

Report to: Development and Regeneration
Scrutiny Committee

Date: 2nd July 2007

Bolton Council

Report of: Director of Development and
Regeneration

Report No: DRSC/08/07

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Report Title: **Bolton Mills Action Framework Update**

Non Confidential: (***Non-Confidential***) This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.

Purpose: To update Members on the good progress being made in implementing the Bolton Mills Action Framework.

Recommendations: Members are asked to note the progress being made on the implementation of the Bolton Mills Action Framework.

Decision:

**Background
Doc(s):**

Bolton Mills Action Framework Update

1. Introduction

1.1 In November 2006 the Executive Member for Development approved the Bolton Mills Action Framework, commissioned from King Sturge LLP, and the proposed plan of its implementation which was endorsed by members of the Bolton Strategic Economic Partnership in Sept 2006.

1.2 The aim of the study was to work with a selection of mill owners and other stakeholders to review planning policy and develop an action plan with a toolkit of interventions, to secure the best use of mill properties or sites for high quality employment or, where appropriate, mixed use opportunities. Sustainability, design standards, best practice, respect for heritage, and optimising economic viability; were all equally important and were considered as part of the study.

1.3 The Bolton Mills Action Framework identified 7 Key Objectives:

- To recognise the value of Bolton's mills;
- To conserve the best of Bolton's Industrial Heritage;
- To maximise Bolton's available employment space and provide a 'ladder of accommodation' of varying values;
- To preserve local distinctiveness;
- To ensure that mills are an asset to the communities they sit within rather than a liability;
- To diversify the uses of mills; and
- To recognise that not all mills are an asset to the Communities they sit within – prioritise the best.

1.4 The following Actions were adopted as priority and a prioritised delivery plan was completed (view appendix 1):

- Assessment and Prioritisation of all the mills in Bolton;
- To develop and adopt innovative and flexible planning and land-use policies
- To improve engagement and communication with mill owners and other stakeholders
- Make representation to MPs, MEPs and regional bodies such as the NWRDA to raise the profile and knowledge of mills.

1.5 This report seeks to update Members on the progress made to date with the implementation of the Action Framework focussing on the four priorities above especially the completion of the pilot assessment, the prioritisation of the six Great Lever Mills, and to note the proposed way forward to complete the assessment and prioritisation of the remaining 102 mills in the borough.

2 Implementation Update

2.

2.1 Priority 1: Assessment and Prioritisation of the Borough's mills

The Council intends to assess and prioritise all the mills in the borough by the end of March 2008 in order for the results to be used as evidence to support any changes in planning policy, as discussed in 2.3 and to identify and prioritise other actions as appropriate.

2.2 Pilot Study

2.2.1 In order to test and refine the methodology to be used to assess the mills in Bolton, a pilot assessment and prioritisation of six mills was completed in March 2007, in consultation with various stakeholders - mill owners, members of the local community within which the mills sit and Council Officers in planning, conservation, economic development, business liaison, inward investment and regeneration. The pilot study enabled the methodology to be tested, problems identified and ironed out, and for a better estimation of the time and resources needed to complete the whole task to be gained. The pilot study assessed the following six mills located in the Neighbourhood Renewal Area of Great Lever:

- Swan Lane No 1&2
- Swan Lane No 3
- Burnden Bleachworks
- Hartford Tannery
- Moor Mill
- Haslam Mill

2.2.2 The mills were assessed on the three main criteria, developed for the Council by King Sturge, using specialists from within the Council:

- Heritage Value – Social and Historical Significance; Rarity/Importance; Listed Status; and Townscape.
- Regeneration Value – Catalytic Effect; Condition/Risk; Viability; and Physical Adaptability.
- Value to the economy – The contribution that a mill currently makes to the local economy; and the potential that a mill has for contributing to the local economy.

2.2.3 The pilot work was carried out in consultation with many stakeholders, and its results are therefore particularly rigorous and defensible.

2.2.4 Discussions were held with all the owners of the mills in the pilot study where an understanding was gained on their future aspirations for the mill buildings. These ideas were fed into the scoring.

2.2.5 In partnership with planning charity North West Planning Aid (NWPAs) three sessions were held with two local schools where a brief talk on

the Mills project was given and the children were encouraged to produce a piece of artwork, on the theme of the future use of mill buildings, to be displayed at the Community Consultation 'drop-in' events. The sessions were held with St William of York (5th & 12th February) and Clarendon Primary School (6th February).

2.2.6 Two community consultation events were held at 'The Melting Pot', St Philips Church Hall, Great Lever, where members of the public were invited to attend and to comment on the six mills involved in the pilot study. Although limited numbers attended, enough comments were received to enter a community opinion score into the matrix.

