Cinderford Business Plan
Executive Summary
December 2007
Overview

The Cinderford Business Plan, published in its final form in December 2007, sets out a ten year action plan for the regeneration the town. Overall the Business Plan aims to make Cinderford:

- A model of sustainable new development;
- A more desirable and affordable place to live;
- A more exciting place to work and do business;
- A more fun and imaginative place to play and visit;
- A more accessible place which is well connected;
- A more attractive, green and sustainable environment;
- A more active community with better facilities; and
- A more supportive and inclusive place to learn.

Based on consultation, technical analysis and examination of a wide range of baseline data, a series of projects and initiatives have been identified which have the potential to regenerate Cinderford and deliver a step change in quality of life for local people. The Business Plan presents a rationale for these interventions and sets out a framework within which key projects can be taken forward.

This Executive Summary provides an overview of the key projects recommended for implementation by the Business Plan. These are organised under the eight headings listed above. However, it is important to recognise that many projects would contribute to the achievement of one or more objectives and that, together, they offer opportunities to achieve significant regeneration.

The projects identified by the Business Plan require action across various sites within and around the town. However, the key opportunity for regeneration and redevelopment is for land to the north of Cinderford (incorporating Northern United, existing sites allocated in the Local Plan and the area around Steam Mills Lake), referred to by the Business Plan as the Northern Quarter. This large swathe of land has the potential to accommodate a range of facilities and land uses which will go a long way to meeting the overall regeneration objectives of the town. A number of sites in the town centre also offer significant opportunity to deliver improvements. Figure E.1 provides an overview of the spatial strategy recommended by the Business Plan - this indicates where it is anticipated that development will take place over the next ten years.
Figure E.2 shows the preferred option for the Northern Quarter. The key elements of the vision for this area are:

- A new tree-lined avenue linking the A4136 to Valley Road;
- A new college campus adjacent to Steam Mills Lake;
- A new hotel in a visible location adjacent to the new road and enjoying views across the Forest. This would be located next to the college and have links to hospitality, catering and training facilities;
- A mixed use development on Northern United, potentially incorporating a biomass plant (within the site or on adjacent land) to provide a sustainable source of power for the regeneration area;
- A site for high quality employment, including offices, adjacent to the new road;
- An area of residential led mixed use development which is well integrated to the natural landscape;
- A new flagship multi use activity centre, located close to the new college campus and adjacent to new housing areas;
- Areas of retained and improved woodland and grassland;
- New footway and cycle links integrating both with cross county routes such as the Gloucestershire Way, and linking with the town centre;
- The retention of the Local Plan allocation Cinderford 5 for housing (albeit reduced to take account of likely flood risk issues);
- Retention and enlargement of Local Plan site Cinderford 2, to incorporate land to the east; and
- Improvements to Steam Mills lake, with access retained for anglers, walkers and cyclists.

In addition, linked to these proposals, the Business Plan recognises the importance of:

- Enhancing and revitalising the existing industrial estate and in particular making more efficient and effective use of land, in order to provide a continued supply of appropriate employment sites;
- The retention of Local Plan site 9, albeit potentially reduced to take account of flood risk issues; and
- Potential redevelopment of the cricket ground, either for the relocation of the football club or for employment uses.

The town centre is also an important site in its own right and redevelopment and regeneration in this area offers significant opportunities to deliver the overall objectives of the Business plan. Figure E.3 provides an overview of the recommended strategy for the town centre. Two different categories of potential redevelopment are identified:

- Firstly, smaller scale redevelopment opportunities within single plots located at key gateways to the town. These include the vacant warehouse adjacent to Lidl, the ‘new shops’ (containing the Spar) on High Street, Merretts newsagents on the corner of Heywood Road and the former toilet block on Woodside Street; and
- Secondly, more significant, comprehensive opportunities for redevelopment two larger sites which are currently in multiple ownerships.

Site 1 includes land to the rear of Westgate Store/in front of the Miners Welfare Hall and is envisaged to provide an opportunity for mixed use development which could incorporate an enhanced pedestrian link between the town centre and the Miners Welfare Hall and better link the hall with the retail area, so that it can effectively function as an ‘anchor’ to the northern part of the town.

