5. Summary

This report comprises the sixth progress report following the submission of the last report to Regeneration Scrutiny Panel on 2nd April 2008.

6. Recommendations

That the Panel note the progress that has been made since the last report and that a further report be submitted to cover progress in October 09
7. Proposals and Details

1) **Westgate Demonstrator**

The Old Market Site (site 3).

The building has now been handed over to Iliad and is complete and units are available to let/for sale. Iliad have sold one of the 44 residential units available and are confident of completing on a further 25 units. Iliad are currently seeking occupiers for the two ground floor commercial units.

Keppel Wharf (site 5).

Construction started on site in September 2007. Completion of the residential elements is programmed for the 20th May 2009. Iliad have taken deposits on 43 of the 53 residential units and as soon as the building is complete and handed over Iliad will seek to legally complete on these sales.

Imperial Buildings (site 1)

The residential units are available for let/sale. There are 19 residential units. Iliad have legally completed on 13 units. Nine of the units are now let and occupied.

A team of Council officers are working closely with Iliad and their agents to identify occupiers for the ground floor retail units. To date there are four prospective retail/commercial lettings to report. All four have agreed Heads of Terms and leases are being drawn up.

All Saints Building (site 2)

The current proposal seeks to deliver 33,000sq ft. office accommodation and 17,000sq ft ground floor retail accommodation. Demolition of the existing building will be completed by the end of March 2009. Officers are working with Yorkshire Forward and Iliad to bring forward a Business Plan which will enable the Council to deliver this building through 100% grant support from Yorkshire Forward (Geographic Programme and ERDF).

The Wierside site (site 4)

It is proposed to bring forward the public realm element around Westgate Demonstrator including Domine Lane, Market Street, river frontage and site 4. This will enable the Council to spend the £3.5m allocation for public realm currently in the Yorkshire Forward SRIP Programme. Design work is ongoing with a view to starting work towards the end of 2009.
2) **The Bus Station Interchange Site**

Officers have met with TCN and Norseman Holdings who own the bus station Interchange to explore a scheme of redevelopment. An outline scheme was put forward by them for consideration which involved extending the bus station on to the Crinoline House site, re-building the multi storey car park, creating a second floor of 115,000 sq.ft. of retail space and building a 45,000 sq.ft. office block. The developer was unable to attract any interest from retail/office occupiers and in the current financial climate it is proving increasingly difficult to establish a deliverable scheme.

3) **Flood Alleviation Scheme**

The first phase of the two phase scheme is now complete. The total cost of Phase I is £14million. Designs for Phase II are now complete. Negotiations with the grant giving bodies are continuing for funding Phase II works. River Don Bridge abutments encroach into the flow channel of the River Don and cause an obstruction to flows in times of high water which creates a back wash which contributes to flooding. A scheme for the removal of the bridge is in place. Most of the funding is secured and officers are exploring funding opportunities with partners and the grant giving bodies. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent to demolish the bridge has been obtained. A Traffic Regulation Order to close the bridge is within the advertising period.

A second intermediate scheme to raise the river wall levels between Chantry Bridge and the Bus Station has received funding in full. Again, this will offer protection in times of flood to the Interchange Area and Bridge Street.

4) **Railway Station**

The funding for this project has been approved in principle and a full business case for funding from Yorkshire Forward and ERDF will be submitted in April for final approval. Planning permission was granted in December 2008. The new station building will provide improved facilities for rail users and will create a visual and physical gateway to the town. Discussions are also progressing to acquire adjacent land to facilitate a turning circle at the station and provide a significantly improved station setting. Works are programmed to begin at the end of 2009 with completion 2010/11. The station will remain open throughout.

5) **Rotherham Leisure Complex**

Since the last report to the Panel this site has been completed and open to the public. The new facility provides a new main swimming pool and smaller access pool, flumes, slides, six badminton courts in a sports hall, café facilities, a fitness suite and a climbing wall.

6) **Townscape Heritage Initiative**

Grant funding of £3.5 million is approved to subsidise the refurbishment of up to fourteen buildings on High Street. An update on some of these are provided below:
a) **Essoldo Chambers**

Having been granted planning permission for the refurbishment of this building to create eight new apartments and new shop fronts to the ground floor, the owner is in the process of drawing up a tender brief to contract for the works.

b) **Hanbys Shoe Shop, The Little Coffee Shop and Zak’s Hairdressers**

The owner of this block of properties has appointed a Conservation architect who has drawn up plans for the restoration of the frontage to these buildings.

c) **No 20 High Street**

The owner has appointed a conservation architect who has drawn up plans for the restoration of No. 20 which will comprise restored shop frontages and two one-bed apartments.

d) **The George Wright Building, The Three Cranes and Alfonso’s**

The Council has issued an ‘Urgent Works Notice’ on the owner to save the George Wright building from irreversible dilapidation. The owner has not complied and the Council is undertaking the works in default. A charge will be placed on the building in an attempt to recoup the cost. The owner has been requested to provide access for an internal inspection of the remaining Listed Buildings, but to date has not co-operated.

