

# The Context:

## Levelling Up Fund – Tipton Town Centre Regeneration

- The Government announced the Levelling Up Fund and invited councils to bid for a share of these funds in early 2022.
- Sandwell prepared and submitted an initial bid for Tipton, to redevelop four sites in the town centre to provide a total of 65 new affordable rented homes.
- In the 2023 Spring Budget statement it was announced that Sandwell had been awarded £20m.
- In the meantime, costs had risen considerably, and it was accepted that one of the four original sites (Owen Street) was no longer practical to deliver. The project was therefore reviewed, and a revised scheme was approved by Sandwell Council's Cabinet in Autumn 2023.
- This focused development on three of the original four sites but increased the size of two of these sites, enabling the original target for new homes to be met.
- Residents have been helped to move from the council-owned blocks on two of the sites, while shop tenants have been given assistance to relocate to other premises. This process will be complete by the end of March 2024, after which demolition can begin on these sites.
- A detailed planning application for the new development is expected to be submitted during Spring 2024.
- Construction of the new apartments is likely to begin on site in 2025 with completion expected in 2026.



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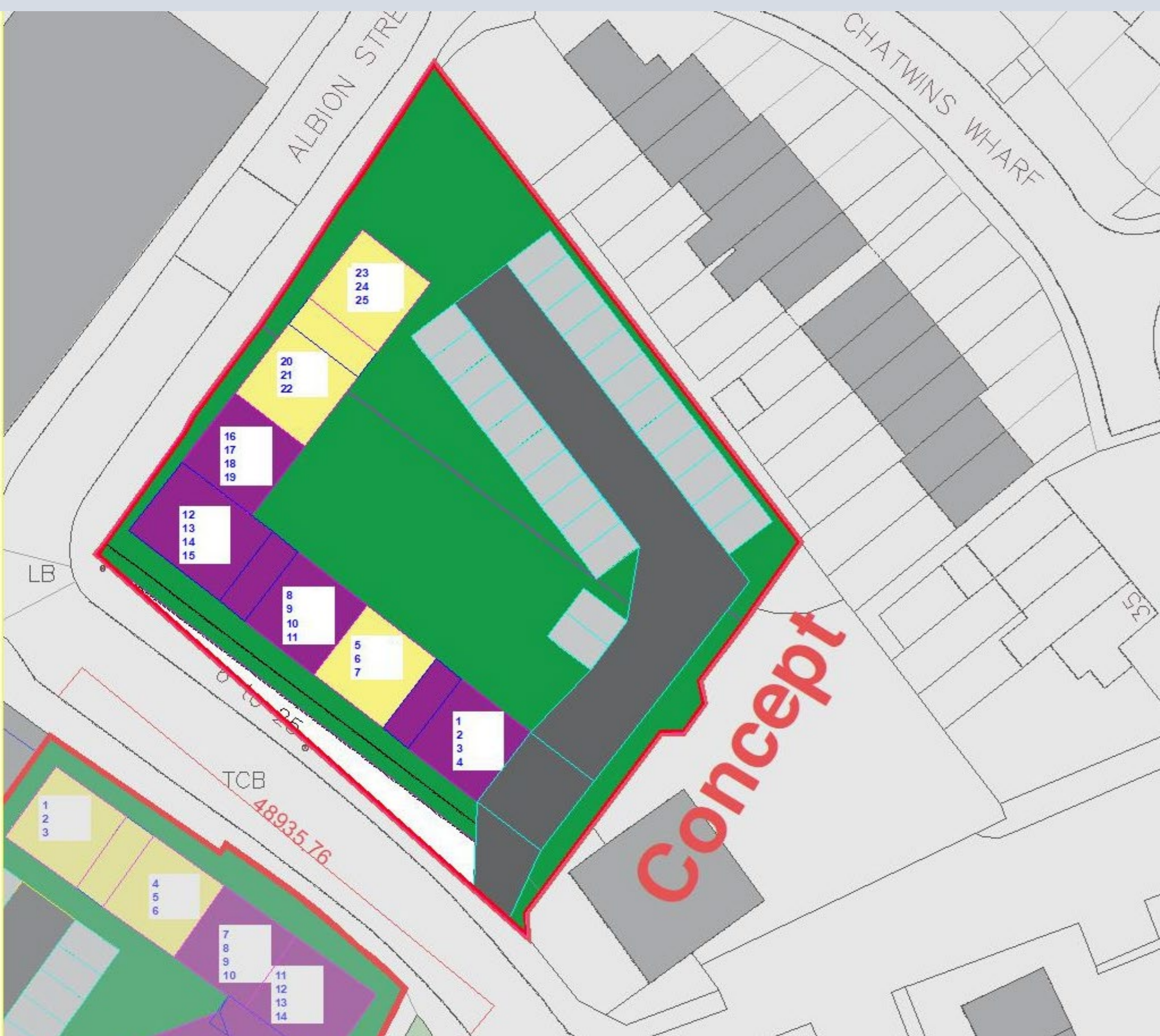
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## Site 1 – Union Street East

