

**Halesowen Town Centre
Access Study
Proposals for public consideration**



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Initial consultation findings

Extract from HALESOWEN TOWN MATTERS CONSULTATION EXERCISE

The six-week town centre consultation exercise, steered by the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise Working Group, commenced on Friday 15th September and closed on Friday 27th October 2006. The purpose of the consultation exercise, branded '*Halesowen Town Matters*', was to respond to concerns expressed by Elected Members, local residents and businesses with regard to the short term impact of regeneration activities in the town centre and in respect of associated transportation issues.

Travelling to Halesowen Town Centre

| | No. | % |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| Car/van | 486 | 54.1 |
| Walk | 213 | 23.7 |
| Bus | 183 | 20.4 |
| Cycle | 6 | 0.7 |
| Other | 6 | 0.7 |
| Motorcycle | 2 | 0.2 |
| Community transport | 2 | 0.2 |
| Taxi | 1 | 0.1 |
| Total* | 899 | 100.0 |
| Did not answer | 4 | |

* In some cases, more than one answer was provided

After cars, the second most popular method of travelling to the town centre was walking (23.7%). 1 in 5 respondents (20.4%) stated they used the bus to travel to the town centre. Thus, just over 4 in 10 (44.1%) of respondents travel to the town centre by sustainable modes.

Length of Time Spent in Town Centre

| | No | % |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|
| Less than an hour | 240 | 29.6 |
| Between 1-2 hours | 419 | 51.7 |
| Between 2-3 hours | 89 | 11.0 |
| More than 3 hours | 63 | 7.8 |
| Total | 811 | 100.0 |
| Did not answer | 9 | |

Just over a half of all respondents (51.7%) stated they spent between 1 to 2 hours in the town centre on an average visit. Approximately, 30% (29.6%) of respondents stated they spent less than an hour in the town centre on an average visit. Thus, 8 in 10 respondents **(81.3%) stated they spend up to two hours in the town centre on an average visit**

Satisfaction with Town Centre Facilities / Provision

| | Increase (%) | Stay the same (%) | Decrease (%) | Total (%) |
|--|--------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Pubs and Clubs | 5.9 | 76.1 | 18.0 | 100.0 |
| Restaurants and cafes | 40.0 | 57.2 | 2.8 | 100.0 |
| Hot food takeaways | 4.2 | 60.8 | 35.0 | 100.0 |
| New homes | 26.5 | 58.9 | 14.6 | 100.0 |
| Large supermarket | 89.1 | 7.5 | 3.4 | 100.0 |
| Department store | 88.0 | 10.5 | 1.5 | 100.0 |
| Small independent non-food retail | 75.2 | 22.4 | 2.4 | 100.0 |
| Small independent food retail | 65.8 | 32.0 | 2.2 | 100.0 |
| Street traders | 41.0 | 46.7 | 12.3 | 100.0 |
| Short stay car parking provision | 84.4 | 14.1 | 1.5 | 100.0 |
| Long stay car parking provision | 42.5 | 51.4 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Town centre events | 63.6 | 34.0 | 2.4 | 100.0 |
| Other | 71.3 | 2.7 | 26.0 | 100.0 |

Responses over 70% shaded in grey

8 in 10 respondents (84.4%) wished to see an increase in short-stay car parking provision. Over half (51.4%) wanted long stay car parking provision to remain the same.

Main Factor to Encourage Respondents to visit Town Centre More Frequently

When asked what would be the main factor that would encourage respondents to visit the town centre more frequently the top three answers were:

1. Better / more shops;
2. New / improved supermarket; and
3. Reduction in car parking charges / increase in short stay car parking provision

Key Priorities for Improvement

The top 5 areas local residents wanted to see improvement were as follows: -

- 1. Car parking;**
2. Crime prevention;
3. Street cleanliness;
- 4. Congestion on roads leading into town centre**
5. Town centre events

In response to these findings the Council resolved to **address congestion on roads leading into the town centre and car parking through a detailed Access Study covering the whole town centre.** In terms of street cleanliness and town centre events both issues will be addressed through a Town Centre Risk Management Strategy to minimise the adverse impact of redevelopment proposals. **In both the Access Study and Town Centre Risk Management Strategy, crime prevention will be an overarching consideration.**

