

Halesowen Area Committee – 10th November 2010

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Public consultation on the Halesowen Area Action Plan ‘Options’ stage document

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on the consultation responses received on the Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP) Options document.

Background

2. On 30th June 2010, Cabinet approved the publication of the Halesowen Area Action Plan ‘Options’ stage document for public consultation.
3. The Halesowen Area Action Plan will form part of Dudley Borough’s wider ‘Local Development Framework’. It will provide a vision for what we want to achieve in the Town Centre by 2026, and through its policies and site allocations, it will set out how that vision will be delivered.
4. Following on from and informed by earlier stage information gathering, the Halesowen Area Action Plan ‘Options’ stage document sets out a preferred vision and set of objectives for the town centre. A variety of Halesowen town centre issues are identified, together with some preferred (and where appropriate alternative) options and or proposed policies in terms of how these issues may best be resolved.
5. The planning process requires that the community and other stakeholders are engaged in the preparation of development plan documents such as area action plans – hence the need for the ‘Options’ stage document and its subsequent formal public consultation period between July 30th to September 10th 2010. This included a two day community consultation event in the Cornbow Centre on the 12th and 13th of August where Council officers were available to discuss the document with the public and seek their comments.
6. 33 stakeholders responded in writing or electronically to the public consultation, and a further 135 people were engaged in the consultation event at the Cornbow Centre.
7. Of the 33 respondents, 4 stated that they had no comment to make. Summarising the remaining stakeholder responses, support was variously expressed for a wide range of the key issues identified and suggestions put forward in the Halesowen AAP ‘Options’ document. In particular, there was a quantity of support for:

- The proposed Vision and Objectives – with comments that the objectives could be strengthened from an environment perspective;
 - That A1 Retail land use/development continue to be focussed within the Primary Shopping Area (retail core);
 - Improving and adding to the evening and night-time economy (though not adding to the younger adult drinking culture);
 - That any new development close to the River Stour should enhance the river, improve access to and along it, and guard against flood risk;
 - Protecting and improving wildlife habitats and the network of green spaces;
 - Improving the quality (and, where appropriate, quantity) of the public realm – streets, paved and green open spaces, trees and landscaping, street furniture, signage, art, etc;
 - A return towards pre-1960s town character – finer grain, narrower scale and character of frontages (but avoiding pastiche, making sympathetic use of new design ideas and materials, and respecting the past while embracing contemporary development);
 - That new development should be of high quality and should improve Halesowen town centre's character, image and safety (including that good design should be sustainable and consider energy sources/consumption and water use/drainage);
 - Improving pedestrian connectivity between St John's church and the town centre, and better incorporating the church into the town (including by using the church for civic, community and cultural uses, and by including St John's church within the town centre boundary).
8. The consultation event at the Cornbow Shopping Centre was carried out by officers from a number of Council Directorates – these officers successfully engaging and obtaining the views of local people across the 2 day event.
 9. Using display posters and a series of themed questions, a good deal of support was expressed for the Halesowen Area Action Plan 'Options' document in terms of its key issues and suggested ways forward. The nature conservation and historic environment themes appeared to enjoy particularly high levels of interest and support.
 10. There was very little dissent or objection. A number of people criticised the loss of much of Halesowen Town Centre's older and more traditional character due to development/redevelopment from the 1960s onwards. Although the scale and appearance of recent buildings was criticised, there was recognition and support for the role Asda (for example) plays as an anchor store and improved convenience shopping provision. The current appearance of the 'Husky Dog' traffic island was also criticised – it was explained that the island will be planted out at the appropriate time of year.
 11. All the representations received on the 'Options' document will now be taken into account in the next stage of the preparation of the Halesowen Area Action Plan which is anticipated to be published in April 2011 for a further round of public consultation. The Halesowen Area Action Plan will then be submitted to the Secretary of State later that year and then subjected to a formal examination in public, with subsequent adoption by the Council anticipated during 2012. The Halesowen Area Action Plan will then form part of Dudley's statutory planning framework.

Finance

- 12. The Halesowen Area Action Plan will be funded from existing budgets and resources dedicated to the production of Development Plan Documents and other such statutory planning documents.

Law

- 13. The production of the Halesowen Area Action Plan is necessary in order to update and replace the Halesowen chapter of the Dudley Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – the UDP having a plan period to the end of 2011.
- 14. This Area Action Plan for Halesowen will deliver those regeneration requirements for the town as set out in the emerging Black Country Joint Core Strategy. This Area Action Plan is a Development Plan Document and has to be produced in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.
- 15. In addition Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything that it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of the area.

Equality Impact

- 16. The Halesowen Area Action Plan will set the planning framework for the development of Halesowen up to 2026. The Area Action Plan will seek to ensure that sufficient homes, shops and employment, social, educational and recreational facilities are planned and provided for in that time to meet the needs of the communities in the area. This will include meeting the needs of children and young people by seeking to provide sufficient facilities for them as well as having a positive effect for future generations.

Recommendation

- 17. That the committee notes the progress of the Halesowen Area Action Plan.



.....
J. B. Millar
Director of the Urban Environment

Contact Officer: David Piper
Telephone:01384 814173
Email:david.piper@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers

Halesowen Area Action Plan (AAP) Options document – available in Members Room
Black Country Joint Core Strategy <http://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/>