

# PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER:P05/2441

Type of approval sought	Full Planning Permission
Ward	Halesowen South
Applicant	Centro
Location:	<b>HALESOWEN BUS STATION, QUEENSWAY, HALESOWEN, WEST MIDLANDS</b>
Proposal	<b>REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING BUS STATION TO CREATE NEW BUS STATION</b>
Recommendation Summary:	<b>APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS</b>

## SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 1 The existing bus station is located off Queensway on the edge of the Town Centre, on a level site, with the concourse alongside a row of shops and an entrance to the Cornbow Centre. The concourse contains a toilet block, planters, and a temporary staff/security building. On the opposite side of the highway is the Andrew Road public car park, on which the Queensway Centre (elderly persons' drop in centre) is located.
- 2 The bus station has six bus stops/ shelters and one bus stand, with four of those stops located to the nearside of the carriageway adjacent to the Cornbow Centre, and the remaining stops accessed via a pedestrian crossing to a 30 metre long island. There is a further island out into the carriageway, on which a clock, traffic signs and a lamppost are located.
- 3 Buses can currently only enter the station from the north and exit via the south in two lanes either side of the middle island. Vehicles are not permitted to turn right from the bus station exit: to do so, the Hagley Road roundabout is utilised. The main traffic flow along Queensway is not permitted to pass through the station: it is routed around it instead.
- 4 The application site boundary comprises most of the existing station and associated carriageway and part of the concourse. However part of the concourse alongside

the existing Cornbow Centre, and proposed extension to that Centre, is outside the boundaries of the site. The western boundary of the site abuts (and is shown integrating in with) the proposed road realignment. The site area is given as 0.27 hectares.

- 5 The character of the area is predominantly commercial, however there are flats at Wychbury Court on the other side of the Andrew Road car park and dwellings in Wesson Gardens on the opposite side of Queensway to the south of the site.

## PROPOSAL

- 6 The proposal is a detailed application, which seeks to provide a new bus station, as an updated facility with more stops, largely accommodating the space between the proposed extended Cornbow Centre and the realigned highway (Queensway). For the avoidance of doubt, those highway works are deemed to be permitted development, with the Queensway Centre remaining unaffected.
- 7 In more detail, 8 stops are proposed in a curving linear configuration on the eastern side of Queensway, split (5 to 3) either side of a central staff/ service building and pedestrian crossing point. That crossing is shown as signalised and leads onto a central refuge. It is currently proposed that this will link up from there with a crossing across the realigned highway to the pavement alongside the Andrew Road car park.
- 8 The central refuge partially separates the proposed bus station carriageway which is shown for buses only from the realigned Queensway, with an additional layover bay shown within that semi-enclosed bus concourse. It is one-way only (north to south, in the same direction as the direction of flow at the existing station). Buses are shown to be able to turn right into the station while travelling in a northerly direction, but are only capable of accessing bays 5 to 8 inclusive following that manoeuvre.
- 9 The shelters are shown as within an enclosed structure, with automated door openings on either side (from the concourse and from buses on the other side). The proposed service building / pod is also accessed via this enclosed space. The elevations to the shelters are shown with glazed sections mounted on concrete plinths, with a flat roof, 2.5 metres high, projecting at either end of the row, and

aligning, and merging, with the canopy on the Cornbow Centre (that part of it unaffected by the recent redevelopment proposals).

- 10 The service pod is shown as cylindrical with a flat roof rising to the gap at the centre of the shelters, and with cut- outs for the shelter roof and a tensile fabric canopy which is above that gap/ central access point. That canopy is shown as rising to 5 metres in the same direction as, and at a similar angle to, the roof of the service building, and also supported by two struts which angle into a central point at ground level. The elevation of the service building to the highway is blank and proposed to be rendered in a terracotta colour.
- 11 Other, associated works are proposed. This includes new paving, which is shown fanning out from the central gap and around the edge of the shelters to the Cornbow Centre. It is proposed that this paving be of differing textures, sizes and hues. Guard rails are shown at the kerb from the edges of the shelters to the existing pedestrian crossings at either end of the site.
- 12 The applicants have submitted supplementary information, including information on Air Quality, noise, contamination, lighting and a traffic assessment summary.

