
Halesowen Area Committee – Tuesday 3 July 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 developments taking place in Halesowen town centre and introduce a short presentation by Vale Retail, Centro/WMPTA and Council Officers to outline progress.

Background

2. As reported to 14 March 2007 Area Committee, a progress report will be presented to forthcoming Committees updating Elected Members and members of the public on progress with regard to the development of the Cornbow shopping centre, bus station and town centre management issues.
3. On 23 April 2007, representatives from Dudley MBC, Vale Retail, Centro/WMPTA and the Police attended the first Halesowen Progress Meeting. All partners agreed that regular monthly progress meetings should take place over the course of the development to ensure effective communication between the agencies involved in the physical regeneration initiatives in Halesowen and identify and resolve any blocks or constraints to progress. A second Progress Meeting took place on 13 June 2007. A verbal update will be provided at Halesowen Area Committee and Vale Retail, Centro and Council Officers will outline progress to date.
4. In term of the overall development in the town centre, 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 current situation is detailed below.

Cornbow Shopping Centre

5. Vale Retail plans a major regeneration of the Cornbow shopping centre to provide a new Asda store on two levels plus larger shop units for other retailers. The existing Precinct car park will be replaced with a larger multi-storey car park over the Asda store. In a scheme which responds to the needs of the town on this highly visible site, Vale Retail will enhance Halesowen as a shopping destination and improve the facilities available to the general public. The anticipated completion date for this development is December 2008.

6. Vale Retail has again confirmed the project is progressing well. The majority of service diversions are expected to be completed by the end of June and BT civils completed by mid-July with cabling completed mid-September. The temporary entrance works are completed and appear to be operating well. Tenant forums have been set up in order to keep tenants in the Cornbow shopping centre advised on an ongoing basis.
7. Work has begun on the creation of alternative public toilets in No. 10 Queensway Mall; expected completion date is Sunday 15 July 2007. Importantly, the existing public toilets in the Cornbow shopping centre will not be decommissioned until the new public toilets are fully operational.
8. Demolition of the existing Multi Storey Car Park has commenced and is expected to be completed by 22 July. Soft stripping out of the main Queensway frontage started on 11 June and will be followed by the demolition of Prospect House and buildings on Queensway.

Halesowen Bus Station

9. As programmed, the bus station closed on Sunday 4 March 2007. Hand back of the bus station to Centro is targeted for mid-October but this will be dependent upon completion of service diversions, particularly British Telecom. Following hand back, Centro will then begin building the new Bus Station which is expected to be completed mid-Summer 2008 along with the changes to Queensway Highway implemented by Dudley MBC.

Highways and Traffic Issues

10. A one-way system and traffic management system is in place and has been for the last 4 months. A verbal update will be provided at Area Committee on progress with regard to this matter. The traffic management will remain on-going and the inevitable disruption that this entails will continue throughout the whole of the construction period. A draft Movement and Access Study is being considered by the Working Group and progress will be reported verbally at the Committee meeting.

Town Centre Management Issues

11. Sewer replacement works and the installation of a new water main in the town centre are now complete. The official opening of Wilkinson's took place on Wednesday 28 March 2007 with Mayor Councillor John Woodall, Mayoress Woodall and Councillor Harold Jackson officially opening the store. The new store has retained the forty existing members of staff and a further 60 members of staff were employed.

12. A series of events have taken place in the town centre since March 2007, namely: -

Events taken place in Halesowen town centre March to June	
Friday 6 April	<i>Churches Together</i> performed in Somers Square
Thursday 12 April	<i>"Brum and Dudley"</i> performed juggling and street theatre in Somers Square
Friday 13 April	Children's Mini Fair rides in Somers Square
Tuesday 1 May	Children from seven Halesowen schools participated in a May Day Maypole celebration in Somers Square
Friday 18 & Saturday 19 May 2007	French Market (Marche de France)
Thursday 31 May	Climbing wall in Somers Square
Friday 1 June	Free Mini Fair rides in Somers Square

13. At the time of writing this report the following events are planned to take place: -

Saturday 16 June	Victorian Street Fair
Sunday 24 June	Halesowen Parish Church Tricentenary Celebration – celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the installation of bells in the Church of St. John the Baptist
Monday 25 June to Friday 29 June	<i>Creative Networks – Local Schools Entertain</i> – Primary school youngsters from seven Halesowen schools are currently developing a programme of lunch time singing and dancing in Somers Square
Thursday 5 and Friday 6 July	Halesowen College Entertains in Somers Square
Saturday 7 July	West Midlands Police Brass Band Entertains Halesowen
Thursday 26 July	Climbing wall in Somers Square
Friday 27 July	Mini fair rides in Somers Square
Thursday 2 August	Rumple's Circus Workshop in Somers Square
Thursday 30 August	Mini fair rides in Somers Square
Saturday 4 August	Halesowen by the Sea Event
9 / 10 / 16 / 17 / 23 / 24 / 31 August	Children's entertainment

Finance

14. 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.

Law

15. 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.

Equality Impact

16. 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.

Recommendation

17. That the Committee note the progress of development in Halesowen town centre.

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for John Millar
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List of Background Papers

Report to Halesowen Area Committee (14 March 2007) '*Halesowen Town Centre Development*'