Traffic management and Highway improvements

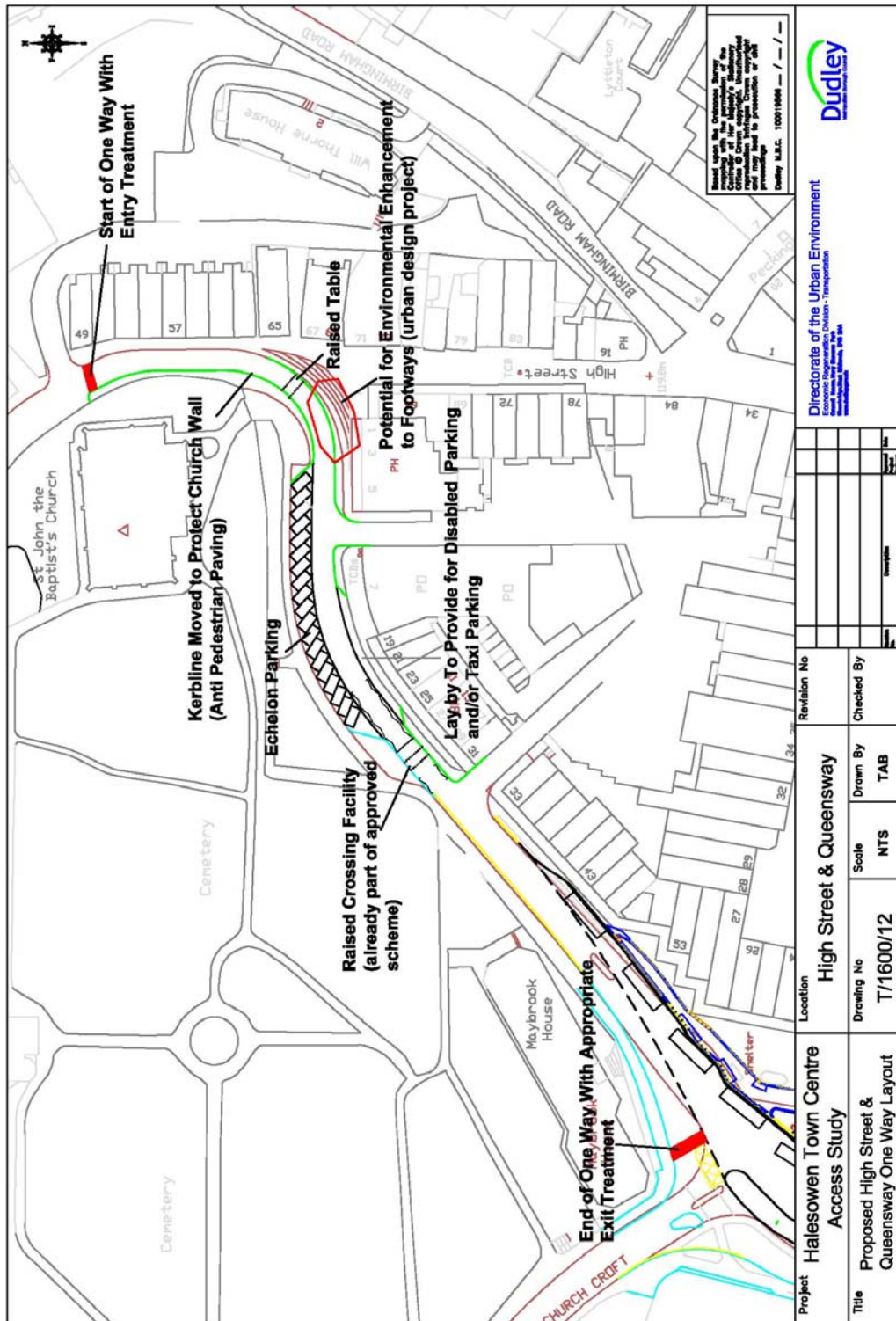
The town centre, like many of the roads in the West Midlands conurbation is heavily congested during peak periods during the week day relating to the daily commute or school run. The traffic flow is noticeably tidal due to the proximity of the town to the heart of the conurbation, Birmingham. The worst period and of particular concern being the AM or morning peak, approximately 8:00 to 9:00, when considerable numbers of vehicles pass through the town on route to and in the direction of Birmingham.