Site 2 includes land between Heywood Road and the Co-op/health centre car park and is identified as a potential opportunity to deliver new retail led development, and create a new pedestrian shopping street linking the Triangle to the supermarkets on Dockham Road.
Figure E.2 - Indicative masterplan of the preferred option for the Northern Quarter
Figure E.3 Opportunities for longer term redevelopment in the Town Centre

Site 1

Site 2
A model of sustainable new development

**Aim:** To promote Cinderford as a regional model of sustainable new development and management, and reduce the town’s ‘carbon footprint’.

**Key projects**

1. Develop a biomass facility as an integral part of the Northern Quarter proposals. This will provide a sustainable source of heat and power for new and existing development in the northern area of Cinderford.

2. Ensure that all new residential development in Cinderford seeks to meet Government targets for reducing carbon emissions meaning that new homes should be zero carbon by 2016. In the meantime, improvements over current performances will be sought with a view to ensuring that residential developments emit 25% less carbon than they do now by 2010 and 44% less by 2013. The highest standards of sustainability will be promoted, in particular, throughout the Northern Quarter. Development will be expected to comply with English Partnership’s ‘Quality Standards’, which require projects starting before April 2010 to achieve the Code for Sustainable Homes code level 3, projects after this date to demonstrate code level 4 and projects starting after April 2014 to achieve code level 6.

3. All new office, industrial and other development in Cinderford will also aim towards higher levels of sustainability. Non-residential development in the Northern Quarter will achieve at least a BREEAM rating of ‘very good’. On the existing industrial estate a lower rating may be acceptable but developers will, nevertheless, be expected to demonstrate good standards of design and energy efficiency.

4. There will be an emphasis on predominantly local materials, in particular local timber and locally sourced brick. Methods of measuring and monitoring the use of local materials should be introduced.

5. There will be an emphasis on predominantly local labour and projects taken forward as a result of this Business Plan should be used as a mechanism for training as well as for showcasing local skills.

6. The urban fabric as a whole will be designed to minimise the use of energy, water, and other natural resources, both in construction and in operation. Recycling and the sustainable management of waste will be encouraged, and new development will contribute to improved air and water quality.
7. Specifically in terms of water, developers will be expected to incorporate mechanisms for rainwater harvesting, grey water recycling and other methods which reduce consumption.

8. Innovation and careful thought will form a key part of the design approach for each building and space. For example, it is anticipated that buildings and public spaces will be laid out to make the most of solar gain.

9. New buildings will be designed to retain heat in winter and to disperse heat in summer, minimising the need for heating and air conditioning. Wherever possible, construction materials will be sourced on site keeping transport to a minimum.

10. New development, especially in the Northern Quarter will, where appropriate, be truly mixed use. It will incorporate all the facilities and land uses needed to enable it to become a viable community.

11. The use of sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) will allow rainwater and other surface runoff to soak into the ground, as it would if the land were undeveloped, rather than being piped to the nearest watercourse. This ensures that the impact of the new community on runoff rates will be neutral.

12. New development will be designed to relate well to the surrounding landscape, enhancing existing environmental assets and providing new recreational resources.

13. Opportunities for improving the energy efficiency and sustainability of existing buildings should be investigated. Home owners should be given the advice and support required for them to improve energy efficiency. Opportunities for micro generation, for example through community wind turbines or photovoltaics will also be encouraged.

14. The scope for recycling ex-mining/spoil tip material to provide fill material for new road/cycleway infrastructure will be investigated.

**Emerging LDF**

The emerging Local Development Framework is likely to reflect guidance set out in the PPS1 consultation document on Climate Change, by introducing a policy which requires new development to generate their own power from sustainable sources.

The proposed LDF policy will read “The Council will require all developments, either new build or conversion, with a combined floor-space of 500m², or one or more residential units, to incorporate on-site renewable energy equipment to reduce predicted CO2 emissions by at least 10%” New development in Cinderford will therefore be expected to, at least, comply with this policy.
A desirable and affordable place to live

**Aim:** To provide a mix of new housing types, deliver more affordable housing for first time buyers and low income families and make better use of the existing housing stock.