2.2.7 The methodology has proved successful in giving us an evidence base to assess:-

- The mills that we should retain for their overall contribution to heritage, place, and local regeneration
- The mills that do not make any positive contribution and so could be lost without detriment.
- The mills and sites which have an economic value and where it would be important to retain or replace employment use in a future re-use or redevelopment.

2.2.8 It is now proposed that the methodology be rolled out across the remainder of the mills using current Council resources to be completed by March 2008.

2.2.9 Officers are also using the methodology as a "rapid response" tool to respond to planning applications and development proposals on mill buildings, in advance of rolling out the methodology across the remaining 102 mills.

2.2.10 Mill owners are also actively encouraged to participate in the assessment and prioritisation process by getting in touch with Council Officers to discuss the future of their Mill.

2.2.11 It would not be practicable to repeat the level of community consultation undertaken during the pilot stage. However the community views are an important contribution to the overall score. Working in conjunction with the Marketing & Communications Agency's Consultation Team and colleagues in Neighbourhood Management a more effective programme has been developed to ensure the future involvement of the community will be more focused.

2.2.12 The community involvement programme will consist of:

- Area focus groups from the Citizens Panel – 11 area based focus groups will meet to discuss and score the mills.

- Community Group involvement – area based via Neighbourhood Management and the Community Involvement Team. Upwards of 60 Groups on the Community Group mailing list will be offered the opportunity to participate in the study.
- An online questionnaire on the Bolton Council website – this will be promoted to ensure as many people as possible complete the questionnaire.

2.3 Priority 2: Planning Policy – To develop and adopt flexible planning and land use policies including the introduction of an Employment Development Land Fund from planning obligations (Section 106).

- 2.3.1 The possible introduction of a fund to mitigate the loss of employment land to other uses is being pursued through preparation of the Council's Core Strategy and Allocations Plan. One key part of this Strategy will be the development of policies that will set out the criteria against which planning applications for the development and use of land and buildings will be considered. In addition, the Council's approach to the use of planning obligations will also be included.
- 2.3.2 Currently the Council's policies on planning contributions focus mainly on residential development, with the exception of public art. Bolton's Unitary Development Plan also sets out specific requirements for affordable housing, open space and public art. In addition it has more general policies about the requirement of new housing to consider the capacity of existing infrastructure, and securing the greatest degree of access by all modes, but particularly public transport, walking and cycling.
- 2.3.3 Through Core Strategy Issues and Options development the range of infrastructure being sought through planning obligations is being re-considered. New development does create pressure on other forms of infrastructure not fully covered by the existing policies. One of the themes of the Bolton Economic Strategy is to increase sustainable economic investment. Residents of new housing need access to employment as well as to other facilities and so there is a case for building a fund to help achieve sustainable economic investment. Paying into the fund could also mitigate the loss of employment land and property to other uses. This concept is described as an employment loss mitigation fund and would be relevant to those mills that have a current economic value.
- 2.3.4 One option therefore being suggested is to retain or widen the types of infrastructure covered by planning contributions, for example to include an employment related fund.
- 2.3.5 Testing of such an option in principle will take place initially through consultation on Issues and Options during July and August this year. The approach will then need to be refined as the Core Strategy is progressed to adoption.

2.4 Priorities 3 & 4: Engagement and communication with mill owners and other stakeholders including the provision of technical assistance to mill owners.

2.4.1 The Council have put a number of marketing and communications measures into action in order to improve the engagement and communication with the mill owners and other stakeholders inclusive of Members, MPs, MEPs and regional bodies such as the NWRDA.

- Branding and distribution of the Bolton Mills Action Framework (Jan 07)
- Production and distribution of newsletter (Jan 07)
- Web presence on Bolton Council's website (Jan 07)
- Press Releases (ongoing)

2.4.2 Mill owners have been given the opportunity, via the newsletter and the dedicated webpage on the Council's website, to contact the Council to request technical advice and assistance. To date around a dozen mill owners have contacted the Council to either show an interest in the project or to arrange a meeting to discuss their future plans. The feedback received on the work being undertaken by the Council has been positive.

3 Next Steps

3.1 Work is on schedule to complete the assessment and prioritisation of all the mills by March 2008 and to continue the engagement and communication with mill owners. The development of planning policy and site allocations will then be prioritised to support the development of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to note the progress being made on the implementation of the Bolton Mills Action Framework.

