Upper Don Valley

Physical Regeneration Strategy

Final Report

Executive Summary

October 2006
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Introduction

This document summarises the Physical Regeneration Strategy for Sheffield’s Upper Don Valley. The Strategy establishes a vision for the Upper Don Valley and identifies key actions required to facilitate regeneration, investment and development, some of which will fall to the public sector to deliver. The Strategy provides an ambitious but practical approach to the regeneration of this special area, over the short, medium and long term. It is important to recognise that the time frame for the Strategy will extend to the next 15 – 20 years, within which time the Upper Don Valley could be fundamentally transformed and improved.

The Vision for Upper Don Valley

The Vision is of a place where investment in development, infrastructure and the environment creates a high quality corridor as part of the ongoing regeneration of the city.

“The Upper Don Valley will be a place for successful businesses, particularly for materials technologies and advanced manufacturing, which will be an important feature of the local economy. It will also be a place to live, learn, relax and spend leisure time, all of which will take place in a significantly improved environment where the traditional industrial character will be reinforced by high quality development and vibrant new places.

Penistone Road will be a strong corridor, approach and gateway to the city centre. The riversides will be rediscovered and will be enriched in themselves and add value to development.

Above all the Upper Don Valley will be a more attractive place for people whether they are workers, residents, visitors or investors. It will make the most of its unique features and location to fulfil its potential as one of Sheffield’s most diverse and distinctive regeneration areas.”

This Vision will be translated into aspirations for different parts of the valley, underpinning proposals and actions in a series of focus areas.
The Upper Don Valley Today

The Upper Don Valley is a predominately urban area and is located to the north-west of Sheffield City Centre. The study area is identified in Plan 1 from the main report and this emphasises the scale and extent of the regeneration area. It is a large area of mainly brown-field land, dominated by employment and industrial land uses. Formerly the area was one of the key employment generators of Sheffield but has been in decline, physically and economically for a number of years. There are very few houses or other uses, although to the east and west of the valley are successful and popular suburban residential areas. One of the city’s main arterial routes, the A61 Penistone Road, runs through the area.

Key ‘ingredients’ in the Upper Don Valley are:

- Its proximity to the City Centre;
- Its dramatic valley landscape at the urban edge and close relationship with the Peak District;
- The River Don and River Loxley, which are important underutilised environmental assets;
- A unique combination of leisure and sporting opportunities close to the city centre;
- Large development sites close to successful well established and new residential areas;
- Well established industrial businesses, many linked to high quality steel fabrication; and,
- Hillsborough College in Livesey Street, which has created a new destination in the area.

The Upper Don Valley now represents an important opportunity for economic development within the surrounding communities, Sheffield and South Yorkshire. With strategic intervention, new opportunities can be grasped and new places and opportunities created.

This Executive Summary provides a succinct overview of the Physical Regeneration Strategy and the main ideas and proposals contained within this more detailed document.
Strategic Objectives

A series of strategic objectives underpin the Physical Regeneration Strategy. These objectives fall into the categories of Economy, Communities, Environment and Action.

**Economy**

- Identify and promote policies and actions which will attract investment and new development to the Upper Don Valley, addressing problems of underused and vacant land.

- Encourage new employment opportunities across the Upper Don Valley whilst supporting and sustaining existing employment and businesses.

- Support a ‘mini-cluster’ of mutually supporting specialist materials technologies and advanced manufacturing, with related new and existing businesses.

- Develop a broader and more diverse mix of uses across the Upper Don Valley. The prevailing industrial character will need to be transformed in places and the quality of the environment improved, to attract investment in new uses.

- Making more intensive and creative use of available sites and underused land to facilitate new development and unlock investment opportunities.

- Focus on a limited number of high priority projects and sites, which offer the potential to transform the quality, offer and identity of the Upper Don Valley.

- Recognise the value of the rivers as vital assets in regeneration terms, providing scope to create new and improved places and realise the economic value of sites with a riverside setting.
Communities
- Ensure investment and development in the Upper Don Valley creates benefit for local business and residential communities.
- Develop stronger relationships with adjacent areas, communities and voluntary sector bodies in, and adjacent to, the Upper Don Valley.
- Support local people through regeneration in terms of learning, employment and healthy living through ongoing improvements across the Upper Don Valley.
- Improve connections between communities and destinations across the Upper Don Valley; linking people with job opportunities by improving the quality of public transport, walking and cycling links.