Studies have shown that the journey time from Hayley Green to The Grange junction on the A456 (Manor Way) increases 6 fold during this period resulting in an average journey of 9 minutes. This time penalty encourages significant volumes of traffic to seek alternative routes of similar or perceived time advantage through the town. In reality this perceived advantage does not exist due to the network being in a state of natural equilibrium producing a very similar journey time on all alternative routes with the same origin and destination.

The problem is a direct result of under capacity of the primary route network. This network of routes signed with characteristic green signs should carry the through traffic, in this case, around the town but severe congestion at the A456/A459 Grange junction results in rerouting through the town via Hagley Road/Blackberry Lane, Queensway and Grange Road.

A key to resolving the congestion problem in the town would therefore be to, wherever practicable, encourage traffic not wishing to call into the town to seek the most expeditious route to and via the primary route network, whilst at the same time discouraging through traffic from using the town centre for through or "rat running" journeys. This policy would manifest itself in measures to improve the primary route network and to encourage its use and supportive measures to dissuade unnecessary use of the town centre roads. Measures have therefore been developed to help address these problems.

The temporary traffic management currently in operation to facilitate the town centre regeneration project has given an ideal opportunity to study the impact of certain measures on the town centre and any unforeseen eventualities. In particular the one way working on Queensway from the Towns End to Hagley Road roundabout has shown that there is potential in considering some form of permanent one way albeit less extensive on this route. Drawing Number T/1600/12 shows a proposed layout for making High Street and Queensway one way in a south west bound direction on a permanent basis.



This would reduce the flow of traffic past the Church and provide opportunity to bring forward environmental improvements to this area currently suffering from traffic impact and severance.



This would also address the growing enthusiasm to reconnect the Church with the town. It is suggested that the length of road subject to this one-way order would be from the Service road o/s Shutterbug to the junction of Church Croft, as indicated on Drawing Number T/1600/12.



This route will already be the subject of a 20 MPH order however it is suggested that it would be appropriate to apply a similar order or zone to the town centre core of live streets such as Rumbow Birmingham Street, Pool Road, Hagley Road and Great Cornbow. This would increase journey times across the town centre whilst improving the environment for



pedestrians. The following schematic drawing number T/1600/11 shows all the proposed roads which will be subject to a 20mph zone (shown in red). This drawing also shows the extent of the 20mph zone already approved as part of the Bus Station enabling works (shown in green) and the extent of proposed permanent southwest bound one-way for all traffic (shown in blue).



Pool Road near it's junction with Great Cornbow outside the Leisure Centre would under these proposals be subject to a 20mph speed limit/zone bringing obvious road safety benefits to this area.

Associated with these traffic management measures aimed at discouraging through traffic in the town centre a supportive set of proposals should be considered to improve the primary routes where fairly modest improvements could bring quite substantial improvements. Attention



should be given to improved traffic regulation on the A458 Stourbridge Road resulting from the current Traffic Management Study taking place on this route and re modelling of the Grange roundabout associated with the Safety scheme currently proposed by the Highways Agency.



The lack of flare on the approach to the Stop line on the Birmingham bound carriageway restricts capacity here and could be rectified by local widening approaching the roundabout.



Car parking

The West Midlands LTP to which the Council have endorsed their support seeks to increase the number of short stay car parking spaces in town centres and reduce the number of long stay spaces. As part of the temporary arrangements to facilitate the town centre regeneration a number of car parks have been re-designated short stay.

The full impact of these changes will not be apparent until after completion of the regeneration project when the new 600 space multi storey car park opens in Autumn 2008. At this time further consideration could be given to the balance of long and short stay car park provision.



As part of the current temporary Traffic Management arrangements for the redevelopment the on street parking on the Queensway adjacent to the Church is to be modified to Echelon from the existing end on perpendicular parking. This will facilitate their use and reduce delay and potential hazards associated with manoeuvring out of the spaces, whilst the one-way operation is in place.



