

Chair's Foreword

The role of the District Centres Task and Finish Group was to make recommendations on how the three purpose-built District Centres – Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow, could be improved on a short term basis as well as to identify options for long-term redevelopment. We explored many issues during the exercise including installing cash machines into the Woodrow Centre and the upgrading of pedestrian access to local centres. We also considered the issue of opening up access to the bus route in order to generate greater trade for the local shopping centres. However, the Group were split on how this should be done.

We recognised that any recommendations may not be implemented immediately as the cost implications of improving the District Centres could potentially run into hundreds and thousands of pounds. Much of the work that would be needed would require a capital bid. The review built on an earlier scrutiny recommendation that the proposed development at Church Hill go ahead and I am confident that with these recommendations and other developments, the remaining three District Centres can be improved, updated and be active for generations to come.

On behalf of the District Centres Task and Finish Group, I would like to thank all Members, Officers from both Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council, outside bodies, and residents and commercial tenants of the Centres for contributing to the work of the District Centres Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Andy Fry
Chair of the District Centres Task and Finish Group



Task and Finish Group Membership

Task and Finish Group Members

Cllr A Fry (Chair)
Cllr D Taylor (Vice Chair from July 2007 until January 2008)
Cllr K Banks
Cllr M Chalk
Cllr D Dudley
Cllr D Enderby
Cllr N Hicks
Cllr D Hunt

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Recommendations

We would like to recommend that:

1. an Improvement Fund be established to provide a continual source of funding for improvements in Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres, subject to further work being undertaken by Officers to develop the proposed Improvement Fund further;
2. the Council consider entering into arrangements with local companies to sponsor local bus shelters and roundabouts in order to generate further income that could be used to make improvements to the three Centres;
3. Officers work with the landlord of the Old Sticky Wicket Public house in Matchborough to facilitate the creation of a pub garden;
4. a free 24 hour cash dispenser machine (ATM) be installed at the Woodrow Centre, outside the Costcutter supermarket;
5. where there is scope, the Council work with the Probation Service to deliver specific enhancement works in Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres;
6. the Council consider allocation of £500 for basic work on upgrading the security of residential properties in Winyates District Centre; this funding to be used to finance work by a Community Support Officer and a skilled manual worker / joiner / labourer;
7. the Council approach What's Your Point community group to carry out painting and decorating works on the commercial shutters in the District Centres. A budget of £5,000 should be made available for these works. What's Your Point to work with the commercial tenants to agree a colour scheme or appropriate design for the shutters;



Recommendations

8. Officers to arrange for the purchase of 20 road side signs at a total cost of £4,500, directing traffic from the main arterial roads to the relevant District Centres. The signs must include 'Shopping Centre' as part of their wording;
9. a capital bid is made for 2009/10 to undertake resurfacing and remodelling works within the Winyates centre in two key phases:

Phase 1: resurfacing the bus lane and either footpath immediately left and right of the bus lane.

Phase 2: remodelling of the footpath, entrances to the Winyate Pub and the old toilets.
10. the sections of the bus only lanes that travel through Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres be maintained as bus only routes.
11. the Council investigates the relative costs of either contracting out or buying machinery to remove chewing gum from the paved surfaces in the three District Centres; and finally
12. the Council redevelops all of the remaining three District Centres in the future and that the Council considers Woodrow Centre as the next centre for redevelopment after the redevelopment of Church Hill District Centre has been undertaken.



Introduction

Aims and Objectives of the Review

The District Centres review began in 2005 and originally had two distinct objectives. These were:

1. to decide which of the four purpose-built District Centres (Church Hill, Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow) should be the subject of a wholesale redevelopment; and
2. to explore viable ways to carry out piecemeal improvements to the remaining Centres that were not selected for redevelopment.

The first stage of the exercise was completed in October 2006 when Church Hill was selected for redevelopment. The Church Hill redevelopment was shaped by the contents of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Church Hill consequently ceased to be included within the remit of this review.

The District Centres Task and Finish Group was established in May 2007 to complete the second stage of the exercise. The aim of the second stage of the review was to investigate what piecemeal improvements could be made to Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres.



Methods

Bus Tour

At the beginning of the 2007/08 municipal year, new Members were appointed to the District Centres Task and Finish Group. To familiarise ourselves with the conditions in the District Centres we felt that it would be a useful exercise for us to undertake a bus tour of the four purpose-built District Centres. This trip took place on Tuesday the 4th of September 2007.

In each of the centres, we met with the representatives of various interest groups in order to learn more about the problems that the centres were facing. These included:

- representatives from the local Police;
- Officers from Redditch Borough Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team;
- commercial tenants; and
- residential tenants.

We used the bus trip to help us identify the key problems for each of the three remaining centres. Shortly after the bus tour took place a debriefing meeting was held where we in turn listed each of the areas we were concerned about in the three centres and where we felt we might be able to make some recommendations for improvement. This list was used as the basis for a work programme for the review.