Environment
- Improve environmental quality across the Upper Don Valley; focusing on improving the riversides, public realm and streetscape. Take early remedial action where the environment has been abused and requires improvement to create safe, clean and people friendly places.
- Maximise the potential of the riversides for amenity and recreation, recognising the special character of the Rivers Don and Loxley and improving their setting and access.
- Improve linkages across the Upper Don Valley and particularly between open spaces and the riversides. The creation of a continuous riverside walk along the River Don is a specific objective for regeneration.
- Enhance the quality and image of the A61 Penistone Road Corridor, as an important approach and gateway to the City Centre.
- Make the most of existing open spaces and, where necessary, create new public open spaces as focal points within the Upper Don Valley.
• Focus on prominent sites and areas where image can be ‘won and lost’. Sites and buildings which are detractors to character and which undermine people’s impression of the area should be tackled as a priority.

• Address congestion hotspots; where traffic impacts severely on the quality of place and its economic performance.

• Secure strategic and local transport and access improvements to support regeneration in the Upper Don Valley, but also to create benefit for the wider city and its communities.

• Conserve and enhance heritage townscape and landmark buildings, seeking innovative ways in which older buildings can contribute to regeneration by being given a new lease of life.

• Significant improvements should be sought at Parkwood Springs to maximise the recreational and environmental value of this important asset. The creation of a major new Urban Park and delivery of the ‘Parkwood Springs Community Vision’ (SOAR 2003) should be a priority.

Action

• Endorse and promote the vision and strategy to align and attract public and private sector investment to the Upper Don Valley, providing greater certainty over what will be supported.

• Recognise constraints, but focus on deliverable projects, seeking practical and innovative ways to implement the Strategy and kick start regeneration.

• Promote positive planning as a means of creating confidence and development interest in the Upper Don Valley and position land use proposals within the evolving planning framework for this area.

• Develop partnerships involving residential and business communities to deliver the vision for the Upper Don Valley, recognising that the public sector can play a key facilitating role.

• Ensure ‘strategic fit’ of the Upper Don Valley as one of Sheffield’s Strategic Regeneration Zones.
Strategy Proposals

Broad Development Proposals

The main development ideas within the Strategy include:

- Encouraging the regeneration, investment and investment evident in Sheffield Central Riverside, Kelham and Central Neepsend to extend northwards into the Upper Don Valley, to create a vibrant **new mixed employment area in Neepsend**, focused on a rejuvenated riverside. Existing businesses will be supported and new businesses encouraged to locate in this area, by regenerating vacant and underused sites and land.

- Creating a new **Technology Park at Hillfoot Riverside**. This will include improvements to access and circulation and the delivery of new sites through consolidation of existing development. The focus of new development here should be on developing a specialist ‘mini-cluster’ of materials technologies and advanced manufacturing businesses.

- Making a long term commitment to deliver major environmental improvements at **Parkwood Springs**, consistent with the Community Vision, to create a new high quality Urban Park in the Upper Don Valley. Resolving landfill issues will be vital to deliver the long term vision.

- Securing a radically improved recreation and leisure attraction at **Sheffield Ski Village**, including a ‘real snow’ facility and alpine village, creating a major new regional destination.

- Significantly improving the environment and offer around **Owlerton Stadium and the new Hillsborough College** to create a vibrant and welcoming campus environment which is attractive by day and in the evening. The potential of the Loxley riverside needs to be recognised, as does the link to Hillsborough centre. By relocating a proportion of car parking away from the prominent stadium frontage, new leisure uses could be accommodated to support vitality in this area.
• Improving the gateway to the Upper Don Valley in the Owlerton / Wadsley Bridge area through new development, highway and environmental works. This will include junction improvements and regeneration of prominent vacant sites for high quality commercial frontage development.

• Enhancing Claywheels Lane as an important employment location and securing the sustainable regeneration of underused sites, such as the former UCAR site. Significant improvements to access and infrastructure in this area will be required to unlock the true development potential.

A Concept Plan (Plan 2) from the main report illustrates these ideas and Plan 4 develops this thinking to suggest a new land use structure.

Proposals for Transport, Access & Connectivity

Strategic transport proposals include:

• Improved bus priority on the A61 Penistone Road.
• Improvements to the Leppings Lane Junction with Penistone Road and at Claywheels Lane / Penistone Road.
• A new road bridge link connecting Claywheels Lane to Middlewood Road.
• The development of the Upper Don Valley Pedestrian and Cycle Network.
• (A feasibility study into the) Stockbridge / Sheffield Rail Line.

