



# **Western Growth Corridor**

## **End of Project Report**

**June 2017**

## **Project Summary**

Weymouth & Portland is the smallest borough/district in Dorset. It is a densely populated area with the urban area covering 59% of the borough and housing 81% of the population. Weymouth and Portland is a vibrant and historic area that has been instrumental in the development of advanced technologies such as sonar, torpedoes and submarine systems. Portland has an active port and which has built upon its Royal Navy heritage by accommodating some of the largest cruise liners in existence.

Dorset Councils Partnership, its partners and the local community wanted to shape and develop a clear strategy to deliver a brighter future for Weymouth town centre and also contribute to the wider economic growth potential of Weymouth, Dorchester, and Portland. The emerging strategic economic plan would set out the growth ambition for the area, the Western Growth Hub. This project has widespread public support with the population supporting significant changes to ensure a prosperous future for the town and surrounding area.

Dorset LEP funding was for feasibility work in advance of developing a strategy. Which will involve developing 1,000 new homes and in excess of 2,700 jobs across five brownfield sites, amounting to 58 hectares in the town centre, to bring greater prosperity and create a vibrant and exciting place to live, work in and visit.

The Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan is designed to transform Weymouth Town Centre and builds on the natural attributes of its location. This, along with the Dorset Council Partnership's commitment to use its own property and land assets, provides a means to enhance and diversify the employment base and housing stock, with more choice and new opportunities for residents and visitors in its tourism, marine and cultural offer.

## **Review of Business Case**

This project was included within the "Transforming Dorset" Strategic Economic Plan, which was used for the bid to Government for the first round of Growth Deal Funding. Western Growth Hub – Weymouth Town Centre was not successful in gaining funding through Growth Deal 1.

When Growth Deal 2 was subsequently announced, Dorset LEP put forward a number of projects for consideration, 6 projects were approved by Government and £12.6m was allocated to deliver them. £600k was allocated to Western Growth Hub – Weymouth Town Centre for the 2016/17 financial year.

## **Change of timings & name**

Following discussions with Dorset Councils Partnership and sign off from Dorset LEP Board in November 2015, the Western Growth Hub – Weymouth Town Centre project was brought forward with the aim of completing as much work as possible within the 2015/16 funded year, in order to utilise available funds.

Western Growth Hub – Weymouth Town Centre project amended its name to Western Growth Corridor and has been referred as this from Grant Agreement stage onwards.

## **Planned Outputs**

1. Transport and Movement Study
2. Skills Study
3. Business & Housing Development Study
4. Culture & Tourism Study
5. Weymouth Town Centre Business Plan

## **Planned Outcomes**

The development of the Western Growth Corridor economic strategy has identified additional economic potential which includes:

- Expanding the three new redevelopment sites for employment, housing, learning and leisure opportunities;
- Increasing the Western Dorset Growth Corridor redevelopment land in Weymouth from 15.01 acres to 57.94 acres;
- Unlocking further private investment which is likely to exceed the estimated £124 million;
- With the significant increase in available employment land a projected increase in new fulltime and part-time jobs is envisaged;
- Identifying over £11 million of local authority assets as part of the strategy with the potential to help kick-start improvements by working in partnership with other land owners and investors;
- Securing an initial £3.2 million from the Environment Agency and a £300,000 commitment from the council to commence the town centre medium term flood defence plan over the next three years.

## **Governance**

In April 2016, governance arrangements for the project were agreed and a Western Dorset Growth Corridor Programme Board was established, comprising member representatives of Dorset County Council, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, West Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council and Dorset LEP.

## **Change Request**

In July 2016, Dorset Council Partnership requested to extend the Grant Agreement completion date to March 2017. This was to allow for the completion of some of the key elements of the Transport and Movement Study, in particular the completion of the A354 Corridor Study and Rail Study (Element A complete and Element B was underway) their anticipated completion date, March 2017.

As this project was brought forward from the original start date of April 2016, this change would not have a negative impact on the original planned delivery of outcomes. Dorset LEP Board approved this change in July 2016, and an addendum was drawn up and signed August 2016.

## **Achievement of Outputs**

In October 2016 final versions of four studies were submitted to Dorset LEP, transport and movement study was submitted in March 2017. They also were taken on board by Dorset Councils Partnership to inform the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy.

The [Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy](#) was adopted by Dorset Councils Partnership (Weymouth and Portland Borough and West Dorset and North Dorset District Councils) and Dorset County Council in December 2016. The first 5 year Action Plan of the strategy was agreed and adopted in April 2017, which included recommendations from the transport plan.

## Outcome

Delivery of the Western Growth Corridor Economic Strategy is progressing and the following outcomes have been achieved:

- Homes start and complete: 351
- Land unlocked: 8.8 HA
- Commercial Floorspace: 529 sqm
- Jobs: 26

Outcomes will continue to feed into the quarterly outcome reporting to BEIS.

## Benefits Realised to date

The studies have supported the establishment of a wider economic growth strategy which is adopted by four Councils and Dorset LEP.

Dorset LEP funded studies enabled swifter progress to be made on the Weymouth Town Centre regeneration programme. This was recognised by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council with the Management Committee approving (September 2016) an additional £200,000 from its reserves to progress the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan.

The outcome from the studies enabled a refocus of the regeneration plan. For example, the economic viability assessments concluded that the North Quay, the Peninsula and Commercial Road (North and South) sites should be the priority sites to progress. The studies gave a better understanding of the quantum of development that can be achieved on each site, the viability of each proposed development and subsequently the next steps to progress. This has generated considerable interest with the private sector and potential developer partners.

## Review of Project Objectives

RAG Review of Objectives	Status	Comments
<b>Time</b>		The project was brought forward to 2015/16 to utilise funds. Dorset LEP Board approved an extension to the project in July 2016 and the project concluded in March 2017.
<b>Cost</b>		The project came in slightly under budget, with an underspend of £6,042.55
<b>Quality</b>		The project delivered all outputs exactly as described in the business case, outcomes are currently being delivered.
<b>Scope</b>		The project stayed within scope delivered all outputs exactly as described in the business case.
<b>Benefits</b>		Increased private sector interest and developer partners; release of additional public sector funds to support the regeneration programme
<b>Risk</b>		No significant risks reported.

## Lessons learned

1. Strong early engagement and frequent communication with the Dorset Councils Partnership enabled us to take advantage of the opportunity to bring the start date forward.
2. This was only possible due to the strong existing relationship between Dorset Councils Partnership and its contractors. This will help shape preparation and discussions with future projects.
3. Monthly invoicing (rather than quarterly as originally offered) and did not prove too onerous for the LEP team. It also enabled tight cost control. This will be offered to all projects moving forward.

## Conclusion

In March 2016 final versions of the five studies were submitted to Dorset LEP. They also were taken on board by Dorset Councils Partnership and Dorset County Council to inform the Western Dorset Economic Growth Strategy which was adopted in December 2016.

To drive the strategic economic growth strategy forward, a councillor led Western Dorset Growth Strategy Member Board has been established to ensure a structured and coordinated approach to the delivery of economic growth across Western Dorset.

The Board members include the Leaders and Economic Champions/Briefholders of Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council, and the Chairman of Management Committee and Economic Briefholder of Weymouth & Portland Borough Council; the Chief Executives and Strategic Directors of Dorset County Council and the Dorset Councils Partnership and a representative of Dorset LEP.

The Board endorse, drive and promote the joint strategic economic growth plan of the four contributing Councils of North Dorset, West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland and Dorset County Council.

### Dorset LEP

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