At subsequent meetings we invited relevant Officers from within the Council to present information about the issues we had identified. We have discussed the information provided by Officers. Based upon these deliberations we have either made recommendations or, where considered necessary, requested further information from Officers.



Methods

Structure of Report

The following discussion section of the report is split into four parts as follows:

- issues relevant to Matchborough Centre;
- issues relevant to Winyates Centre;
- issues relevant to Woodrow Centre; and
- overarching issues relevant to all three of the District Centres.

A brief account of our discussions has been provided with information detailing what recommendations were made, if any, from our deliberations.



Matchborough Centre

Introduction

We felt that there were some very positive features contained within and around Matchborough District Centre. We felt that the 'Matchborough Water Gardens' constituted a very pleasant, well looked after green area with a duck pond, a large grassy area and benches for people to sit and enjoy their surroundings. We were all in agreement that this provided users of the Centre with an extra facility they could use in addition to the usual District Centre facilities. However, there were some elements in the centre that we felt could be improved or enhanced.

Matchborough Toilets & Plaque

An issue that stood out to us when we visited Matchborough Centre was the fact that the de-commissioned toilets stood empty. We agreed this was a wasted opportunity and that it would be useful to make use of the space left by the old toilets by turning it into a new unit. Officers explained that it would be extremely difficult and expensive to carry out this type of conversion. This was because the building was situated on a split level. Officers pointed out that the building would have to be reconfigured for it to be changed into a useful space. As a result of this advice, we decided to take no further action on this item.

During the bus trip to the District Centres, we observed that a plaque was attached to the exterior of the old Matchborough toilets unit. This sign advertised opening times for the toilet facilities. We discussed whether to remove the plaque, given that the toilet facilities were no longer available for public use.

The Old Sticky Wicket Pub at Matchborough

We all felt that the grassy area adjacent to the Old Sticky Wicket Public House had potential to be greatly improved by creating a pub garden. We felt that this would compliment the existing 'Matchborough Water Gardens'. At our suggestion, Officers negotiated with the landlord of the Sticky Wicket and reported to Members that the Landlord was happy to introduce a pub garden in time for the summer months.

We recommend that Officers work with the landlord of the Old Sticky Wicket Public house in Matchborough to facilitate the creation of a pub garden.



Winyates Centre

Introduction

When visiting Winyates Centre, it was immediately obvious that this centre faced a series of more complex problems than Matchborough. Winyates Centre has a reasonable sized residential community living above and in close vicinity to the centre. This was in contrast to Matchborough, which had only one tenant living above the Centre. It was clear to us that this created a number of additional issues that needed to be addressed. However, we did recognise that Winyates provides a diverse range of shops and services including a butchers, a hair salon, a nursery and a craft centre. In addition, the Centre benefits from the fact that the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team are based in the Centre.

Security in Winyates Centre

During our visit to Winyates Centre, Officers from the Anti-Social Behaviour team demonstrated to us the types of anti-social problems that had developed because there was no secure access to the residential flats located above the shopping units. It was evident that a greatly improved system was needed to combat these issues.

We were shown some options for increasing the security. One proposed option involved the possibility of installing an electronic secure access system on the communal access doors, similar in arrangement to that recently installed at Woodrow Centre. After we heard evidence from Officers, we decided that this scheme was too expensive and would take a considerable amount of time to implement. However, Officers were able to show us a cheaper and possibly quicker alternative which involved simple upgrading of the current security system. Officers suggested that it would cost approximately £500 to make basic upgrades to communal access points, gas cupboards, front doors and windows in the form of bolts, locks, chains and jammers. This would cover the cost of materials but not the cost of labour. In order to address this, we propose that a skilled Officer employed by the Council undertake the work.

We recommend the Council consider the allocation of £500 for basic work on upgrading the security of residential properties in Winyates District Centre; this funding to be used to finance work by a Community Support Officer and a skilled manual worker / joiner /labourer.



Winyates Centre

Benches in Woodrow and Winyates

We were concerned about the high number of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour that occurred in the centres. It was reported that benches within the some of the Centres were acting as a focal point for this anti-social behaviour. We also noted that some of the benches were in poor condition. Officers investigated further the costs for removing the benches. However, we decided to take no further action on this item.

Removal of Low wall in Winyates

As a Group, we were very were concerned by reports of youths congregating around a low wall opposite the supermarket in Winyates Centre. Officers examined whether it would be feasible to knock down this wall. However, there were concerns that this wall formed part of the drainage system. We therefore decided to take no further action on this item.

Vacant Toilet in Winyates

As in the case of Matchborough, Winyates Centre had decommissioned toilet facilities and we noticed that again the space left was not being used. We felt it would be useful to utilise this space and Officers explained that it may be possible to convert into a storage facility that could be used by the Council. However, we made no further recommendation on this issue.

The Central Ground Space at Winyates

We agreed that the central ground space within Winyates District Centre did not appear to serve any useful purpose and that it would be beneficial to the centre if a purpose could be agreed. We discussed a variety of ideas on how to fill the space. The ideas discussed included allowing The Winyate Public House to expand their outside seating area into this space; inviting market stalls to utilise the space; and using the area for public performances. However, we made no recommendation about how we could fill this space.



