
Halesowen Area Committee – Wednesday 14th November 2007

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Halesowen Town Centre Development

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members and residents on progress with regard to physical development taking place in Halesowen town centre.

Background

2. At the 14 March 2007 Halesowen Area Committee, Members requested that progress reports be presented to future Committees with an update on progress with regard to the development of the Cornbow shopping centre, bus station and town centre management issues. Since the last report presented to Committee on 6 September 2007, officers from the Council have met with representatives from Vale Retail, CENTRO/WMPTA and the Police (Halesowen Regeneration Progress Meeting: 15 October 2007). Over the lifetime of the development period, officers will continue to liaise with Vale Retail, CENTRO/WMPTA and the Police to ensure building works are carried out and communicated to the public in the most efficient and effective way. The Town Centre Working Group of Members and officers met on 22 October 2007 to consider the issues raised by the partners. The Head of Policy, Executive and Support Team will provide a verbal update on the outcomes of the Progress Meeting and Working Group at this Committee.
3. At the 6 September 2007 Area Committee, Members agreed to seek the approval of the Cabinet Member for Transportation to use a proportion of the Section 106 monies to contribute to the trial of a shuttle bus. The free shuttle bus (branded the “*Halesowen Hopper*”) commenced operation on 1 October 2007 for a three month period; funded by the three project partners of Centro/WMPTA, the Council and Vale Retail. The shuttle bus links the town centre shops and the temporary bus stops which have been set up while development work takes place. The service runs from Monday to Saturday between 9:30am and 3:30pm covering a circular route every ten minutes and is free of charge for all passengers. If the service is successful and attracts enough passengers, it is hoped that it will continue during the development period.

Cornbow Shopping Centre

4. Vale Retail has confirmed overall programme timescales are being maintained. Key elements which Vale is hopeful will be achieved between now and Christmas includes the opening of the new Peacocks store and possession of the existing

Peacocks unit. Possession of the Peacocks unit will enable completion of the demolition works. It is anticipated that before Christmas the piling will be complete and erection of steel on the western elevation facing Queensway will commence. Throughout the development period Vale Retail will continue to provide a programme of entertainment activity for every Tuesday; “*Top Notch Tuesdays*”.

Halesowen Bus Station

5. The handback of the bus station by Vale Retail to Centro/WMPTA took place on 15 October 2007, following completion of the advance works, including those directly interfacing the bus station. By allowing Carillion to commence their works as planned gives a realistic opportunity to complete the bus station and associated highway works in order to complement the redevelopment by Vale Retail and the scheduled opening of ASDA store. At the time of writing this report, Carillion are now on site and setting up their site compound at the rear of the Labour Club on Hagley Road.
6. The bus station will include two modern, high quality passenger waiting areas serving eight bus stands, with electronic doors which open when the bus arrives. Two electronic information displays with up-to-date timetable information will be installed and CCTV with a help point will be provided. There will be an attractive entrance canopy, creating a landmark feature into the Cornbow shopping centre and a spacious paved area will link the bus station to the shops. The whole facility has been designed to allow easy access for all users, and one of the bus stands will serve Ring and Ride minibuses, used by people with limited mobility.

Marketing and Communications

7. Gateway signage stating “*Building a Better Halesowen*” was installed on five strategic approaches to Halesowen town centre in early October. The signage demonstrates the commitment of all three partners to work together in this £30m regeneration project. Specific locations include:
 - Just before the junction of Stourbridge Road and Richmond Street;
 - Haden Hill/Dudley Road and Furnace Hill - on the corner, by the fish and chip;
 - On the approach to the roundabout at the bottom of Mucklow Hill - situated in the grassed central reservation area;
 - On the approach to Halesowen where Grange Road and Bromsgrove Road meet (on the grassed central reservation); and
 - Huskey Dog roundabout – on the roundabout, facing the Hagley Road approach.

Town Centre Management

8. The repainting and, where necessary, replacement of bollards in the town centre is now complete. New removable bollards have now been installed in Hagley Road, High Street, Great Cornbow and the Queensway. At the time of writing this report, forthcoming events in the town centre include the following: -

Thursday 25th October	Rumple’s Circus Workshop and Abbey and T Bags, Somers Square Halesowen (free to children)
Friday 26th October	Ray Roberts Childrens Fair Rides (free to

	children)
Saturday 10th November	Proposed date for Union Flag dedication ceremony by the Royal British Legion in the Great Cornbow, Halesowen
Saturday 17th November	Proposed date for Halesowen's celebrated annual Christmas Lights switch-on.
Saturday 22nd December	Churches Together in Halesowen: open air carol service in Somers Square (11am – 1pm)
December (date to be arranged)	Barbershop Quartet entertains shoppers; further acts being requested.