**Key projects:**
1. Develop a mix of housing types and tenures, showcasing the highest standards of sustainable design and construction, as part of a mixed use, mixed tenure scheme for the Northern Quarter. Development of Housing Association and shared equity schemes will be encouraged.
2. Allocate the site of Cinderford Football Club for housing, following the relocation of the Club to an improved location with new facilities.
3. Facilitate the relocation of the abattoir in order to bring forward the current Local Plan allocation.
4. Encourage take up of the District Council’s ‘living over the shop’ grant for conversions of spaces above shops in the town centre.
5. Incorporate town centre housing through appropriate conversion of vacant plots and retail units and as part of a comprehensive redevelopment of the area to the rear of the existing Westgate store.
6. Encourage existing homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient and sustainable, and hence cheaper to run, through the provision of information and advice.
An exciting place to work and do business

Aim: To stimulate economic development which raises the skills level of the local workforce, providing higher skilled and higher paid employment and opportunities for self employment.

Key projects:

1. Provide starter units for new small businesses as part of a mixed use development at the Northern Quarter. These should be linked to an overall start-up strategy for the District.
2. Provide office accommodation, in an attractive setting, to kick start this sector, as part of the mixed use development of the Northern Quarter.
3. Provide serviced land for other employers, both as part of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Northern Quarter and as part of a programme of intensified use of the industrial estate.
4. Provide improved access to the Northern Quarter and the industrial estate via a new tree lined avenue linking Valley Road to the A4136.
5. Improve the overall image of the existing industrial area through the implementation of a greening strategy and potentially through a change of name and remarketing as a Business Park.- this will help improve the overall image and attract higher quality, higher wage employers.
6. Undertake a publicity and marketing campaign to encourage new businesses to locate in Cinderford.
7. Work with businesses to help identify requirements and sites at an early stage.
8. Focus on delivering vocational training and skills tailored to the needs of local businesses through the Learning Plan.
9. Ensure that all new workspaces are fully IT enabled.
10. Encourage new retail development in the town centre, where this is compatible with the existing retail offer.
An accessible place which is well connected

*Aim:* To provide better road, pedestrian and cycle access both to, and within, Cinderford.

**Key projects:**

1. Provide a new tree lined avenue linking the A4136 to Valley Road in order to provide an attractive, high quality approach to the town and the new Northern Quarter development area, improve access to the existing industrial estate and bypass Steam Mills village.

2. Ensure that areas highlighted for new development in the Northern Quarter are sustainably linked to the town centre, for example via good footpath and cycle routes, as well as improved road links.

3. Encourage traffic to use alternative routes (via St. Whites Road and Valley Road) rather than pass through the town centre and improve these routes, key junctions, signing and on-street parking arrangements accordingly as part of a comprehensive traffic management strategy.

4. Implement a signing strategy to better direct traffic via appropriate routes.

5. Implement a 20mph speed limit in the town centre in order to reduce the dominance of traffic and make the environment more attractive to pedestrians.

6. Investigate opportunities to manage existing public car parks better, consider opportunities to provide additional public car parking in the town centre and ensure new development provides adequate parking to serve its own needs.

7. Make better use of existing privately owned car parks, by entering into agreements with landowners, especially for long-stay parking.

8. Improve pedestrian links to existing car parks and to the proposed Tesco car park (as in the Environmental Enhancement Study).

9. Provide new and improved cycle routes linking into other existing routes, into the Forest and to key destinations (for example, between Heywood School and the new college campus). Ensure that cycle parking is provided as an integral part of all new developments.

10. Ensure that new developments, including the proposed new college campus, are well served by public transport.

11. Implement attractive new ‘gateway features’ on the main approaches to Cinderford to mark the entrances to the town.
A more active community with better facilities

**Aim:** To provide significantly improved community facilities, to serve both the local population and also a wider catchment area.

**Key projects:**

1. Develop a multi-use community activity centre offering a range of facilities currently not available locally, such as an indoor skate park or climbing wall. This facility should serve local demand in the first instance, but should also take advantage of opportunities to attract visitors from further afield.

2. Support the refurbishment and extension of the Miners Welfare Hall, as proposed by Hannah Reynolds Associates.

3. Support the refurbishment of village halls and community centres in the area of influence where these can be demonstrated to provide facilities and are shown to be financially sustainable.

4. Undertake a feasibility study to support future non-health related development at the Dilke Hospital. Note that consideration of health care issues was outside of the brief for this study.

5. Encourage development of an improved retail and leisure offer in the town centre through land assembly and redevelopment to create modern shop units that will appeal to high street retailers, cafes and restaurants.