Winyates Centre

Ground Surface Renewal at Winyates

During our discussions about Winyates Centre, Winyates Ward Members raised concerns that the bus lane was splitting the Centre into two distinct parts. Some of us felt that the shopping centre and the Winyates Barn felt like two separate entities. However, we agreed it would be beneficial for them to be seen as part of one large complex. We discussed the possibility of linking the two sections together through the physical fabric of the centre. One suggested way of achieving this would be to replace the current ground surface with a coloured surface that incorporates the shopping centre with the bus lane and Winyates Barn / Craft Centre. Winyates Ward Members also stated that they had received complaints from constituents that the surface in Winyates had deteriorated to the point that it was considered dangerous and a tripping hazard and therefore argued that the Centre was in need of resurfacing.

While discussing possible resurfacing options, it became clear that if we were to recommend that part of the centre be resurfaced, it would be sensible to carry out other needed works at the same time. Officers explained that footpaths and entrances to buildings were not compliant with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) legislation and would benefit from work being carried out to raise the Centre to the required standard. Further details of all the proposals and a map detailing the areas for proposed changes can be found in Appendix 1. Officers provided costs for three phases as follows:

- Phase 1** Remodelling the pedestrian crossings and resurfacing the ground surface on the bus lane and the adjacent footpaths either side of the bus lane. **Total cost: £70,000.**
- Phase 2** Remodelling some of the pathways and the entrance to the Winyate Public House to make it DDA compliant. It also includes some work on walled features surrounding the vacant Dentist and toilet units that would help to remove problems of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. **Total cost: £65,000**



Winyates Centre

Ground Surface Renewal at Winyates

Phase 3 This option involves resurfacing the area around the main shopping precinct.
Total cost: £22,000

If all three phases are constructed concurrently, the total cost of the scheme is estimated at £151,000. However, if the scheme is constructed phase by phase then the aggregated scheme cost would be £157,000. The Group felt that these costs could be covered either by submitting a capital bid or by the money that could be generated from other schemes recommended in this report.

After considering all of these proposals, we decided that it would be prudent to implement all three options if possible. We were aware of the high cost implications of this recommendation. In order to reduce these costs, we decided that the idea of introducing raised landing platform for buses at the bus stop would be unnecessarily costly and could be removed from the proposals. We agreed that if possible the work should occur in stages in order to spread out the costs of the work.

Officers have subsequently informed us that the funding for Phase 3 will be made available through the allowances of the repairs and maintenance capital expenditure for 2009 / 10. Therefore, the total cost based on the above workings for the two phases would be approximately **£135,000**.

Therefore, we recommend that a capital bid be submitted to carry out resurfacing and remodelling works within the Winyates Centre in two key areas:

Phase 1: resurfacing the bus lane and either footpath immediately left and right of the bus lane.

Phase 2: remodelling of the footpath, entrances to the Winyate Pub and the old toilets.



Woodrow Centre

Introduction

We found Woodrow Centre to be very similar to Winyates in that it provides housing for a large number of people above the Centre. We felt that Woodrow Centre again, offered local residents a diverse set of facilities including a library in addition to the usual shops and a public house. We also agreed that there was some development potential, with open land adjacent to the Centre that could be used for any future expansion or development plans.

Bank services

We all agreed that it was important that all of the District Centres offered visitors banking facilities. However, one of the key differences of Woodrow from the other Centres was that it did not provide a banking facility. Officers were asked to approach commercial tenants at the Centre and ascertain if any of them would be willing to provide a banking facility on their premises. The new Costcutter tenant was keen to pursue this idea. Members specified, in descending order, their preferences for the location of a cash dispenser machine:

- outside the Costcutters unit and free of charge;
- inside the Costcutters unit and free of charge;
- outside the Costcutters unit and subject to charge; or
- inside the Costcutters unit and subject to charge.

We recommend that a free 24 hour cash dispenser machine (ATM) be installed at the Woodrow Centre, outside the Costcutter supermarket.



Woodrow Centre

Kwik-Save Unit at Woodrow

During the District Centres Task and Finish Group exercise, the Kwik Save shop in Woodrow District Centre closed. We all agreed that it was of paramount importance that a supermarket was maintained in all Centres and were keen to ensure that another supermarket took its place quickly. Officers were able to provide updates for us at each meeting about the Council's negotiations with possible supermarket replacements and we were very pleased when this issue was resolved when Costcutter was brought in as a replacement.

Vacant Land in Woodrow Centre

As mentioned above, we were informed early on in the exercise that land had become available at the Woodrow Centre where the old Health Centre used to be situated. During meetings, we did discuss possible uses for this land. However, we did not agree any recommendations for this issue.



General Issues

Introduction

During our investigations, we found that many of the issues discussed were pertinent to all of the District Centres. The following section of the report highlights these issues and any recommendations that were made while considering the items.