The Councils solicitors have served a Winding Up Petition on the company for unpaid business rates to the Council. This was heard in the High Court on 11th March 2009 when a Liquidation Order was served. The assets (including the above properties) will now pass into the hands of the Liquidator. The Liquidator has been informed of the Council’s interest in acquiring the properties. In addition we have met with the Building Preservation Trust (BPT) and the Buildings At Risk Trust (BART) to secure their interest and financial assistance toward developing a scheme of restoration for these buildings.

7) **Lot 1 - Council Accommodation**

The contract to build the offices and the agreement for lease was agreed in December 2008. The application for planning permission has been submitted and is being processed.

8) **Lot 2 - Delivery of Cultural Centre**

As part of the procurement by Competitive Dialogue procedure under the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) submission, the Council Officers and the developer, TCN/Express Parks, are discussing the development brief and delivery package for the new Cultural Centre. It is envisaged the centre will comprise a theatre, museum, library and other Ancillary uses.
9) **Lot 3 - Redevelopment of The Councils Remaining Vacated Sites**

Negotiations are currently on-going with TCN/Express Parks.

Negotiations between TCN and a car park operator for the construction of a multi-storey car park on the Drummond Street site are well advanced.

**Scrutiny Panel has requested a detailed report on public realm in the Town Centre. I would report as follows:**

10) **Public Realm**

Council officers working closely with colleagues in Yorkshire Forward (YF) have identified several public realm projects which can be delivered within the Geographic Programme period.

Each of the areas identified connect development projects either in the pipeline or under construction/completed. YF are keen to show a strategy of works which contributes and supports their current investment in the Renaissance Programme.

**a) Canal frontage adjacent to Central Rail Station**

There is a stretch of river adjacent to the Rail Station which is overgrown and derelict. It is proposed to improve the setting of the Rail Station and give visitors to the town the opportunity to sit out and walk along the canal front in a safe and pleasant environment. Initial design concepts include the possibility of bringing the former canal warehouse (now derelict) back into use.

Works will be synchronised with the refurbishment works around the Rail Station which commence in November 2009. This project has been identified within the Geographic Programme.

**b) College Road Gateway**

To reinforce the positive impression of Rotherham for visitors going into the town and in particular those people arriving by train, it is proposed to upgrade and improve College Road (from the Rail Station to Chantry Bridge) This work will focus predominantly on the streetscape, and will upgrade the quality of pavement materials, street furniture and lighting with a view to improving the “feel” of Rotherham for those walking from the Rail Station into Rotherham.

The programme of works will coincide with the works around the Rail Station. Further phases will take this project further into the town centre towards the Bus station (subject to funding). This project has been identified within the Geographic Programme.
c) Markets Square

This is a key area of the town centre which needs to be addressed. The success of this project depends on a detailed understanding of how this area is to be developed markets and the future retail strategy for the town centre.

Once the above issues are settled, work can be undertaken to design this area as part of a comprehensive upgrade of the public areas in and around the Markets area. It is important that this area is developed as one of Rotherham’s key local points and reflects the aspirations of Rotherham town centre to become a unique destination.

The programme for this public realm project is dependant upon a comprehensive strategy for the area. It will likely follow the physical development of the public realm around the Rail Station and RCAT both of which are more advanced in design terms and delivery programme. This project has been identified within the Geographic Programme.

d) Public realm around RCAT redevelopment

The proposal to redevelop RCAT is well advanced and is subject to various approvals from funders. As part of this development the Council are committed to ensuring that the setting for the College matches the top quality architecture of the building. This public realm project should also address the route from RCAT to the Markets area.

Each of the above four projects need to be addressed in a holistic way. Each element connecting with the other to provide a comprehensive upgrade from RCAT past the Markets and Bus Station to the Rail Station. This concept has been rehearsed with YF and has their support in principle. This project has been identified within the Geographic Programme.

e) Church Street (between the Minster Yard and adjacent All Saints Building)

All Saints Building demolition will be completed by April 2009 and the new build (offices and retail) will commence 2009/2010. The setting on the town side ie Church Street will also need to be addressed as it forms a fundamental part of All Saints Square. It also provides connectivity between the upgraded Minster Yard and the new All Saints Quarter (Imperial Buildings).

