

12th November 2021

Cllr Alan White
Leader of Staffordshire County Council

Dear Alan

Burton upon Trent Towns Fund Project E (Library and Enterprise Hub/Market Hall)

As you know, I have been Chair of the Burton Town Deal Board since its inception in 2019 and have worked closely with representatives of the two Councils to establish a vision for the regeneration of Burton through the Towns Fund programme. When seven of our proposals were supported by Government in March earlier this year, I was excited to be part of the journey that would deliver on that vision particularly as it was an unique opportunity to access substantial funding which the town has never been afforded before.

I was born in Burton and having lived here all my life, I have been involved in many community programmes and initiatives going back over many years. You may be aware that this is not my first experience of working with public sector partners to deliver regeneration in Burton but that I was a board member of the Single Regeneration Budget 1 & 2 which took place in the 1990's and I was also a board member on the Local Strategic Partnership in 2000.

The opportunities presented by the Burton Towns Fund programme have the potential to be just as impactful, changing the landscape of the town centre and better positioning it for the future. The delivery of Project E, to relocate the library into the Market Hall, is a fundamental part of that transformation.

Alongside my role as Chair of the Town Deal Board, I also act as a 'Project Lead' for this proposal, providing a link between the project and the Board. As such, I have been engaging with Officers and Members from Staffordshire County Council about this project and so feel I am well placed to provide a broad and professional view of its potential impact.

A significant determinant for the proposal is the impact it will have on the Market Place area, bringing greater levels of footfall and activity to an area of the town centre that does struggle in this day and age. Converting the Market Hall building into a facility that provides a modern, upgraded public service will create interest in a somewhat forgotten part of the town centre. It is the objective of the Town Deal Board to enhance the vibrancy of the Town Centre and I am confident that this proposal will achieve that.

I have spoken with all of the businesses (with the exception of the Mobility Centre) that currently operate from within the Market Hall, most of whom have leases that expire before the project commences. Through these discussions, I have come to appreciate what they offer to the town as retail businesses and I am reassured by the Borough Council that they would be sufficiently supported in their relocation to other retail premises within the town centre.

The delivery of Project E would safeguard the preservation of the historic Market Hall building for generations to come, but it would also facilitate the wider regeneration of the town centre through Project D. I understand that the redevelopment of the current library is a fundamental part of that project, which looks to create a riverside destination within Burton town centre.

Through the delivery of Project D, the Borough Council intend to create a new Washlands Visitor Centre in place of the library, which I know is a proposal that is generally supported by the public as it ranked highly on the latest public consultation. The transformation of that area is crucial to the successful delivery of Project D, which in turn makes it crucial to the success of the Burton Town Investment Plan and its vision.

To that end, if the business case for Project E identifies the relocation of the library into the Market Hall as being the preferred option, I will ask the Town Deal Board to support the project and approve the capital funding from the Towns Fund that has already been identified and supported by the Board in principle.

I hope this letter provides some assurance that the delivery of Project E is critical to the success of the Burton Towns Fund programme.

Yours sincerely

Ben Robinson MBE DL
Chair of the Burton upon Trent Town Deal Board