Improvement Fund

It was very clear once we started this review, that making improvements to the Centres would inevitably involve spending large sums of money. In order to make tangible recommendations that would make an impact on the Centres, we agreed we would need to identify how to make extra resources available to finance any recommendations that had large cost implications.

A proposal by Officers, and one that we were keen to pursue, was the establishment of an Improvement Fund for Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow Centres. This was proposed as a way to raise income for work in the centres. The Improvement Fund would work by top-slicing the rental income received from commercial tenants and ring-fencing the funds for improvement works in the District Centres for a specific number of years. We acknowledge that further work is need by Officers to develop this idea further.

We recommend that an Improvement Fund be established to provide a source of funding for improvements for Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres subject to further work being undertaken by Officers to develop the Improvement Fund further.

Sponsorship

Officers and Members discussed the possibility of encouraging local companies to sponsor bus shelters and roundabouts in Redditch in order to raise additional income. It was noted that this had been successfully undertaken by other authorities in the local area. We agreed that any income raised through sponsorship could be utilised for improvements to the three remaining District Centres.



General Issues

Use of the Probation Service

We recommend that the Council consider entering into arrangements with companies to sponsor local bus shelters and roundabouts in order to generate further income.

Officers suggested one way of making savings and improving the visual appearance of the centres would be to utilise individuals on probation undertaking community service to undertake work in the three centres. It was explained by Officers that the Probation Service was already working with the Council over the delivery of other projects. We agreed that individuals undertaking community service could help by carrying out additional specific enhancement works in the Centres that are not already undertaken by the Council, therefore improving and maintaining the appearance of the Centres.

We recommend that where there is scope, the Council work with the Probation Service to deliver specific enhancement works in Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres.

Canopies

A common feature of the three District Centres was the overhanging canopies over the shops, particularly in Matchborough Centre. We felt that the canopies overhanging the shop units contributed to an overall bleak appearance at the three centres. As a group, we were all keen to see these canopies removed. However, Officers reported that it would be extremely difficult to remove the canopies as they made up an integral part of the building structure. Therefore, we agreed not to pursue this issue any further.

Cleaning in all of the Centres

As a Group, we recognised the necessity for the Centres to be kept clean and tidy at all times. While we did not feel the Centres we visited were overly dirty covered in litter we wanted to ensure that proper cleaning levels were being maintained. Officers did inform us that cleaning takes place regularly in the centres: twice a day in the week and once a day at weekends. We felt that this frequency was adequate and should be maintained by the Council.



General Issues

One issue of cleansing that we were particularly concerned with was the large amount of chewing gum that was found on the pavements of the Centres. Members agreed that they wanted to investigate further the possibility of incorporating the regular removal of chewing in the three Centres into the cleansing schedule either by buying machinery to undertake the task or by contracting the work out to an external company.

We recommend that the Council investigates the relative costs of either contracting out or buying machinery to remove chewing gum from the paved surfaces in the three District Centres.

Empty Units

We agreed there was an issue regarding the vacant units in all of the centres, but we were particularly concerned with the empty Dentist unit at Winyates Centre. Using information provided by Officers we decided that there was little that could be recommended at this stage. However, Officers from Property Services are due to present a report on this issue to the Executive Committee in the near future.

Shutters on Commercial Properties

One feature common to all of the District Centres was the metallic shutters used to protect the frontages of the commercial units when the units were closed. All of the Group agreed that these shutters contributed to the creation of an uninviting appearance in the centres, especially at night and weekends when the units were more likely to be closed. Initially, we felt that replacing these shutters would be the most suitable course of action to take. However, there was a significant cost implication for this and we were informed that new shutters would require planning permission.

We therefore decided that the best method of refreshing the shutters was to repaint them. Officers discussed the possibilities with the commercial tenants of the three centres and presented us with three options for redecorating the shutters:



General Issues

- painting the shutters one agreed, uniform colour;
- painting the shutters alternating, different colours; or
- painting different patterns and designs onto the shutters.

We also felt that the repainting of the shutters provided an opportunity to engage members of the local community in revitalising their local environment. We were very impressed by the recent work carried out in some of the underpasses in the town by the local group “What’s Your Point?” .

We agreed that we would invite ‘What’s Your Point?’ to undertake the repainting work on the Shutters, in consultation with Officers from the Council. Rather than making any decisions about the three proposed options for a colour scheme, as highlighted above, we felt it would be beneficial “What’s Your Point?” to consult with the commercial tenants to agree on a colour scheme. Officers informed us that the work carried out by the What’s Your Point? Group on the underpass in the town centre had cost the Council £6,000. We therefore expect that the group would charge a similar figure for the repainting of the shutters in the Centres.

We recommend the Council approach What’s Your Point community group to carry out painting and decorating works on the commercial shutters in the District Centres. A budget of £5,000 should be made available for these works. What’s Your Point to work with the commercial tenants to agree a colour scheme or appropriate design for shutters.



