn, such as the Environment Agency and British Waterways. Their involvement may not be required immediately, but their role may become more defined on key projects and it would be worth considering where there may be synergies with their objectives and approaching them as necessary.

For example, there may be a role for the Housing Corporation (who fund and regulate the provision of affordable homes in England) to play in regenerating the large estates which surround the town.

Key partners

The two key parties (who also fall into categories already identified) are EEDA and EP, primarily as they have a mandate in delivering regeneration, which is a natural fit with the objectives of this masterplan, and the ability to form partnering arrangements to support delivery of the plan. Both have resources that can be harnessed in taking the masterplan forward and this should be extensively explored.

Co-ordination

Going forward, there will be a need for a body to oversee and to push forward the proposals which have been outlined in this plan. As many of these are development proposals, particularly on the sites identified for Specific Development Areas briefs, this could be taken on under the mantle of the Council's planning and property teams.

However, as there are also many other streams that will need to be brought together to deliver the plan, such as education, healthcare, transport, leisure and employment sectors, a single body which can draw these layers together, yet be independent of any one department is likely to be more effective.

A single body with a dedicated mandate to taking the regeneration strategy forward is also likely to offer a stronger and more pro-active leadership which can offer a single point of contact for residents, development and investment partners, local and regional government. We have looked at the JRC model in greater detail below, but there are a number of different ways in which a co-ordinating body might be structured and defined.

For many of the implementation angles identified below there may be additional specialist skills required from the professional consultancy market and this support should be investigated, and carefully commissioned with a clear brief to target resources most effectively.

Planning

Policy and development control

There needs to be commitment to the masterplan proposals through the planning system, for any development to be taken forward successfully. The planning status of this document therefore needs to be secured.

The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk has successfully argued for King's Lynn to be a top priority for regeneration and development in the Eastern Region. The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy recognises King's Lynn as a sub-regional centre requiring a strategic approach to regeneration, whilst offering the opportunity to accommodate substantial increases in residential development.

The Borough Council is currently preparing its Local Development Framework (LDF) under the requirements of the new planning system. The Urban Renaissance Strategy (URS) and Urban Development Strategy have been developed as key documents to be incorporated in this process. The URS provides an overall strategy for King's Lynn, integrating regeneration, land use planning and urban design objectives and providing direction on future development in the town. Additionally, the URS and Urban Development Strategy incorporate the findings of background documents undertaken to inform the LDF process. These include borough wide urban capacity and open space assessments.

To reinforce the status of the URS and Urban Development Strategy, it is anticipated that they are adopted as, or form the basis for, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to the LDF. It is anticipated that the most suitable form of SPD will be an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the town, or key areas of the town, with additional detailed development briefs focused on key sites highlighted by the outline briefs in the Urban Development Strategy.

The adoption of the URS and Urban Development Strategy will ensure they represent a material consideration in the development control process. However, in the interim, the Borough Council should reflect these findings and recommendations as it develops the policies that form the core strategy for the LDF. Furthermore, before the adoption of these documents, it is important that policy and development control officers are aware of the objectives and direction promoted by the URS and Urban Development Strategy when considering planning applications for significant development or redevelopment in the borough, and particularly King's Lynn.

Standards

We have recommended above that a high level of design quality and sustainability standards should be insisted upon for all new developments. There are also a range of other aspects for which planning policies should be formulated if they do not already exist, which will relate to new development, such as parking and landscaping. Appropriate policies should therefore be put in place to ensure delivery is controlled to the aspired standards, and to facilitate new types of residential development e.g. town centre low-car living.

This is particularly important for sites which are outside Council control, as once sites have been transferred to the private development market it is

often very difficult to keep maintain control of what is happening on the ground without a high level of resources to monitor.

Consents, conditions and contributions

To strengthen the likely compliance of new development delivery with the proposals put forward, planning consents should be conditioned, particularly as regards design, elevational treatments and landscaping proposals. Whilst this may seem an unduly high burden on new development, particularly in the early stages of site delivery where there are no precedents to cite, it is precisely this maintenance of quality, particularly in setting the tone on early schemes, which will ensure the long-term attractiveness of King's Lynn as a place to live and work.