- All three sites on Union Street are in need of urgent redevelopment for new housing, as they are of low quality, obsolete in design, dilapidated and/or vacant. Surveys of the buildings have confirmed that they are beyond economic repair or renovation.
- The project involves building a number of affordable, one and two bedroomed apartments across these three sites, to help tackle Sandwell's housing waiting list and provide much-needed affordable homes in Tipton.
- As well as being affordable, these new homes will be built to the latest standards of construction and energy efficiency, which will help to revitalise the town centre and set a new benchmark for the quality of affordable housing in the borough.
- Site 1 is on the eastern side of Union Street. It is a four-storey 1950s block, with 12 flats that had become hard to let and are now all vacant, plus ground floor shops, including the Post Office (which will be relocated).
- Sandwell recently acquired the lease on the Albion Street public car park behind the block from Tipton Shopping Centre. There is enough car parking elsewhere to serve the town centre, so the land will be used to enlarge the development site.
- The site will be developed with social-rented apartments built to a similar height as now (three/four storeys). These will overlook Union Street and Albion Street, with parking and amenity space to the rear.







### Site 2 – Union Street West

- Site 2 is on the opposite side of Union Street and is a three-storey block of three maisonettes, with three shops at ground level, one of which has been vacant for some time.
- This is a very small site and hard to develop on its own, so the frontage is being extended into the end of the former canal line.
- The largely-disused council car park at the rear, accessed off New Cross Street, will also be included as part of the development site. An independent car parking survey has confirmed that the town centre has sufficient additional capacity to remove this.
- As with Site 1, this will be developed to a height of three/four storeys. These will overlook Union Street, New Cross Street and the canal walkway, bringing additional security to that green space.

### Site 3 – Conservative Club

- Site 3 is the former Conservative Club, beyond the canal walkway, which the council recently purchased.
- The building is vacant, has been disused for some time, and is in a poor condition after a number of break-ins.
- The existing building is locally listed and lies within the Factory Locks Conservation Area. The council is exploring all options to bring the site back into beneficial use i.e. housing. The council will take expert advice, in conjunction with its conservation officer, on the building's heritage value and structural condition before plans are finalised.







- The current scheme involves demolishing two low quality and obsolete blocks of flats on either side of Union Street. These include a number of council-run shops. Two of these shops have been empty for some time, but the block also includes the town's well-used Post Office.
- The town centre has suffered from long-term above average retail vacancy rates. For this reason there are no plans to build shops as part of the new scheme and the focus will be on providing much-needed affordable social housing.
- It is vital to retain the Post Office and the important services it offers in Tipton, so plans are in place to relocate it within the town centre.
- All other affected businesses have been offered help by the council to find other shops, though not all will stay in Tipton.
- Sandwell Council recently undertook an analysis of retail activity in the town centre and found that 54% of retail units in the town appear inactive and/or vacant. The council is working with agents for Tipton Shopping Centre, who manage the precinct, to re-let some of the empty and shuttered units.
- The businesses along Owen Street that formed part of the original LUF bid have all been contacted. The council will work with owners to develop a scheme to facelift these shops, to improve the look of Owen Street and help bring empty shops and living spaces back into use.

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# Our ambition for Tipton Town Centre

- The main focus of the project is on new housebuilding and there is no scope for the council to step back from its commitment to deliver a minimum of 65 new homes by 2026. Failure to deliver these commitments will result in grant funding being returned to central government.
- However, the bid includes some funds to tackle a range of other issues in the town centre. Whilst we have explained why building new shops is not possible, there are other improvements the council is keen to make around the town. For these we need your views and ideas. The images on this page are precedent images used as an example of what a future scheme may look like.

## Key themes:



- Improving public realm – this project also offers the opportunity to improve paved public spaces throughout Tipton Town Centre including along Owen Street.



- Create new social spaces in the town centre – building homes on Union Street will involve removing or thinning a number of trees. The council is committed to planting new trees to replace those that are lost. This also offers an opportunity to create a new landscape here, an attractive shared place where people can meet.



- Improving levels of urban green space – having trees and good quality green spaces close to where people live and work is an important factor in their health and well-being, as well as helping reduce the impacts of climate change.



- Celebrating the canal history – the former canal line was infilled in the 1960s and subsequently laid out as a walkway. The only relic of its former use is a lock chamber.

- Making better connections – various proposals are being explored to improve connectivity, to calm traffic and make the town centre feel less car dominated and more welcoming for people.

- Improving the green walkway along the former canal line that runs between Union Street and Elliott's Road – this area would benefit from improvement to create a safer and more usable walkway and amenity space near the town centre.