General Issues

Signage to Centres

While driving between the different Centres on the bus tour, we noticed that the signposting on the highways was inconsistent and unclear. We all agreed that there was the need for more effective sign posting indicating the location of the centres. We agreed that all signs should be standardised and each district centre should be clearly labelled as a "shopping centre". Officers investigated the costs of installing new signs to the District Centres and reported that for twenty signs it would cost £4,500.

We recommend that Officers to arrange for the purchase of 20 road side signs at a total cost of £4,500, directing traffic from the main arterial roads to the relevant District Centres. The signs must include 'Shopping Centre' as part of their wording.

Bicycle and Footpath Access

A further issue we considered during the exercise was that of making it easier to reach the Centres on foot or by bicycle. We discussed installing lockable cycle racks in the centres and increasing the provision of cycle routes into the centres. However, this issue was not prioritised and therefore we did not make a recommendation.



General Issues

Lighting and other Security Measures

An important contributing factor to the overall appearance of the Centres was the quality of the lighting. We discussed this in great detail and came to the conclusion that the lighting might not be adequate in all of the Centres especially around some of the covered areas entrances into the Centres. However, this issue was not prioritised as highly as some of the other issues that we discussed and as a consequence no recommendation was made about lighting in the Centres.

Future Development

As a conclusion to our review of the three District Centres, we decided that we would like to make a recommendation on which of the three remaining purpose-built District Centres should be redeveloped once the redevelopment of Church Hill has been completed. We agreed that all of the Centres were most in need of redevelopment. However, we did feel that Woodrow, as the oldest Centre, was showing its age the most. We acknowledged that redeveloping Woodrow Centre would present difficulties, especially given the large number of flats and maisonettes built above the Centre. However, it was clear from our visit that there were a large number of physical, environmental and social problems associated with the Centre which needed to be addressed.

Further to this, we felt that this review had produced a number of in-depth recommendations for the improvement of Winyates Centre, that if accepted and implemented, would result in considerable changes to the Centre in the long term. This was not necessarily the case for Woodrow Centre.

Therefore, we recommend that the Council redevelops all of the remaining three District Centres in the future and considers Woodrow Centre as the next centre for redevelopment after the redevelopment of Church Hill District Centre has taken place.



General Issues

Opening of Bus only Routes

We have conducted several discussions about the possibility of opening up the small sections of the 57 / 58 bus route running through the three centres. This idea was originally proposed by tenants of the centres, who felt that if these routes were opened up to all traffic this would be an increase in passing trade to the centres.

To aid our discussions, we invited representatives from Worcestershire County Council to talk to us on behalf of Integrated Passenger Transport about the feasibility and implications of opening up this particular bus only lane. We also heard evidence from representatives from the two bus companies operating in Redditch: First and Diamond. These three expert witnesses were all opposed to opening up the buses only route. (The case put forward by the three witnesses can be seen in more detail in Appendix 2). However the main reasons for their opposition to opening up the bus lanes are highlighted below.

- **Bus operating speeds.** Utilising bus only lanes has the advantage that higher bus speeds can be maintained compared to a normal carriageway. Lack of congestion results in shorter journey times, higher frequency of buses, and lower operating costs. The impact of this is that these services are more commercially viable and therefore are more likely to be sustained.
- **Strategic policy framework.** The opening up of the bus only lanes contravenes principles of the Integrated Passenger Transport strategy which closely follows guidelines set out in other related local, regional and national policies.
- **Best Practice.** We were informed the 57 / 58 bus only route is routinely used by the County Council as an example of best practice in demonstrating how bus only routes can improve efficiency, sustainability, and reliability for customers.



General Issues

Opening of Bus Routes

- **Environmental sustainability.** It was stressed to us that maintaining bus only routes was important to addressing issues of environmental sustainability. Bus priority measures are imperative to offering a real alternative to private modes of transport and to help in supporting an improved environment for local people.
- **Low accident rates.** The current rate of accidents is low on the bus only routes. It was argued to us that if the bus only routes were opened up to other traffic, this would increase the likelihood of pedestrian and vehicle conflict and lead to a rise in accidents of this nature.

We fiercely debated this issue but no consensus was reached about what recommendation we collectively wished to make. Some of us have been convinced by the expert witnesses' arguments whilst other Members feel that these points simply represent conjecture. Therefore, the three viewpoints put forward by various Members of the Group were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These three viewpoints were as follows:

- a) opens up the whole of the 57 / 58 bus only route to all traffic in order to increase passing trade to the District Centres;
- b) opens the sections of the bus only routes that travel through Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres to all traffic in order to increase accessibility to the District Centres;
or
- c) maintains the 57 /58 route as a bus only route.



General Issues

Opening of Bus Routes

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee debated this issue at a recent meeting. The Committee were informed that they could put forward either one recommendation or propose a majority and minority recommendation which would represent two viewpoints of the Committee.