Town Centre Access Study consultation.

9. At its meeting of the 28th June 2006, the area committee resolved to set up a working group of members to consider the impact of the regeneration activities in the town and associated transportation issues. Having steered the initial consultation in the, "Halesowen Town Matters Consultation Exercise", the group has continued to meet to consider its outcomes and develop proposals. These proposals form the Access Study and will be available for public consultation until 30th January 2008. Copies of the proposals will be available for the public to view at the Library Halesowen, The Housing Office Queensway and Council House Stourbridge. Reply paid questionnaires will also be available at these locations. Officers of the Council will be pleased to explain the proposals further and can be contacted through Dudley Council Plus on 01384 812345 or by email at Transp,DUE@dudley.gov.uk.

10. The initial consultation exercise, as reported to this area committee at its meeting of 24th January 2007, identified congestion on the roads leading to the town and car parking as the key areas for consideration. The study proposals at appendix 1 to this report also consider public transport, cycling and walking are summarised below:-
 - Congestion in the town centre, particularly in the morning peak hour is closely associated with under capacity on the adjacent primary roads. It is therefore proposed to carryout minor highway improvements to A456 Manor Way and improved traffic management to the A458 Stourbridge Road.
 - Associated with improvements to the primary roads it is proposed that a package of supporting measures be implemented to discourage through traffic from the town centre by making High Street permanently one way and extending the existing Queensway 20.mph zone to all of the town centre trafficked streets.
 - The situation concerning the off street car parks will not be fully apparent until the new parking stock has been completed when it is proposed that their management is reviewed. It is also proposed that the temporary changes to on street parking namely the increase in the duration of stay and layout of spaces be reviewed at the same time with the view of retaining them permanently
 - With the traffic management proposals alluded to above it is suggested that the existing bus lanes on Queensway and Bromsgrove Rd/St should be retained until the impact of these measures can be fully explored.

- Although cycling currently represents less than 1% of the trips to the town centre it is recognised that improved facilities could encourage greater usage. It is therefore proposed to provide further secure cycle parking either at existing locations or within one of the multi deck car parks.
 - Walking is the second most popular mode of access to the town which on the whole is well provided with pedestrian facilities. The one way proposals discussed earlier do, however, present the opportunity to improve access from High Street to the Church and its extensive footpath system. It is therefore proposed to provide an improved pedestrian access to the Church at this location by the introduction of an additional calming table at the gated access off High Street/Queensway.
11. The outcomes of the access study consultation will form the basis for detail development and ultimately adoption by the Council for implementation as funding allows.

Finance

12. A number of the issues raised within this report have a direct financial implication on the Council. However, all costs detailed which fall on the Council will be funded by existing capital or revenue budgets held within the Economic Regeneration Division.

Funding for the study has been found from the Councils Highways Capital Budget for the development of transport strategy. Funds have been allocated for the development of proposals for the Grange (A456) roundabout from the Councils Highways Capital Integrated Transport programme. The Highways Agency has allocated funds from its budgets to develop and implement safety improvements at the Grange (A456) roundabout. Contributions are available from planning obligations (section 106 of the Highways Act) for highway improvements to the town centre.

Law

13. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough. The council will carry out highway improvement/ maintenance work under the Highways Act 1980.

The Council is empowered to improve Highways under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980. Traffic Regulation orders are made under powers contained in section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The traffic Calming Act 1992 amends the Highways Act 1980 to allow works to be carried out to promote safety and to preserve or improve the environment. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.

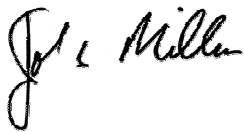
Equality Impact

14. A primary role of the Town Centre Management Service is to encourage inclusivity amongst all sectors of the community, including the needs of children and young people. The Cornbow shopping centre development responds to the strong demand amongst the local community for the presence of an anchor retail food store. A principal aim of the bus station development is to improve accessibility for all users to and from the town centre in a safe and secure environment. This work has been conducted in full accordance with the Council's equality and diversity policies and should in no way have any prejudicial impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

15. That the Committee notes the progress of development in Halesowen town centre.

That the area committee support the proposals identified in the Access Study at appendix 1 to this report



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List of Background Papers

Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

Halesowen Area Committee (September 2007) '*Halesowen Town Centre Development*
<http://cmis/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=9307>