



WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL GAMECHANGER 2 SITES ACQUISITION: ECONOMIC POTENTIAL AND PURPOSE

The proposed acquisition of the 'Gamechanger 2 Sites' by Worcestershire County Council offers a unique opportunity to unlock latent local economic potential, and in doing so, to 'spark' positive change for the county and its places.

In doing so, there is an opportunity for the County to evolve an innovative public value asset management approach, which shows strategic leadership in securing and balancing financial, economic, social and environmental outcomes.

The Economic Opportunity

Working with local partners, WCC has identified two significant acquisition opportunities which can play a material role in supporting economic growth and transformation within the county.

The sites occupy strategic locations within their respective urban environments but are currently characterised by weaknesses in the quality of place, in the density and quality of economic activity, and in the way in which they link with their wider urban areas.

Both sites have been identified as being crucial to local regeneration, development and investment aspirations. Implicit within this are opportunities to:

- Support investment in strategic infrastructure, enhancing connectivity across the county
- Support aspirations to strengthen and diversify the value of the Worcestershire economy, capitalising on population growth across the county, and growing regional demand resulting from the government levelling up agenda and broader economic trends
- Respond to socio-economic challenge and polarisation which exists within the county
- Respond to structural changes which are taking places in the way we live, work, consume and move around – both as a result of Covid-19 and longer-term urban trends (e.g. move away town centre 'retail as reason').

In both cases, the scale and complexity of the opportunity means that a long term and committed approach will be required.

In this context, the agreement of a clear strategic ethos and 'purpose' for each opportunity is of paramount importance; this should set the basis and tempo for a partnered approach to delivery which brings together all strategic interests and stakeholders (including local authorities, the County, the LEP, and infrastructure partners).

Guiding Economic Ethos and Purpose for Worcestershire's Places

Worcestershire's ambitions to build a more connected, creative and dynamic economy are well established.

While the county's places are highly diverse, there are a number of overarching economic priorities and principles which are common across the area and which should underpin WCC's approach and thinking regarding the Gamechanger 2 Sites. These include:

- Enhancing connections and building economic critical mass and value across the county and its places
- Encouraging new ideas across the county's places: commercial, social, environmental and experiential.
- Building long term resilience and balance: anchor institutions underpinning a thriving enterprise ecosystem
- Distinctiveness: pursuing long term identity and 'ethos', over niche sector specialisms
- Quality: setting a high benchmark for place, amenity and infrastructure across the county.

Towards a Public Value Asset Management Approach

The proposed acquisition of the 'Gamechanger 2 Sites' by WCC is an important first step in the unlocking long term economic potential: providing a physical 'building block' from which economic growth and evolution can be anchored, while also establishing the basis for renewed and deeper partnership working across key strategic and local partners.

On both sites there are immediate opportunities to spark activity and 'build the market' in pursuit of long term public value objectives. These include meanwhile/temporary uses to test new ideas and uses, activities to animate the area and build footfall, and broader placemaking and public realm activities to enhance accessibility, identity and reputation.

Time limited opportunities have been identified to lever third party funding to support delivery.

Acquisition offers an opportunity for the County Council to evolve a public value asset management approach, which protects commercial income generation while unlocking untapped economic, social and environmental potential and outcomes. This approach would embed and balance a set of principles which are agreed by partners, and framed by the wider 'place purpose', as summarised to the right.

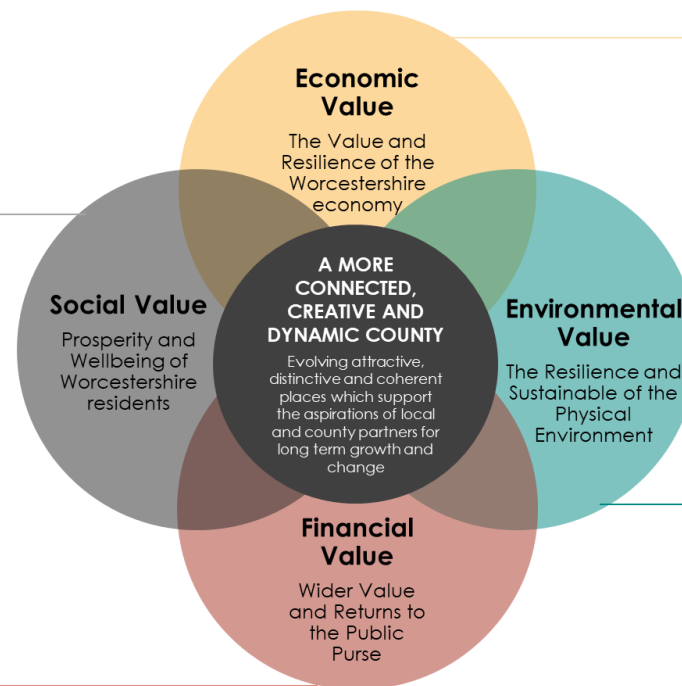
Creating new and better quality **employment, training and enterprise opportunities** for residents

Improving access to **secure, affordable and high quality housing** for local and County residents

Enhancing quality of **community infrastructure and facilities**, enhancing satisfaction and enjoyment of residents and visitors

Creating **healthier and more inclusive spaces** which encourage recreation and participation

- Leverage of additional public sector funding to support **infrastructure investment**
- Leverage of investment for reinvestment in local **community infrastructure** – NHB, CIL
- Wider revenue generation for **reinvestment in economy and service provision** – business rates, council tax, New Homes Bonus
- Value uplift for **neighbouring public sector assets**.



Building local **economic critical mass**, increasing the number and density of jobs

Enhancing economic **productivity and resilience**, building strengths in a wider and more future facing range of sectors

Embedding innovation within the local economy, encouraging and incubating new **ideas and enterprise**

Strengthening the **retention of value** within the Worcestershire economy.

A platform to embed **built environment zero carbon principles** within urban environments

Encouraging step change in **active and sustainable modes of travel** locally

Prioritising **environmental responsibility** within local local business communities

Encouraging innovation and enterprise in **green technologies, practices and processes**.



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'Sparking' Change from the Bottom Up

Cutting across the approach of WCC and its partners should be an appreciation of the long term nature of the opportunities.

Public value and place-shaping activities delivered in the short and medium term will support the evolution of a more successful and resilient asset, place, and county in the long-term.

Appetite to innovate and take managed risk will play an important role in determining long term success, with the longevity of the opportunity providing an extended period over which public value returns can be secured.