In association with this and to facilitate more flexible short term shopping it is also intended to extend the on-street limited waiting areas in Queensway (perpendicular parking), Hagley Road and Birmingham Street to duration of 45 minutes with no return for 45 minutes. These changes will improve short stay shopping opportunities, particularly in Queensway.

It is suggested that these changes are reviewed at the same time as the off-street parking situation in autumn 2008 and that, in principle it would be appropriate to retain the echelon layout should the one way system be retained permanently as discussed in this document.

Public transport

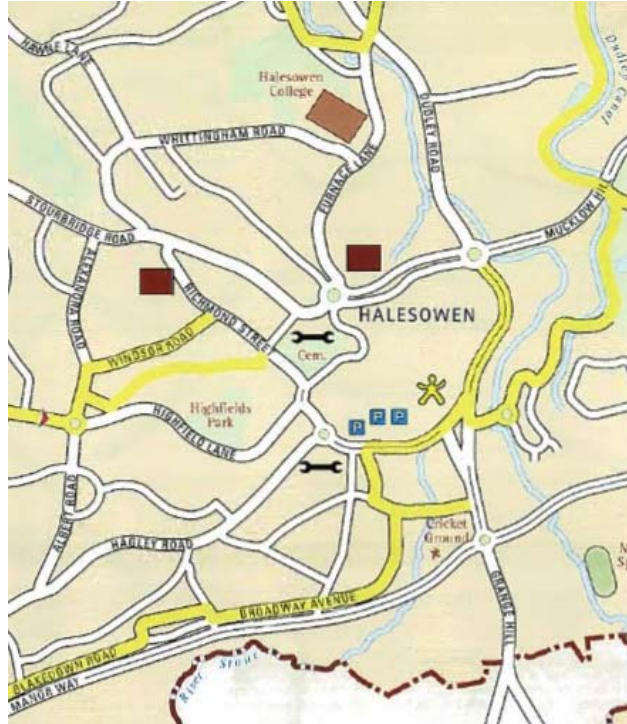
Halesowen is well served by bus a service which is indicated by the fifth of the respondents who used public transport to access the Town.

The bus station is currently being redeveloped to improve bus and passenger facilities which may encourage more passengers to use public transport especially at night.

Clearly the suggested permanent one way system to Queensway will have major impact on bus services and the usage of the existing Bus Lanes to Queensway and Bromsgrove Rd/St. The future of these lanes can be further considered in conjunction with the possible one way working and possible improvements to the capacity of the Grange junction. It should be noted that returning the lanes to general traffic use could be counter productive in as far as discouraging traffic passing through the town.

Cycling

The town centre lies at the edge of the borough's extensive planned network of cycle routes as shown on the figure below.



Cycling is prohibited in the pedestrianised areas of the High Street, Hagley Street, Peckingham Street and Great Cornbow.

Cycle parking within the Town Centre is minimal with two Sheffield type stands on at the northern end of the High Street and the other in Peckingham Street outside Woolworths; two stands are attached to the wall of the Council House in Great Cornbow and four cycle 'slots' outside the Leisure Centre in Pool Road.



Only 0.7% of visits to the Town were by cycle. Provision of secure cycle parking facilities either in the existing High Street and Peckingham Street locations or, preferably, in the Pool Road and revamped Cornbow car parks may release any suppressed demand and encourage greater use of cycles to access the Town.

Walking

Walking is the second most popular mode of access to the Town.

Pedestrian access to the Town is good from all directions although Bromsgrove Street tends to cause severance to the north east of the Town. There are existing signalised crossing facilities on Queensway at the junction with Bromsgrove Road, a subway and pelican crossing near Summer Hill, a pelican crossing just south of Andrew Road, the new road layout on Queensway north of Church Croft includes relocation of the existing zebra crossing and to the north there is an existing pelican crossing at the northern end of the High Street. A subway system under the Townsend roundabout connects the High Street to Furnace Lane.

The northern end of the High Street is connected to Church Croft and the west via a footpath system through the Church.



Improved pedestrian connectivity is proposed across the High Street just north of the entrance to the Church as part of the High Street/Queensway southbound one way scheme. This will further improve access to the north of the High Street by improving the link to the Church footpath system.

