

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 22 NOVEMBER 2006

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on regeneration developments in Halesowen town centre; namely, the CPO Inquiry, Bus Station and Vale Retail proposals.

Background

2. Members will recall at the Halesowen Area Committee of 12 September that the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) agreed to provide a detailed report to the next ordinary meeting of the Committee outlining timescales, together with proposals for Vale Retail, proposals surrounding the new bus station and the position of Asda with regard to a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).
3. Associated with the proposals for Cornbow, detailed in the report presented to Halesowen Area Committee on 22 March 2006, is the need for a CPO which is required in order to acquire property to allow the development to proceed. The CPO Inquiry originally scheduled for 7 November start has now been postponed until 9 January 2007 and the hearing is likely to last six days. The postponement was agreed at the request of Government Office following representations made to the Inspector by the objectors. The Council is still endeavouring to conclude agreements with the objectors before the Inquiry.
4. If the CPO is confirmed in Spring 2007 then work on the Asda extension proposal could start in early summer 2007. Vale Retail are prepared to do several of the preliminary works (sub-terrain works), which do not need new acquisitions, in advance to coincide with work on the ring road and bus station so as not to cause disruption twice and so that the planned opening of the new Asda can still happen by Christmas 2008 or Easter 2009. Planning consent has been granted for the Asda proposal but was subject to a request for Judicial Review by Somerfield. The Council has been informed that the Court has confirmed there is no case to be heard.

5. The Council will transfer the Precinct car park to Vale once possession of units located underneath the car park is secured. Vale Retail has also acquired the headlease of the Safeway/W H Smith/Cornbow Hall building. Currently, negotiations are underway with a prospective tenant looking to occupy the former Safeway supermarket as a non-food retail outlet.
6. The proposed improvements to the Bus Station respond to both the Cornbow Centre development plans to expand out into the existing Bus Station, and also the need to accommodate an increased number of bus stands, layover/service vehicle parking and improved messaging provision. Improvements will be provided for passenger waiting and staff accommodation. The proposals to increase the Bus Station's facilities are as a direct result of increasing customer and service demands. Other improvements for bus users and shoppers will include the introduction of pedestrian crossings in the area. The planning application for the bus station was approved subject to conditions by the Development Control Committee on 28 February 2006.
7. An up to date position statement from Centro will be provided at the meeting. The combined developments detailed above are likely to last for two years.

Finance

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Law

9. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough.

Equality Impact

10. The proposals set out in this report accord with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Recommendation

11. That Committee note the current status of regeneration proposals in Halesowen town centre.



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List of Background Papers

None