The majority of the Committee agreed that the whole of 57 / 58 bus route should be maintained as a bus only route. **Therefore, we recommend that the sections of the bus only route that travel through Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow District Centres be maintained as a bus only route.**



Appendix 1

Report of Operations Manager, Asset Maintenance Regarding Winyates Centre Resurfacing

The following items need to be considered in conjunction with the possibility of a review of the operation of some or all of the bus-only lanes. For Members' guidance, these are sited at:

Church Green West (Town Centre)
Park Way (Easemore Rd.) to Matchborough Way (Icknield Street Drive)
Studley Road (Woodrow)

The main route passes through the District Centres of Church Hill, Winyates and Matchborough. The major residential areas are served independently, off the Local and District Distributor Road network. However there is no direct access to serve residential properties off the bus lanes except at Winyates Centre (including Holy Oaks Close) and Matchborough Centre. In both instances these are the sole means of access. As a consequence of these arrangements access to these areas is gained in four places:

Winyates Centre (N) via Winyates Way off Moons Moat Drive

Winyates Centre (S) via Matchborough Way off Warwick Highway

Matchborough Centre (N) via Matchborough Way off Warwick Highway

Matchborough Centre (S) via Matchborough Way off Icknield Street Drive

This results in considerable lengths of all-purpose highway, except in the immediate vicinity of the District Centres.



Appendix 1

Any alterations to the existing arrangements will necessitate corresponding revisions to the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). This is a formal and lengthy (32 weeks) process in addition to anticipated design and construction factors.

For the sake of clarity, I have for ease of reference only, split up the various areas and listed the perceived problems and possible solutions. With regards to adoptions, it would appear that only Winyates Way and the paving immediately adjacent, on either side, is public highway (Worcestershire County Council). The areas in and around the District Centre are Redditch Borough Council's responsibility.

As a final footnote, preliminary layouts had already been prepared (in October 2006) showing how the bus lanes at both Winyates and Matchborough Centres could to be modified to accommodate through traffic, whilst retaining priority for buses.

Phase One: Winyates Way

On the west side, the path has been partially reconstructed and is in generally good area. Pedestrian crossing points have been formed but do not comply with current standards in respect of tactile surfaces and DDA. There are remnants of earlier fixtures/fittings which have been cut-off flush with the surface.

There is evidence of earlier works to pave a former soft landscaped area to the south of the bus shelter. This is in poor condition and was probably not carried out in an appropriate fashion at the time.

The carriageway surface is in reasonable condition, and appears to have been locally resurfaced at some previous time. On the east side, works of a similar nature have been carried out, but not to the full width of the paved area.



Appendix 1

Phase Two: The Winyate-Dentist-Health Centre

There are no proper tactile crossing points. The existing crossing points are not truly sites on the natural desire lines. The layout of the existing bus stops partially creates a hazard for pedestrians, particularly on the southbound services. It is recommended that these deficiencies are rectified.

The paths on the south side, leading away from the bus shelter are in reasonably good order. There is some evidence of statutory undertakers activities, and other than patching, do not appear to have had any adverse impact.

On the north side, the path leads towards The Winyate Public House. The access to these private premises does not appear to be DDA compliant. There is a 15m long ramp – gradient 1 in 10 (which is not acceptable) and also leaves a step of more than 150mm to enter the building. Also, there are steps at either end in addition to the ramp and a visually adverse effect is created by the additional 1-1.2m in elevation that needs to be gained.

It is possible to reshape paths to reduce the difference in levels thereby eliminating both visual and safety problems. There is considerable exposed brickwork (18 courses) below floor level at the corner nearest to Winyates Way, and levels can be raised sympathetically.

At the eastern end, there is an additional ramp and steps leading to the former public conveniences. These latter are purely retained for the distribution of electrical services. The dividing wall between the high-low sides has failed. It may be possible to modify the access to the former public conveniences for service access only, and eliminate this hazardous and visually unattractive area.



Appendix 1

Phase Three: Main Precinct and Access to South Car Park

By the former Dentist's unit, there is a narrow staircase leading to the lower level which is currently effectively redundant. Consequently, to achieve a reasonable access for the less mobile, there is a brick planted area with an adjacent ramp. This varies in relative height between 675mm and 525mm. There is also a ramped dividing wall to protect the difference in height and it appears, as happened at Church Hill, that this is being mis-used to facilitate vandalism of the canopy guttering. This feature can be removed and the area re-shaped to eliminate these problems.

This area is in generally good order. The brick-paved areas in front of the shop units only require re-pointing. The tarmac paths have had various repairs as well as suffered from the effects of utility services. These latter areas can be readily improved by resurfacing works.

The exit towards the south car park is principally ramped, although there are steps on either side 4 next to empty corner unit and 6 near to the former video store. These cannot be removed to comply with DDA standards, and therefore the earlier suggestions to remove steps are not practically viable. This naturally forms the limit of any proposed works in the vicinity. A limited levelling exercise has been carried out to determine the extent of any required re-shaping.