Agreements should also be sought which elicit developer contributions for a range of aspects, as appropriate to the scale and nature of the development being proposed. This could cover contributions towards education, public realm, transportation, We would suggest central funds be set up for these monies, and administered through sub-funds under the various headings as required. This will mean that funds can be targeted more effectively to key projects, and carry more weight than they might if taken in isolation on each development site.

Viability and market influences

This Urban Development Strategy has been prepared in response to many aspects, of which the property market is one, and what makes this plan viable and attractive in today's property market may not be so over the whole life of the masterplan. There may be opportunities which arise from strong markets and new niche products which the planning process should use to its advantage, there may also be market slumps which hinder development in the form desired. Planning controls must have the flexibility to respond to the market at any one time, and also to respond to changes in the marketplace over time.

This is not to say that the planning controls to deliver good quality schemes should be compromised in the face of weak markets and that policy should be a slave to the market, but rather that there should be an acknowledgement that there is scope to change the envisaged uses where there is opportunity to do so which would not be detrimental to the purpose of the masterplan as a whole, and wherever there are obstacles to market viability, that the influence of the planning context should not add to this such that development costs are prohibitive.

Affordable housing policy for example should provide the flexibility to respond to sites where there may be marginal viability due to high engineering or infrastructure cost burdens on the development. Affordable housing creates an additional cost to the development due to the reduced income it generates to a developer compared to private market housing. Therefore if a site has marginal viability, reducing the level of affordable housing required may be one way to increase the viability of development, and facilitate its delivery.

We would recommend that each site be assessed on its individual merits, and that developers and planning officers work together with an eye to viability, to create schemes which are able to contribute successfully to policy requirements and contributions.

Property

Survey

Investigation of the service capacities of the various sites identified for development will be required, to understand where reinforcement of existing utilities may be needed and the accompanying cost implications which may arise.

Detailed survey work will need to be undertaken on most sites prior to development - this is usually something which will be taken on by the party carrying out the development, although certain surveys, such as geological and topographical surveys are helpful in the marketing stages of development sites, to assist prospective purchasers in identifying scheme layouts, potential for value generation and cost implications of development.

Existing ownerships

A full review of title on all of the specific development sites, i.e. land and property ownerships and tenancy arrangements, should be implemented at the earliest opportunity, to understand the interests which need to be acquired to redevelop the sites. The number and nature of interests which exist will affect the length of time, cost and resources required to bring sites forward. To minimise the costs associated with aligning and acquiring interests will require detailed knowledge of notice periods and relevant legislation, and a programme for key dates should be identified following title review, so that acquisitions can be phased and managed effectively.

Aspirations and stakeholders

Where key landowners are known, and once key ownerships have been established, the steering committee should meet with these parties to understand their aspirations for the sites going forward, and to look at ways in which they might work together to maximise the potential of the sites and the contribution they may be able to make to the overall renaissance strategy.

Acquisitions

Where sites are subject to interests other than the council's, there will be a need for negotiations to acquire the interest. Depending on circumstances, this land assembly could be undertaken by the council, with a view to then taking an assembled site to the development market, or directly by a private developer wishing to bring forward development proposals.

In the event that agreement cannot be reached with landowners regarding bringing key sites forward for development, the council should be prepared to utilise its compulsory purchase powers where appropriate, taking care to ensure in any land acquisitions that they are not leaving themselves open to ransom situations. Therefore if it is envisaged that CPO will be utilised, there should be a CPO strategy formulated at an early stage.

Where the council is a freeholder of the sites, there should be scope for an earlier start than perhaps where there are a number of private interests which may either need aligning or acquiring before any development can commence. On freehold sites there is the opportunity for the council to show that they are making early gains and visible changes which in turn can encourage private investment on other sites which the market may not have initially identified.