Bolton Mills Action Framework Delivery Plan

16 month Implementation Plan — 13th November 2006 - 31st March 2008 APPENDIX 1

| Action | Task & Purpose | Implementation plan 13/11/06-31/03/08 |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Mills Assessment and Prioritisation (Priority 1) | The Council intends to assess and prioritise all the mills in the borough by end March 2008 (Phase 2) in order for the results to be used as evidence to support any changes in planning policy and development and regeneration activities. | <p>Phase 1 (2006/07): A pilot of 6 Mills will be assessed, within the Neighbourhood Renewal Area of Great Lever, by end March 2007.</p> <p>Phase 2 (2007/08): The remaining 102 Mills from the Mills Survey will be assessed by end March 2008.</p> <p>Delivered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regeneration & Economic Development Division (REDD) - Community Consultations - Neighbourhood Renewal and North West Planning Aid Service - Heritage – Planning/Conservation Officers |
| 2. Planning Policy Recommendations (Priority 2) | The Council will seek to develop and adopt flexible planning and land-use policies including the introduction of an Employment Development Land Fund from planning obligations (Section 106) taking into account the opportunities to make changes to planning policy when the Local Development Framework (LDF) replaces the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). | A relevant SPD Planning Control Policy Note 1 (PCPN1) Planning Obligations is already proposed in the Council's Local Development Scheme. This will look at Agreements to be used for development control purposes for a range of uses. This is timetabled currently to be the final PCPN to be prepared with work due to commence in July 2008 and adoption in July 2009. |
| | <p>Use of Planning-based Regenerative Studies.</p> <p>Use of Compulsory Purchase Orders.</p> <p>Use of Listed Building & Conservation Area designations.</p> | <p>Actions will be progressed as a result of the outcome of the Assessment and Prioritisation Exercise (March 2008)</p> |
| 3. Assisting Mill Owners (Priority 3) | <p>Newsletters</p> <p>Website</p> <p>Technical assistance to mill owners</p> <p>Information pack</p> | <p>Annual Newsletter to be produced.</p> <p>Dedicated link to web pages on the Council Website to be created.</p> <p>In-house database of mill owners to be produced.</p> <p>A series of workshops topics to be identified by end March 2007.</p> <p>Workshops to be organised based on topics chosen by mill owners 2007/08.</p> <p>Copies of the Bolton Mills Action Framework to be circulated amongst mill owners.</p> <p>Delivered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - REDD - Communications & Marketing Agency |

| Action | Task & Purpose | Implementation plan 13/11/06-31/03/08 |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 4. Attracting Occupiers | <p>The Council will seek to maximise occupancy of all Bolton's mills with sustainable users.</p> <p>Register of vacant commercial space at no cost.</p> | <p>The Council will include the opportunities Mill properties present in any discussions regarding investment/relocation and start-ups.</p> <p>The opportunity for the Council to market the vacant space in the Mill buildings will be advertised to Mill owners through: the production of newsletters; press releases; and via the web.</p> <p>Delivered by: - REDD - Communications & Marketing Agency</p> |
| 5. Promotion (Priority 4) | <p>Positive use of the media</p> <p>National Mills Conference</p> <p>Lobbying of key stakeholders</p> | <p>The Council will provide press releases to the regional and local press.</p> <p>The National Mills Conference organisers are to be approached to allow Bolton Council to undertake a presentation at the next Conference 13th & 14th June 2007, Birmingham.</p> <p>The Council will raise awareness of Key Stakeholders by providing information on the Bolton Mills Action Framework including any newsletters produced. The Council will lobby and make representation with key stakeholders to influence policy and plans.</p> <p>Delivered by: - REDD - Communications & Marketing Agency</p> |
| 6. Funding | <p>Funding opportunities</p> <p>Establishment of an Employment Land Development Fund</p> | <p>The Council will provide guidance on when and where funding may be attainable for mill owners. Newsletters and information sheets will be produced to relay this information.</p> <p>New funding opportunities will be proactively sought and targeted as they arrive.</p> <p>Where applicable, the Council will look to obtain compensation payment (under Section 106) for the loss of employment space to other higher value uses; and to establish a fund which can be used to provide assistance to employment projects in mill buildings.</p> <p>Delivered by: - Planning - REDD - Communications & Marketing Agency</p> |
| 7. Delivery | <p>Ensuring delivery of Action Framework</p> <p>Monitoring and review</p> | <p>The Council will maintain its support for the Mills Action Framework. The Council will co-ordinate and undertake implementation of the plan, subject to resources.</p> <p>Annual Progress Report to Members.</p> <p>Annual Occupancy data update – Data Management to be agreed by Business Rates Team.</p> <p>Delivered by: - REDD - Business Rates Team</p> |