## HISTORY

- 13 Relevant planning history for the application site, and bordering sites, is set out in the table below:-

<b>APPLICATION No.</b>	<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>DECISION</b>	<b>DATE</b>
P05/0878	Part redevelopment, and extension of Cornbow Centre.	Approved, subject to the signing of a S106 Obligation (remains outstanding)	
P05/0598	Siting of temporary office building	Approved (1 year)	11/05/05

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

- 14 1 letter of objection from Travel West Midlands, a letter of concern on behalf of the owners of the Cornbow Centre, and a letter from a member of the local community which primarily criticises public involvement in the planning process, using this application as an example have been received.
- 15 The letter from Travel West Midlands, in summary states that:-
- while TWM supports the provision of improved terminal facilities, the opportunity needs to be taken to simplify bus movement within the Town Centre
    - to give effect to this, bus stopping points should be provided on both sides of Queensway, with the stops on the west side of Queensway acting as a satellite facility, similar to that provided at other recently modernised stations;
  - this is as there are highway safety concerns with buses turning right into the station while travelling in a northerly direction (e.g. there would be confusion amongst other motorists with buses pulling over to the nearside of the carriageway to effect the right turn into the station);
    - o – there may be a misconception that the bus is pulling over to the left to stop there.
  - TWM's alternative would prevent the necessity for this sharp turn, and would accord with planning policy.

- 16 The letter on behalf of the owners of the Cornbow Centre raises a concern that the scheme does not complement the proposed redevelopment of the Cornbow Centre (the subject of planning application P05/0878). This is in that it is considered that the proposed bus station will shield several views of the Queensway entrance to the Cornbow Centre. In particular: the sloping canopy and pod profile set up a dynamic which is opposite to the strong horizontal emphasis of the centre. In addition the proposed scheme will obscure the sense of entrance into the Centre, and obscure the sweep of the extension which leads towards that entrance.
- 17 The proposal has received the support of the Halesowen Area Committee, at their meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2006.

## OTHER CONSULTATION

- 18 **Head of Traffic and Road Safety (HTRS):** -
- the area shown hatched on the off-side exit from the Bus Station was previously identified for service vehicle parking
    - there appears to be room for 1 service vehicle parking space immediately after the build-out for the internal pedestrian crossing
    - no other parking in the remaining hatched area should be encouraged as it may result in blocking back through the Station and potentially back onto the public highway at the entry points to the Station.
  - the horizontal alignment is such that drivers may be confused between the road and the entry to the Station
    - a good colour contrast between the carriageway and the Bus Station, and a well defined edge of carriageway is essential to remove this potential confusion.
    - the priority given to the alternative Bus entry points needs to be marked clearly on the ground within the Bus Station to reduce internal conflict and the potential for Buses backing onto the highway, particularly those U-turning into the station at the Church Croft junction entry point.
- 19 **Head of Environmental Protection (HEP):-**
- no adverse comments on contamination;
  - with regard to air quality and noise-

- the submitted details show that there will be a decrease in NO2, the scheme will therefore not have an adverse effect on local air quality;
- while there will be some increase in noise levels, but it is considered that this can be negated by the use of a modern road surfacing system.

20 **Access in Dudley** – object to the proposal on the basis that it does not provide for a Ring and Ride facility, with a shelter and appropriate seating provision. They also make comments in detail about, for instance, colour design and signage and information.

## RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

### 21 **Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**

- S1 – social inclusion;
- S2 – sustainable development;
- S10- high quality design;
- S13 – role of centres
- S16- access and movement;
- DD1-urban design;
- DD4 – development in residential areas;
- DD6- access and transport infrastructure;
- CR1 – hierarchy of centres;
- CR5 – regeneration and development of centres;
- HTC1 – thoroughfares and public spaces;
- HTC2(1) – Cornbow Centre street block;
- AM1 – integrated safe, sustainable and accessible transport strategy;
- AM2 – public transport corridors
- AM5 – bus provision;
- AM9 – interchanges;
- AM15 – personal mobility;
- EP5 – air quality;
- EP6 – light pollution;
- EP7- noise pollution.

## **National Policy**

PPS1

PPG13

## **ASSESSMENT**

### *Principle of development*

- 22 There is general and specific support for the proposed redevelopment/renewal of the bus station. This is with respect to general policies aimed at promoting sustainable development, and as a means of giving effect to this, the promotion and enhancement of public transport facilities as an alternative to the private motor vehicle (e.g. policies S2 and AM1).
- 23 General support for the proposal can also be identified in UDP policies aimed at securing improvements to accessibility to centres, with a view to maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of those centres, and ensuring accessibility for all people in the community (policies CR5 and S1).
- 24 More specifically, UDP policy AM5 states that the Council will encourage and support the provision of effective and efficient bus services in the Borough by implementing bus priority measures focused on showcase routes and in the Borough's key centres. Furthermore, Policy HTC1 states that proposals for the expansion of Halesowen bus station within the vicinity of the Andrew Road car park (in conjunction with traffic management measures) will be supported.
- 25 Within this context, it is considered that, in principle, the proposal will provide for an enhanced and modern facility, with an increase in the number of bays, in a sustainable location, thereby promoting enhanced accessibility to the Town, and with wider benefits for the vitality and viability of that centre and its environs. This is especially as it is considered to complement, and add to, the regeneration benefits for the Town which it is considered will arise from the proposed redevelopment of the Cornbow Centre (P05/0878).
- 26 There is therefore strong planning policy backing for the proposal in principle.