The programme for this work could follow completion of both the Minster Yard and the new All Saints Building in 2011 if funding can be identified from within the existing YF allocation.

f) Westgate Demonstrator Project/All Saints Quarter

This project is now well advanced with Imperial Building and Old Market Street completed and Keppel Wharf to be finished shortly. Officers are now moving to accelerate the development of the public realm around the river frontage (deck of cards concept) Main Street and finally Domine Lane. The funding has been approved by YF to undertake this work and detailed design work is progressing.
The current proposal allows for approximately fifty car parking spaces underneath the riverside public realm which does not interfere with public access to the river front (an aspiration of the Renaissance Strategy) and provides additional car parking for the town. Council officers are in discussions with Iliad (the developer) to agree how these spaces will be managed (and by whom) and how the competing demands are to be met ie residential owners/tenants, shoppers and All Saints Building businesses etc.

Works will commence on the “deck of cards” (the old abattoir site) towards the end of 2009 and Market Street will follow on. Domine Lane will be the final phase and is dependant on the programme for the redevelopment of Westgate Chambers which is programmed to start in Spring 2010. Funding has been approved under the existing SRIP programme.

g) All Saints’ Minster Churchyard

This £0.5m scheme funded by Yorkshire Forward (YF) forms part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) and consists of two main elements: floodlighting of the Minster and landscaping improvements. These include the creation of a Minster Plaza in front of the main entrance, seating walls to encourage people to this destination along with additional tree and shrub planting. Following lengthy consultation particularly with the church authorities and the Sheffield Diocese, designs are currently being finalised, and subject to obtaining the necessary statutory approvals for the scheme, it is anticipated that works on site will commence in July 2009.

Also to compliment these improvements, two ornate lighting arches will be installed shortly on Vicarage lane along with new black railings on the eastern boundary wall to the churchyard.

h) High Street

Public realm improvements are also proposed for High Street, which form part of the THI Scheme, with funding of £0.8m being secured from YF. It is proving difficult to programme for the implementation of these works, as it was envisaged that they would commence soon after some of the repair and restoration schemes had been carried out to the THI project buildings. Details of the THI projects are given in section 6 of this report. Two grant applications are expected to be submitted to the Council in the next two to three weeks.

i) Public Realm Strategy

Urban designers, Gillespies have been working on the preparation of the PRS since March 2007. From 11th April to 23rd May 2008, the draft document was the subject of a formal six week consultation period. Over 200 comments were received, and these have been addressed in a Consultation Report with 'suggested changes' produced by the Council. These changes have now been incorporated into the document which is subject to a sustainability appraisal currently on-going.
Initially the Council's intention was to adopt the document as an Interim Planning Statement (IPS), which would be taken into consideration when determining planning applications. However, following comments from the Government Office during the consultation stage about the limited weight of IPSs, it is now intended to adopt the PRS as a Supplementary Planning Document. The SPD would stem from saved UDP policy (ENV3.1) and appropriate policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy. To achieve this, the Public Realm Strategy is now being subjected to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which is being carried out by WSP Environmental Ltd and funded by YF. Two additional rounds of public consultation will be necessary as part of the SA process, which should be completed by mid-May, with the possibility of the final document being adopted by the Council shortly after this date.

8. Finance

The Council has three principal sources of grant aid toward the physical renaissance of the Town Centre as follows:-

1. Yorkshire Forward SRIP £27.1 m 2005-2011
2. Transform South Yorkshire (TSY) £14.1 m 2005-2011
3. Townscape Heritage Initiative
   (i) (HLF) £1.1m 2007-2012
   (ii) (RMBC) £1.0m 2007-2012
   (iii) (YF) £1.44m 2008-2010
   TOTAL £44.74 m

Officers are presently in discussion with Yorkshire Forward regarding a second round of funding through the Geographic Programme which will supercede SRIP through to 2014.

The grant funds serve the prime purpose of acting as ‘kick start’ funding to secure private sector investment. Assuming a typical leverage ratio of 6 to 1 this would yield an additional £300 million plus of private sector investment.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The delivery of the Town Centre Renaissance over say a 20 year period is a highly complex, multi-tasked event which carries risks and uncertainties common to large scale regeneration, principally

1. Securing ongoing funding.
2. Securing land and property acquisitions
3. Continuing to secure private sector interest and funding

So far these main areas of risk have been successfully met and risk analyses are in place to address identified future risks with identified control measures. Whilst the present financial situation (credit crunch) has impacted upon private sector investment in development the availability of public sector monies will act as a welcome incentive offering the possibility of measures such as gap funding etc to reduce developer risk.
10. **Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

The proposals will assist in delivering the following Council objectives.

**Corporate Plan:** Create a vibrant and successful town centre that acts as a hub for social, economic and environmental activity.

**Regeneration Plan:** Achieve Rotherham Town Renaissance. Key action establishing a new civic focus for the town centre.

**Year ahead statement:** Major projects – Rotherham Town Centre Renaissance Programme. Commitments: to start work on Rotherham Town Centre.

11. **Background Papers and Consultation**

Rotherham Strategic Development Framework (February 2005).

**Contact Name:** John Smales, extension 3873, Development Team Manager, john.smales@rotherham.gov.uk