Conclusion

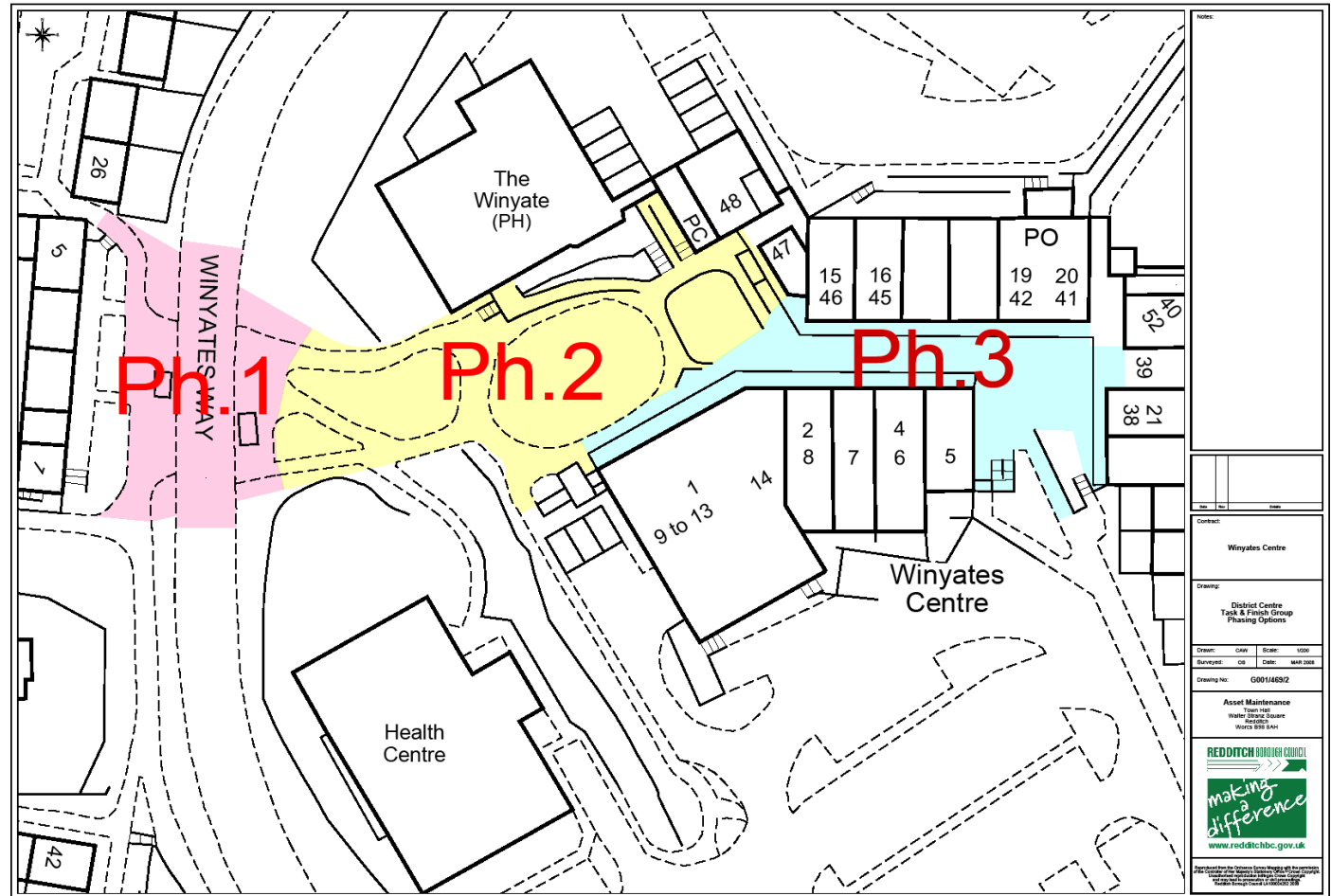
I'd stress at this stage that these are only broad-brush preliminary estimates. No account has been taken for utility apparatus and these will need to be factored into final budget proposals.

All costs subject to survey, etc. With the exception of Winyates Way, they allow for traditional materials only and any enhanced specifications would significantly impact upon final costs.



Appendix 1

Plan of Winyates Centre showing 3 Phases



Appendix 2

Written Response from Worcestershire Integrated Passenger Transport

A request has been received from Redditch Borough Council to consider the opening up of the sections of bus lanes running through the Centres (Winyates, Woodrow and Matchborough) to all traffic. The response from Integrated Passenger Transport at Worcestershire County Council is that it strongly opposes any relaxation of the restrictions of use of the busways (and other bus priority facilities) in Redditch which allows access to any vehicles other than buses, as it does not conform to Best Practice as detailed in the Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy (IPTS). The overarching vision of the IPTS is to provide for Worcestershire 'an affordable, accessible, safe, convenient, environmentally sustainable and integrated passenger transport network, capable of attracting an increasing market share for public transport, thereby, contributing to the achievement of the objectives in Worcestershire's LTP2'.