### *Air quality and noise*

27 Policy EP5 states that development will not normally be permitted if it will hinder or seriously harm the achievement of national air quality objectives. Policy EP7 states that where development is expected to generate noise the Council will require proposals to include measures that would minimise noise emissions and intrusion. The applicants have submitted information to address these issues.

28 Based on that submitted information, HEP consider that the scheme will not have an adverse impact on local air quality. On noise, it is recommended that, subject to a condition for the provision of a modern road surfacing system to dampen noise, this will avoid the need for mitigation works and keep noise levels to the minimum possible in the area. A condition requiring such details is set out in the list of recommended conditions (Condition 5). Subject to this I consider the proposal to be in accordance with the stated policies.

*Provision of a Ring and Ride facility*

29 Policy S1 promotes equality of access for all people, and policy AM1 states that, in pursuing an integrated transport strategy, the Council will seek to maintain and improve accessibility and safety in general.

30 This is an issue which has been specifically raised by Access in Dudley who have objected to the proposal on the basis that no such facility is shown to be provided.

31 There is an existing Ring and Ride stop in Hagley Street, however this is considered to be exposed to the elements and will potentially be divorced from the new retail store at the Cornbow (alongside the proposed bus station).

32 With regard to this, the need for such a facility to be provided in close proximity to this part of the Cornbow Centre is acknowledged. However, this has to be balanced against the limited space available within the boundaries of the proposed bus station to achieve this. It is also considered that an isolated facility, specifically geared to this particular use, in close proximity to the proposed retail store, is likely to be a more suitable alternative. To give effect to this, negotiations have been entered into between the applicants and the owners of the shopping centre. If anything arises from those discussions, this will be reported to you at your meeting.



33 On balance, it is therefore not considered reasonable to reject this proposal on the lack of the provision of such a facility

Design considerations

34 Policy DD1 of the UDP states that all development is required to apply principles of good urban design, including by improving pedestrian routes, making it safer and easier for people to navigate through spaces, by making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, and contributing towards safety and security. Policy HTC1 highlights the thoroughfare between Highfields and the Cornbow Centre as one which is to be enhanced.

35 With regard to security, it is considered that the ability to seal off the shelters at any time that the bus station is not in operation to be positive in not creating an enclosed space which could be subject to anti-social behaviour.

36 In terms of pedestrian flow and circulation, with regard to the thoroughfare between Highfields and the Cornbow Centre (a route which UDP policy HTC1 identifies for enhancement), the design of the proposal highlights and enhances that linkage. This is in that the proposed signalised pedestrian crossing within the centre of the station, as defined by the feature canopy and the paving, achieves this.

37 While it is acknowledged that the link from the proposed pedestrian crossing to the Cornbow entrance is off-set, this is not considered significant and the proposed paving pattern emphasises this pathway.

38 Also, it is noted that the scheme generally allows for unfettered pedestrian passage between the shelters and the façade of the existing and proposed extended Cornbow Centre. However, there are several issues which need to be addressed prior to the Highway Authority fully supporting the stopping up procedure under Section 247 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

\* The width of the public footway adjacent Bay No. 8 is 2 metres, which is below the expected 3 metres for town centre footways. The position of the access into the bus shelter at the narrowest point exacerbates the issues. I would therefore suggest that the access into the shelter serving Bay No. 8 is

repositioned away from the pinch point, which would alleviate the expected pedestrian congestion at this point.

- \* The width of the public footway adjacent Bay No. 1 is 2 metres, which is below the expected 3 metres for town centre footways. Potentially the passengers queuing at Bay No. 1 would further reduce the available footway width. The provision of seating between the end of the bus shelter (Bay No. 2) and the gap in the guard railing for Bay No. 1 would encourage passengers to queue here rather than where the footway is narrow.