Specific development related transportation projects include:

• Improvements to infrastructure and streetscape in Neepsend.
• Improved access to Parkwood Springs and Sheffield Ski Village.
• Improved access to and circulation within the Hillfoot Riverside area.
• Improved access to sites in the Owlerton / Wadsley Bridge area including the Penistone Road Triangle site.
• Improved access to sites in Claywheels Lane based on the new road bridge and an improved junction at Penistone Road. A new footbridge link from Claywheels Lane to Supertram is also proposed.

Transport Proposals are illustrated on Plan 6 from the main report.
Proposals for the Environment, Public Realm & Image

The environment is one of the Upper Don Valley’s undiscovered resources. But a step change in quality is needed to alter and improve its image and identity. Several key themes influence landscape proposals including:

- Rediscovering the riversides and making more of the waterscape.
- Creating new public spaces and green places.
- Improving the Penistone Road Corridor & Gateway.
- Improving streetscape and public realm, overcoming the industrial character
- Celebrating townscape heritage and good quality older buildings, through refurbishment and re-use.
- Creating continuous public pedestrian/cycle access to one bank of the rivers.
- Delivering the Community Vision for Parkwood Springs.

A number of specific proposals are identified as a basis for improving environmental quality:

- A new urban square at the riverside in Neepsend
- New pocket parks at the Old Silver Smith Ruins near Club Mill Road, at Hillsborough Park Riverside and by Niagara Weir in Claywheels Lane.
- A much improved street environment and public realm in Neepsend and at Livesey Street to create a more pleasant and pedestrian friendly environment.
- Highway and environmental improvements focused around Penistone Road and Leppings Lane to include a new public art / gateway feature as a local landmark.
- Refurbishment and re-use of key local landmark buildings including the art deco Hydra-Clarkson building and the Samuel Osborn and Company building.

Environmental Proposals are illustrated in Plan 7 from the main report.
Land Use Character Areas

The Strategy provides a clear vision for regeneration across the Upper Don Valley and maps out the direction of change for each area. To summarise these are:

- **Neepsend Gateway** – A mixed employment area benefiting from an improved environment.
- **Hillfoot Riverside** – A new Technology Park, making greater benefit of the riversides and creating a high quality frontage to Penistone Road.
- **Parkwood Springs** – A radically improved Ski Village facility and major urban park.
- **Leisure and Education Campus** – A safe, attractive, welcoming and vibrant campus style destination.
- **Owlerton / Wadsley Bridge** – An new gateway to the Upper Don Valley where commercial uses create quality development on prominent sites.
- **Claywheels Lane** – An employment-led regeneration area, benefiting from significant access improvements.

These character areas are shown on Plan 8 in the main report.

The Physical Regeneration Strategy focuses on five of the character areas, which together form the regeneration ‘spine’ for the Upper Don Valley: Neepsend Gateway; Hillfoot Riverside; Leisure and Education Campus; Owlerton / Wadsley Bridge; and, Claywheels Lane.

For each of the areas a range of information is provided in the main report, considering in greater detail the vision and approach to development in each area. The information provided includes: indicative masterplans; detailed descriptions of projects; design guidance; and, aspirational images, which show the sort of place the Strategy is seeking to create. Parkwood Springs is also addressed, though not in as much detail, because it is now subject to more detailed masterplanning, outside of this report and Strategy.

Plan 22 from the main report provides an indicative masterplan for the area as a whole, which is made up of the preferred way forward for each of the five areas of change.
Delivering the Strategy

The Physical Regeneration Strategy for the Upper Don Valley represents an ambitious programme that, if substantially implemented, would radically transform this part of Sheffield. The Strategy presents a ‘statement of intent’ to guide the development of the area, providing a robust basis upon which to make future decisions. It should not be seen as a strict land use plan to be adhered to under any circumstances - in fact implementation will no doubt deviate somewhat from the Strategy as a result of more detailed masterplanning and feasibility work and changing market conditions over time.

The regeneration of the Upper Don Valley will be a very long term process, taking up to 20 years. There are several broad reasons for this:

- Few public sector land holdings.
- A significant level of under-utilisation of sites.
- Major derelict sites in important locations.
- Out-moded infrastructure and environment.
- Poor perception of the area in market terms.

These factors not only affect the length of time the Upper Don Valley will take to regenerate, but also influence the approach to regeneration that can be adopted. With no significant land holdings at present, public sector agencies must look to encourage, shape and influence private sector development.

The role of the public sector in the regeneration of the Upper Don Valley is therefore best concentrated around six activities:

- Acquisition of strategically important sites: A clear approach to the acquisition of strategically important sites that can act as a catalyst for the wider regeneration.
- Investment in image and key infrastructure: In particular, investment in strategic transport infrastructure will be vital to unlocking the development potential in the Upper Don Valley.
- Supporting existing businesses: Working closely with businesses to understand how they might play their part in the vision for the Upper Don Valley.
• Enabling appropriate new development: Establishing a clear public sector agenda to bring forward development. This would support the preparation and recycling of land for investment.