The purpose of the strategy is to establish the best possible passenger transport network and facilities, which will address the needs of both current and potential passengers in Worcestershire and deliver the transport objectives of the Government, the County Council and the District Councils. This includes accommodating in a sustainable way, the growth in travel demand likely to be generated by the Regional Spatial Strategy. This is completely consistent with national, regional and local policies and guidance on the environment, economy and transport, including:

The Stern Review – The Economics of Climate Change
The Sir Robert Eddington Transport Study – The Case for Action
Department for Transport – Towards a Sustainable Transport System
Department for Transport – Putting Passengers First
Planning Policy Guidance 13



Appendix 2

Regional Economic Strategy
Regional Spatial Strategy
Regional Transport Strategy
Worcestershire County Council – Second Local Transport Plan
Worcestershire County Council – Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy
Worcestershire County Council – Passenger Transport Integrated Passenger Transport

An effective transport network is essential in order to give people access to the opportunities and benefits that contribute to the enjoyment of a better quality of life.

Bus Priority forms a vital input to the IPTS, and can be summarised as the provision or amendment of infrastructure and/or traffic control and management systems designed to improve the performance, efficiency cost and image of bus travel. Busways and bus-only lanes are an integral part of a Bus Priority Strategy. The key aims are to generate greater use of passenger transport and encourage modal shift from private car to bus. These aims are in line with national, regional and local transport policies on encouraging the use of sustainable transport. The impact of the proposed growth in travel demand arising from the Regional Spatial Strategy puts further emphasis on the need to provide a sustainable and realistic alternative to the car for certain types of journey.

There is clear evidence that bus priority measures have a major role in supporting balanced and integrated transport strategies seeking to improve the quality of passenger transport. Bus priority measures can ensure that passenger transport (and walking and cycling) can offer a realistic and sustainable alternative to the private car, whilst supporting economic prosperity and an improved environment for residents and visitors alike.



Appendix 2

Bus priority measures are designed to give higher priority to bus services (high capacity/high efficiency) over low occupancy vehicles (lower capacity and less efficient) along congested sections of the road network, (particularly in urban areas). Where applicable bus priority measures should also provide priority access to key generators and attractors of travel demand.

Effective and systematic measures protecting buses from the effects of traffic congestion has been demonstrated to have a beneficial impact on bus journey times, service reliability and punctuality, passenger demand, revenue and the level of subsidy required to deliver a high quality passenger transport network. Decreasing journey time variability through the provision of bus only lanes :

- enables timetables to be constructed with greater certainty;
- reduces the need to provide additional time to allow for out of course delays, thereby reducing vehicle and crew requirements and costs;
- reduces the need to have differential journey times between peak and off-peak periods;
- enables more easily understood and simple timetables to be developed; and
- enables users to place greater reliance on the achievement of advertised journey times, increasing confidence in the dependability of the service.

Conversely, slow and unreliable bus services have a significant adverse impact on bus network performance in terms of:

- the numbers of vehicles and crew required to operate bus services;
- the cost of operating the bus network (as vehicle and crew requirements are the main determinants of operating costs); and



Appendix 2

- the attractiveness of the services to potential passengers (particularly those who have a choice of transport modes) with a consequent negative knock-on effect on farebox revenue and the level of financial support required to maintain and improve the bus network

Summary

The bus only lanes that are operational of bus routes 57 and 58 through the District Centres at Winyates, Matchborough and Woodrow are cited as best practice in Worcestershire (see attached leaflet) and are a fundamental contribution to their level of performance and the position of these services as the most highly used bus services in the county which deliver the highest operating speeds. The services are high frequency and are commercially run by two national bus operators in direct competition. Any measures which diminish these benefits, such as the withdrawal of busways or bus-only lanes, would lead to:

- a reduction in operating speeds as the roads become more congested;
- increases in bus journey times and operating costs;
- a decline in bus service reliability;
- a decline in passenger transport accessibility ;
- a decline in bus usage and revenue; and
- a decrease in the commerciality of these services. (This could lead to a reduction in the frequency of the services or to a withdrawal of the operation of the service on a commercial basis).

Conclusions

The Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy has been approved by the full Cabinet and therefore the Integrated Passenger Transport section of Worcestershire County Council unequivocally opposes the suggestion to open up the bus only lanes through the district centres at Winyates, Woodrow and Matchborough as it does not conform to best practice as detailed in the IPTS and as detailed above. As the IPTS is approved by Cabinet, there can be no deviation from the policy without reference back to Cabinet members.



Appendix 2

There are adequate access roads to each of the centres that are open to general traffic, and there are car parks from these access roads for each of these centres. The rationale, that by opening up these small sections of bus route it would make it easier for people to access the centres and thereby increase the number of visits to them is contrary to current environmental and sustainable transport policies which seek to improve access by sustainable transport modes (walk, cycling and bus) rather than the private car. It is probable that the roads around the centres would become more congested, having a detrimental effect on the bus services and passengers boarding and alighting at the centres, and making the centres less attractive to visitors as access becomes more difficult.



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Mr Danson - Chemists at Woodrow Centre



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