

Bradford Property Forum – meeting report – 23 March 2011

The Canal Road corridor in the Bradford District can be the development catalyst for change, Bradford Property Forum (BPF) members were told at the latest meeting.

Changing the landscape

Sixty or so designers, architects and other property-related business professionals heard from Bradford Council and private sector consultant BDP about the plans for a 5,000 home, eco-friendly housing settlement in the corridor. Although the scheme is still at the evidence-gathering stage for now, supporters feel that it could change the landscape of the area when it happens. BDP director Andrew Teage pointed out that consultations were still underway but options on taking the development forward included the scheme acting as a growth corridor, transport hub or even that the 'new town' could transform the image of the natural valley bottom.

Good form

The presentation was augmented by three sixth form students from Bradford Grammar School, where the meeting was held, who outlined wonderfully for people of such a tender age the strengths and weaknesses of both the corridor and Bradford generally. House-building, creating an enterprise zone and including local communities were the themes accentuating the presentation. Uwais Khan, Fraz Ali and Ali Aljaward also combined to underline the importance of sustainability with a clear message about 'going green'. There was, however, a confession afterwards that the experience was 'nerve-racking'. Well done boys, you did good!

Andrew Teage's link to Bradford Council, Simon Woodhurst, gave the rationale to 'why yet another masterplan', noting issues in relation to skills, unemployment and housing needs that many in the audience were already familiar with. To meet the growing local population, the current house-building rate of 3,300 per year needs to double soon, the audience were told.

What opportunities?

The plan to drive the Canal Road project forward will be led by a joint venture company involving regeneration company Urbo and Bradford Council. It is too soon yet to say precisely what business opportunities will emerge for BPF members and other enterprises in the District, although it is widely recognised that the corridor and the rest of Aire Valley can create more local economic growth.

Attendees also heard from Stephen Talboys about the MIPIM property conference in France earlier in the month. He and Kevin Reed, both of Bradford Council, kept up the aim of making new international contacts and promote investment opportunities here. Although it is the sixth year Bradford has had a presence in Cannes, the scale of involvement was pared back this year due to the financial backdrop.

Weighty matters

As BPF chairman noted in his introduction to the meeting, Bradford needs to 'punch above its weight' in order to compete nationally and internationally, so engaging and informing new property contacts remains important for Bradford's economy.

Prior to the meeting, attendees were treated to a short mini-tour through part of Bradford Grammar School, which has been around in some form since the mid-16th century.