Relocation strategy

Some sites identified for development are likely to require partial if not complete relocation of a number of commercial occupiers to be able to deliver sites with vacant possession. To avoid losing these employers from the town altogether, a strategy should be drawn up for properly relocating businesses, in conjunction with the businesses themselves. This should ensure that business priorities are met as far as possible, and they do not suffer in either the short or long term as a result of their relocation.

Compensation

On development sites where there are active businesses or residential properties, tenants/residents may be entitled to statutory compensation for costs incurred through disturbance, relocation and reduction in trade. What compensation may be due will be very site specific, and can be more clearly identified once title has been assessed in detail.

Phasing

Programming

A key part of taking proposals forward effectively will be strong project management planning from the outset, with clear identification of goals and timescales for achieving these.

There should also be a regular review of these objectives, to assess progress, identify where progress has not been made and implement new approaches where necessary to respond to this.

Development parcels

To assist in phasing development opportunities to the market, and tying the delivery of these into the overriding strategies identified in the Urban Development Strategy, a plan of all development sites identified in the town centre area should be drawn up. This plan can draw on the residential sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study, but should also overlap retail, leisure and employment development opportunities.

These layers should then be reviewed and consolidated into marketable parcels and an over-riding indicative use and/or envisaged programme of improvement works compiled on a site-by-site basis from the layers identified. This map can then be taken to developers and be used to promote specific opportunities dependant on the specialism of the developer and the strength of the market at any one time. Site areas will assist developers in considering the potential quantum of development on each site.

Such a plan will aid planning and phasing acquisitions to avoid ransom situations (where control of access strips is not secured early on, or acquisitions leave single and vulnerable access points over which a landowner can elicit excessive values due to its strategic importance to the masterplan delivery).

A review of existing site values will assist in understanding those sites which may be brought forward early and those which may have to be delayed until market conditions are such that existing site values can be overcome by development value potential.

Funding

There is an expectation that the majority of the residential and commercial development required as outlined in the Urban Development Strategy will be brought forward by the private development market.

Notwithstanding this, for items which are in the public good, or where there may be viability barriers to stand-alone private funding, there will be a need to establish sources of funding, whether this be through grant applications, from existing public revenue sources, from new fundraising initiatives, or by drawing monies from viable private development market schemes, for example through S106 contributions and/or requiring construction of public facilities in parallel with the private element.

Private development market and feasibility

To understand which of the specific development sites can be brought forward through the private development market, we recommend that further detailed design work on the site proposals be done to a level which enables costs and values to be assessed, and financial appraisals to be prepared. This will identify which schemes are financially viable proposals, and which sites might require funding interventions to make them viable and attractive to the development market.

Where external funding may be required to bridge viability gaps, sources will need to be identified and an active programme of promotion of sites to these sources implemented.

Opportunity promotion and securing market interest

Generally, developers are risk averse, therefore attracting market interest has to pinpoint the likely success of the scheme, by firstly promoting the strength of opportunity and secondly being able to offer as much security as possible as to limit perceived downsides.

On the first point, King's Lynn is, in some property product areas, an untested market, which could deter potential developers perceiving that where there is no evidence of a product selling well, there is no market.

Equally there are developers who are always seeking new opportunities and are prepared to take the risk in such untested locations, simply because there is less initial competition, sites are consequently cheaper to acquire, there is a restricted supply of the end product to uphold values and the upside has the potential to be so much greater. Opportunities which could be promoted in this respect include there being no real developed market for high density urban lifestyle living in the historic centre, or any real waterfront property market. This is despite the fact that King's Lynn has the physical potential to offer both of these, and in Cambridge, less than half an hour away by train, these are both extremely strong sectors. Central King's Lynn could be promoted as an affordable alternative.

On the latter point, maintaining a dataroom of any documents relating to the Urban Development Strategy, which can be referred to by interested parties, will assist in promoting and selling the sites when they are ready to be taken to the market, by providing increased security on the planning side. The greater security that can be given on additional items of concern to a developer in the marketing of development opportunities, the greater interest there is likely to be from the market, and higher are the values likely to be secured.