6. Support the continuation and improvement of leisure and community facilities including those offered at Heywood School, and facilities for local organisations such as the Leisure Centre/Sports facilities, Fitness Centre, Splinters Youth Group and Music Makers facility.

7. Work to support the aspirations and relocations of sports clubs including Cinderford Football Club and the Cricket Club.
An attractive, green and sustainable environment

**Aim:** To bring the quality and character of the forest and countryside surrounding Cinderford into the town itself and ensure that any new development respects its forest setting.

**Key projects:**

1. Undertake detailed ecological surveys of potential development areas, in particular of the Northern Quarter (now underway).
2. Ensure that designs for new development incorporate measures to maintain and promote biodiversity and create valuable habitats.
3. Ensure that areas of key woodland and grassland are retained and are incorporated as positive features within wider plans for redevelopment and regeneration.
4. Green key access routes into the town centre in order to create attractive routes which create a positive first impression of the town.
5. Improve and extend the Linear Park as a key space for outdoor leisure and recreation.
6. Utilise land at the southern end of the Linear Park for use as allotments.
7. Create a formal park and children’s play area as an integral part of the Linear Park, either on the site of the Rugby Training Ground or in the centre of the Linear Park.
8. Take advantage of opportunities to promote learning about the woodland environment, for example through the creation of a centre for interpretation. This could potentially be linked to the proposed hotel and gateway centre at the Northern Quarter.
9. Improving walking and cycling routes linking the town with the forest.
A fun and imaginative place to visit

**Aim:** To put Cinderford ‘on the map’ by giving visitors more of a reason to come to the area and ensuring that more people who visit the forest come into Cinderford itself.

**Key projects:**

1. In line with the 2002 Tourism Study and the District Council’s Tourism Strategy, promote the development of a high quality hotel as part of the Northern Quarter development.

2. Develop a ‘gateway’ or visitor centre at the new entrance to Cinderford to act as a one stop shop for tourist information and offer facilities for interpretation of the local environment and heritage. This could potentially be linked to the hotel - this would mean that buildings and car parks could be shared.

3. Exploit the proposed biomass facility as an educational tourism attraction and link this with facilities to interpret the coal mining history of the area.

4. Create an observation and interpretation platform at Drybrook Quarry and consider the future use of the quarry as a location for a tourist attraction.

5. Encourage the development of visitor attractions based around the enjoyment of the forest - such as cycle hire and walking routes.

6. Market the improved Linear Park as a key local attraction and resource.

7. Extend the Linear Park into the area to the west of Steam Mills lake and improve public access to the lake as a recreational resource.

8. Provide a new park with children’s play facilities, potentially on the site of the former Rugby Club Training Ground or elsewhere within the Linear Park, and ensure that there are safe, well signed pedestrian routes between it and the residential area and town centre.

9. Provide interpretation boards, explaining Cinderford’s history and heritage, in the town centre and at other key locations.
A supportive and inclusive place to learn

**Aim:** Promote lifelong learning to deliver sustainable economic development, social progress and health and well-being. Deliver the Cinderford Community Learning Plan.

**Key projects**
1. Support and encourage the role of the Royal Forest of Dean College as a provider of formal further and higher education in the Cinderford area and work with the college to secure the provision of a new campus as part of the mixed use redevelopment of the Northern Quarter.
2. Work with Heywood School to capitalise upon opportunities afforded by its specialist sport status and support the school to improve aspirations and outcomes for all students.
3. Work with Gloucestershire County Council to develop extended services in order to achieve the ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes.
5. Support Cinderford’s creative sector, which includes organisations such as Artspace, Music Makers and Creative Partnerships, to maximise its potential and work together to develop Cinderford as a regional leader in creative sector training, recognising this is identified as an emerging sector by SWRDA in its Regional Economic Strategy.
6. Develop Cinderford as a centre for woodland activities and sustainable construction techniques which can be developed and deployed as part of the physical regeneration of Cinderford.
7. Train the Learning Champions by working with others, including Cam and Dursley’s Learning Champions, to support the work of the Learning Plan Co-ordinator and the Learning Team.
8. Work with employers and business support organisations to build local skills and training capacity.
9. Host family learning activities and events to support inter-generational learning and engage learners at whatever stage they are.
10. Appoint an Advice and Guidance Co-ordinator to draw together the individuals and groups who already provide valuable services into a coherent and accessible support for all learners.