• Marketing and branding: The creation of an over-arching vision and brand for the Upper Don Valley should be developed and investment made in the strategic marketing of the area to potential investors.

• Using the planning system: To shape and influence the right types of development in the right locations. There is a clear opportunity through the emerging Local Development Framework to formalise proposals in the PRS.

In order to maximise the regeneration impact of the Physical Regeneration Strategy, the Delivery Strategy focuses on the five Areas of Change that make up the spine of the Upper Don Valley. In these areas, the approach to delivery will be to focus intervention on a small number of Priority Projects (these are set out in full in the main report) to be pursued in the short term.

Given the scale and the complexity of the regeneration of the Upper Don Valley it not possible or particularly helpful for SCC to look at every site and idea all at once, hence practical priorities have been identified. These Priority Projects will involve a combination of the following:

• ‘Soft’ sites - those that are currently vacant, unoccupied or otherwise under-utilised and therefore most susceptible to change.

• Prominent sites - those that are highly visible and therefore offer greatest potential to change perceptions and act as catalysts to wider regeneration.

• Strategic sites - those that open up development opportunities by enabling infrastructure improvements or creating more marketable sites.

• Access, infrastructure and environmental improvements that enable and / or encourage regeneration and site development.

• Non physical measures and interventions such as changes to planning policies which promote regeneration and site redevelopment (in line with the vision).
For each of the Priority Projects within the five Areas of Change, Sheffield City Council and its public sector partners will need to choose the most suitable approach from a range of potential mechanisms.

The Delivery Strategy (in the main report) provides greater detail on the Priority Projects and the table below provides a summary of the potential outputs anticipated through the Priority Projects. These are very broad figures.

### Upper Don Valley Priority Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Neepsend Gateway</th>
<th>Hillfoot Riverside</th>
<th>Leisure/ Education Campus</th>
<th>Wadsley Bridge</th>
<th>Claywheels Lane</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown-field Land Redeveloped (Hectares)</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>21.85</td>
<td>46.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Floorspace Created (m² net)</td>
<td>13,693</td>
<td>17,982</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37,830</td>
<td>69,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Floorspace Created (m² net)</td>
<td>8,678</td>
<td>9,106</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20,200</td>
<td>37,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Floorspace Created (m² net)</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,299</td>
<td>10,700</td>
<td>17,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Floorspace Created (m² net)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,533</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink Floorspace created (m² net)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>2,650</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Floorspace Created (m² net)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,232</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Dwellings Created</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road (new) Improved</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(strategic)</td>
<td>2,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside Walks Created</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>2,350</td>
<td>5,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Open Space Created</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outputs from the priority projects are, for the most part, net gains in terms of what is on the ground already. The timescale is important to recognise here, with significant employment land at Claywheels Lane only likely to be implemented fully in the long term, notwithstanding that the sites in Claywheels Lane are defined as high priorities. The scale of previously developed recycled and re-used for economic activity – over 45 Hectares – is significant and achieving this will be integral to delivering the PRS.
Overall (Indicative) Costs and Values

The table below provides a summary of the costs and values associated with the Priority Projects (from the main report).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upper Don Valley Priority Projects</th>
<th>Indicative Costs and Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Type</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cost (£)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>160,480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic infrastructure</td>
<td>5,250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure and Environment in areas of change</td>
<td>4,406,000 (excluding land acquisition costs for riverside routes and new open spaces)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 170,136,000 | 166,270,000 | -3,866,000 |

The indicative analysis of costs and values suggests that overall the Priority Projects create a gap of just under £3.9 million. This includes the strategic transport projects as well as the landscape and infrastructure projects within the areas of change. This gap may increase given that the financial information in this report is based on general assumptions rather than specific site circumstances in relation to costs and values.

The main report goes into some detail regarding the issue of risk to the strategy and risk mitigation. It also sets out an indicative timeline and indicative phasing for the PRS projects (on page99) highlighting the key actions that are needed for high priority projects, both development and landscape and infrastructure projects.

It is clear that there is much to be done. The delivery of the PRS and the vision it puts forward for the Upper Don Valley will involve many stakeholders and take a long time. Nevertheless the coordination that the PRS can bring to a diverse and challenging area provides a tool which all those involved with influencing urban change in the Upper Don can use to good effect.