- 39 The predominant elements of the design of the proposed bus station are the service building and freestanding canopy alongside. There are concerns from the owners of the Cornbow Centre that those elements in particular would shield views to the (extended) Cornbow Centre, thereby reducing its profile.
- 40 The applicants have provided further detailed information on the design of the canopy. This is described as a twin membrane tensile structure with internal frame, similar to a biplane wing in section, in white fabric and lit from underneath.
- 41 It is considered that the canopy, in particular, adds interest to the proposed bus station, giving it profile and legibility. Indeed, without that feature and the pod alongside it, the proposed bus station would appear as a relatively elongated flat roof building, with little or no variation or relief.
- 42 The canopy is also relatively thin in profile, and allows for views through to the façade of the Cornbow Centre. It also helps to emphasise a main pedestrian thoroughfare to the Town and into the Cornbow Centre in particular. It is therefore considered that the benefits of having such a design feature, outweigh any concerns, including those expressed on behalf of the owners of the Cornbow Centre.
- 43 Given the above, the design of the proposed bus station is considered satisfactory.

### Highway considerations

- 44 Of particular relevance to this issue are UDP policies AM1 (the Council will pursue an integrated, safe sustainable, and accessible transport strategy), AM9 (the Council will support the upgrading of existing bus stations) and DD6 (the Council will require development to make adequate and safe provision for access and egress by vehicles).
- 45 In comparison with the existing bus station, the proposal will result in the provision of an additional 2 bays. It will also continue to allow buses to turn right into the station when travelling in a northerly direction (albeit to allow access to only half of the bays): this being a manoeuvre which is not feasible under the current arrangements. In general, it is therefore considered that the scheme will provide for an enhanced and more accessible facility.
- 46 The scheme has also been refined following discussions with HTRS. The overall view is that the resulting scheme is of the optimum design given the physical constraints of the site, and also meets statutory highway safety requirements.
- 47 With regard to the objections raised by TWM, the issues raised in relation to highway safety already exist in the current access arrangements. In addition, an auto track analysis has been carried out on all the turns involved in the proposed design and demonstrated that those turns can be completed satisfactorily. Furthermore the layout has been subject to an independent safety audit, which did not identify the issues raised by TWM.
- 48 Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that the priority given to alternative bus entry points should be clearly marked on the ground within the proposed station to reduce internal conflict and the potential for buses backing onto the highway. A condition requiring such measures is recommended (Condition 3).
- 49 Given the above, in terms of highway aspects of the design of the proposed bus station are considered to be acceptable in providing for a safe, accessible and operational facility.

## CONCLUSION

- 50 The proposed new bus station will result in the creation of an enhanced facility at a satisfactory design and layout in an appropriate and sustainable location. The proposal therefore complies with policies contained in the Unitary Development Plan, in particular policies AM1, AM5, DD1, DD6 and HTC1.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 51 The proposed new bus station will in principle result in the creation of enhanced facility, of a satisfactory design and layout in an appropriate location, which is likely to have wider benefits in helping to regenerate Halesowen Town Centre. The recommendation is to **grant** permission on this basis, subject to the conditions as set out below.
- 52 There is also a second recommendation that the applicants be invited to make an application to the Secretary of State for an Order under Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to stop up and divert highways to allow development authorised by planning permission to take place.

## REASON FOR APPROVAL

- 53 The Local Planning Authority consider the proposed new bus station will in principle result in the creation of enhanced facility, of a satisfactory design and layout in an appropriate and sustainable location, which is likely to have wider benefits in helping to regenerate Halesowen Town Centre. There is therefore concurrence with the development plan, in particular Unitary Development Plan policies AM1, AM5, DD1, DD6 and HTC1.

Conditions and/or reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

2. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, this permission relates to the following plans: - 39202TBE/PA1/002; AR-090-001-A; AR-090-002-A; 381 - AR-040-050; 391- AR-030-050; 391- AR-040-051; 391- AR-040-052; 391- AR-030-052 A; 391- AR-030-053-A; 391- AR-030-054-A; AR-050-050
3. Notwithstanding the notation shown on the approved plans, no development shall commence until details of highway markings and signage, within the site and on the adjoining public highway, which are required to facilitate the traffic management scheme for the bus station, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented and/or installed prior to the development being brought into use, or to an alternative timescale to have been previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter retained.
4. Before development commences, details, including type, hue and texture of all materials to be used on external elevations and surfaces and all publicly accessible areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be constructed in those approved materials.
5. No development shall commence until details of a road surfacing system have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. That system shall be such as to be effective in reducing noise levels from traffic. The roadway shall be laid out in the approved surfacing prior to the development being brought into use.
6. Development shall not begin until details of the existing and proposed levels of the site, which should be related to those of adjoining land and highways, have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.
7. No development shall commence until details of any lighting to be installed, including location, type and luminance, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Lighting shall be installed in accordance with the approved details
8. No development shall commence until details of the proposed guard rails, including height, siting and finish, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The guard rails shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.
9. No development shall commence until a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface waters has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