Useful documents will include:

- Masterplan documents
- Consultation documents and publicity – e.g. newsletters, website details.
- Planning policy extracts – relevant local, regional and national information
- Planning briefs – draft and adopted
- Planning decision histories
- Title documents – e.g. reports on title, title maps, tenancy and ownership schedules
- Mapping – e.g. site boundaries, policy maps, title maps, OS mapping
- Surveys – e.g. topography, geotechnical, condition surveys, flood risk analysis, environmental surveys, listed buildings, rights to light, drainage surveys, hazardous materials
- Consultant studies – e.g. transport surveys, market research
- Council policy studies – e.g. housing need assessment
- Council documents relating to masterplanning process – meeting notes, reports, approvals, endorsements
- Funding bid documents and funding resource information

Information can be collated in hard copy, by physically collecting in one place (such as at the council's offices), or electronically, which offers more flexibility as regards retrieval, replication and dissemination. The other advantage of storing this information electronically is that it is less likely to become separated or be removed by viewing parties.

Development fund

The Urban Development Strategy proposes a whole range of actions which are not necessarily related to site specific developments, and therefore lack a direct source of funding from development projects and are neither likely to be actioned in the course of site development. This notably includes infrastructure and public realm improvements.

Pooling developer contributions towards implementing the principles in the Urban Development Strategy, and administering these centrally for a defined programme of works will allow a co-ordinated approach to public works to be undertaken. This requires the creation of a ring-fenced fund by BCKL&WN, or any regeneration delivery vehicle which might be created, and the identification of spending priorities to distribute these funds in a targeted manner.

Regeneration companies

The Urban Regeneration Company (URC) approach to leading and coordinating the redevelopment of, and new investment in, declining urban areas, was proposed in the Government's Urban White Paper in 2000.

This set out the role of URCs in delivering change on the ground, through a partnership approach uniting national, regional and local public and private stakeholders in key urban areas.

Given the comparatively recent promotion of such companies, and the diverse nature of the groups within each company, the structure and role of these bodies is varied, and continues to evolve. The focus of promotion can be different from group to group depending on the type of area included under the URC's umbrella, but roles are often multi-headed and can include acting as consultant and/or facilitator and/or direct developer for regeneration schemes.

There are currently 21 URCs in existence, the nearest examples to King's Lynn being in Peterborough and in Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft.

In most cases, URCs' operating costs are funded by the three key public sector organisations involved in them, namely the relevant RDA (in this case it would be EEDA), the Local Authority and English Partnerships.

A URC does not actually have any additional resources or powers over and above those that the partners themselves are willing to commit, its strength in delivery rather lies offering a co-ordinated rather than ad-hoc approach to promoting the area and attracting investment, and creating a catalyst for bodies to work together for change. However, with joint funding from a range of stakeholders, it does take the financial pressure of delivering change in an area off the sole shoulders of the local authority.

Given EP's involvement in Nar Ouse and the South Lynn Millennium Community schemes, it is worth exploring further the potential of such a delivery vehicle at an early stage.

Even if the formal URC structure cannot be implemented due to strong demand on resources, there are a number of ways partnering arrangements which draw in participation from across the board of interested parties, and some sort of co-ordinated lead approach should be embraced for the reasons identified above.

Delivery vehicles

There are many ways in which delivery vehicles can be structured, and in terms of taking forward the Urban Development Strategy as a whole, it is likely that there will be site specific delivery vehicles needed in addition to an overreaching one such as the regeneration company outlined above including all sites, primarily because of the diverse and disparate nature of the sites included. On individual sites, the optimum vehicle will need to be established in light of financial and legal advice.

It is envisaged that the majority of these sites will be taken forward by the private development sector. However, there is likely to be a facilitatory role for BCKL&WN in preparing sites for development and co-ordinating funding applications which may be required to kick-start private sector developer interest.

