

Halesowen Area Committee – Wednesday 12th March 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Halesowen Town Centre Development

Purpose of Report

1. To update Members and the public on progress with regard to physical developments 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 24 January 2008, officers from the Council have met with representatives from Vale Retail, CENTRO/WMPTA and the Police (Halesowen Regeneration Meeting; 22 February 2008). 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 26 February 2008 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.

Cornbow Shopping Centre

3. Vale Retail has confirmed the project is over half-way complete and remains on programme. Demolition work and foundations for the Asda store are now complete. Progress on the west elevation (bus station) has been good and the frame and render finish now complete at low level. The programme remains very much on track and the fit-out team are scheduled to start work in early August. Vale has agreed to allow Asda early access to complete items such as flooring, stairs and lifts during the shell construction phase which places the programme in a strong position for completion in November 2008.

Halesowen Bus Station and Highway Realignment

4. Works continue to progress well on the highway works. However, whilst carrying out the works it became apparent that sections of Queensway and Church Croft were in need of urgent repair and required substantial reconstruction. To carry out these additional strengthening works it was necessary to close Church Croft for 3 days during February. A closure was originally required for Queensway for a period of 8 days from the 8th March. However, due to the proximity of the Easter bank holiday the decision was taken to delay this work on Queensway so as not to further disrupt the town.
5. It is now anticipated that the road closure for the reconstruction of sections of Queensway will be carried out in early April and should be complete by the middle of the month. Every effort will be made to maintain service access to the shops and properties affected by these works. Both on street parking fronting St Johns Church and Maybrook House car park will be out of use during this closure period. Alternative short stay parking will be available at Andrew Road car park and long stay parking at High Street car park.
6. Although these closures and additional works are required there will be no impact on the Contractors ability to commence major elements of the bus station works during March 2008. The bus station and the associated highway works are currently still on target for completion in December 2008.

A456 and Grange Roundabout

7. Following the decision of the committee to support the proposed safety improvement scheme at the A456 Grange roundabout a plan has been placed on display in the foyer of Halesowen library for public examination. A letter drop has also been carried out informing frontages of the scheme and a number of enquiries have been received. To date the proposals have been well received and the plans will be available for comment until May. The Council will continue to develop the scheme with the view to delivering it in 2009/10.

Town Centre Management Issues

8. Entertainment and activities scheduled to take place in Halesowen (Somers Square) during March to June 2008 include: -

Friday 21 st March	Churches Together hymn singing
Tuesday 25 th March	Children's play trailer, Abby and Teabags face painting and balloon modelling
Thursday 27 th March	Rumples circus skills
Tuesday 31 st March	Brum and Dudley street theatre
Thursday 3 rd April	Abby and Teabags face painting and balloon modelling
Saturday 3 rd May	Medieval Halesowen event
Tuesday 27 th May	Climbing wall
Thursday 29 th May	Brum and Dudley street theatre
Friday 13 th June	Local Primary Schools celebration

9. On Tuesday 19 February the first of the 'my council' road shows was held at the Cornbow Centre in Halesowen from 12pm - 4pm. The 'my council' road show communicates with the public about the key services Environmental Management provides including enforcement, refuse and recycling collections, highways work and street care. This is done by visiting town centres and other key locations in the borough to hand out leaflets, record complaints and talk face to face with community members about their services. This stand was part of the Cornbow's Top Notch Tuesday and space was provided free of charge. The stand included representation from the Council's Environmental Team including recycling, enforcement and road gritting.

Finance

10. 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 Economic Regeneration Division.

Law

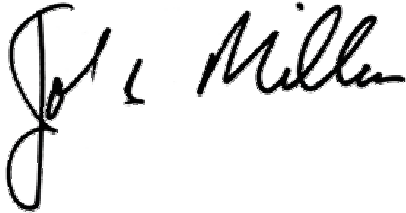
11. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of any part of the Borough. The council will carry out highway improvement/ maintenance work under the Highways Act 1980.
12. 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

13. A principal role of the Directorate of the Urban Environment 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

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



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List of Background Papers

Background documents used in the preparation of this report: -

Halesowen Area Committee Report: Agenda Item No. 17 (24 January 2008)
Available via: <http://cmis/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=10384>