On sites where the landowners wish to retain an interest in development going forward, there will be a need to consider partnership arrangements such as joint ventures with developers. Any declarations as to mutual interest which can be secured at an early stage, however loose, will give

clarity to delivery objectives, and speed delivery on these sites. A "Memorandum of Understanding" for example, between parties to the principle of investing their respective landholdings in a partnership to secure agreed objectives, is one way of doing this. The memorandum could define the receipts expected, and the income profile of this, for example a mixture of capital and revenue receipts expected through leasing of, or disposal of land by the partnership, monies which can be reinvested in the regeneration area until all of the partnership's objectives (as agreed by both parties) have been delivered.

Another initiative which is currently undergoing extensive piloting, is Local Area Agreements (LAAs). As a resource it is under ongoing development and will respond to feedback from the pilots, but the rationale is to set out a new approach to deliver better services based on shared priorities between Government, local authorities and their partners. Pilots are currently underway in 21 areas, and the ODPM intend to put a further round of 40 pilots in place by April 2006.

Funding landscape

Crucially to take many of these aspects forward will require sources of funding, as it is unlikely that the local authority will be able to find resources to dedicate to the strategy without financial assistance. However, the funding landscape in the UK is extremely complex and there are a high number of disparate sources which might be pursued. Purely applying for grants can also take an incredible amount of staff time in co-ordinating deadlines, completing submissions and filling in applications. Ideally it needs someone to take charge of overseeing this specific aspect of the regeneration strategy and monitor timetables so that any sources which may be beneficial are tapped to the best of their potential.

We have included a schedule of many of the main sources of funding as an appendix to this document, to assist in identifying where additional funding may be forthcoming. We would note though, that from year to year these funds change and evolve. Central government is also driving to streamline the number of overlapping funding channels. Many of these are therefore likely to be pulled together in future and we would recommend that the funding landscape is monitored and the mapping table be kept up-to-date as an ongoing project management tool.

Contact

The profile of the Urban Renaissance Strategy should be maintained in a visible and accessible format. There are a number of ways which this can be done, including:

- Dedicated website with plan information, overview of current development and retrospective of developed sites
- Newsletters to inform of progress and key gains
- Display in visible location in the town centre – shop front or in council run facility
- Local press coverage
- Contact details for key personnel, for both public access and resident liaison and investment/developer interest

The relevant contact on the steering committee should be identified.

Further sources of information

There are an array of web-based resources which can be accessed to identify further information as may be required to assist in delivering the Urban Development Strategy for King's Lynn.

As a starting point, the following websites are particularly useful as regards delivering regeneration projects and include a wealth of relevant publications, best practice examples, case studies and links through to additional sources of information and personnel.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

- aim is to create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities for the 21st century, places where people want to live, that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all:

www.odpm.gov.uk

English Partnerships (EP)

- national regeneration agency helping the Government to produce high quality sustainable growth in England:

www.englishpartnerships.co.uk

Government Office for the East of England

- covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Brings together into a single operation the varied regional activities of a range of Government departments with the aim of making the region a better place to live and work:

www.go-east.gov.uk

East of England Development Agency (EEDA)

- driving force behind sustainable economic growth and regeneration in the East of England. Task is to improve the region's economic performance and ensure the East of England remains one of the UK's top performing regions:

www.eeda.org.uk

Government portal site to assist in finding and negotiating different funding sources:

www.governmentfunding.org.uk

Urban Regeneration Companies

- clear and informative website giving an overview of these private legal entities and their role in the urban regeneration process. Managed and maintained by EP and the ODPM with background information, practical resources and links to the 21 URC's currently in existence:

www.urcs-online.co.uk

Association of Town Centre Management

- dedicated to helping town and city centres realise their natural roles both as prosperous locations for business and investment, and as focal points for vibrant, inclusive communities. Includes examples of case studies and award winners:

www.atcm.org

British Urban Regeneration Association

- charitable, not-for-profit organisation promoting best practice in all aspects of regeneration, and providing a forum for the exchange of ideas, experience and information in this field:

www.bura.org.uk

Housing Corporation

- non-departmental public body funded by the ODPM. Role is to fund and regulate housing associations in England:

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

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