

COUNCIL MEETING 24 FEBRUARY, 2004

Report of Councillor Bishop – Planning Policy and Transportation

Taunton Deane Local Plan

A report, detailing the current progress with the Taunton Deane Local Plan, following the receipt of the Local Plan Inspector's report, was presented to the last meeting of the Strategic Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Panel. The report indicated target dates for the agreement of modifications to the Plan, but I must emphasise that I consider these dates may be over ambitious as we cannot propose our recommendations on the modifications until we have received responses to our requests from other agencies who have been consulted.

The Green Apple, Civic Pride Awards **St Margaret's Leper Hospital**

In my last report to Council I indicated that our submission had been shortlisted for national recognition and I am pleased to report that we have been informed that our entry has been selected as the National Silver winner. The Gold award went to Corfe Castle and the Bronze award to The Lighthouse at Poole, Dorset. Over 200 entries were put forward nationally and the scheme was supported by the Institute of Environmental Health, the Environment Agency, The Green Organisation the Institution of Waste Management and the Municipal Journal, Technically the award has been given to TDBC as "it" has the "civic pride"

The Cornhill, Wellington

An improved scheme of lighting has been agreed following a meeting on site with Somerset County Council Heritage and Lighting Departments and an order has been placed for the installation of the new units. I have been informed that an application will be submitted within the next four weeks for the redevelopment of the vacant, boarded up shops. The repatching and the repair of the pavements will be undertaken when the redevelopment of 2 to 6 Cornhill is complete. Negotiations are continuing regarding the provision of a sign, giving details of businesses in the street, which will be placed in the Southern Entrance.

Development Control Meetings

The quality of the presentation of applications to the Committee and the public has greatly improved since the Power Point presentations were first introduced on 28th January 2004, and it was pleasing to hear a member of the public congratulate the officers on the quality of the presentation.

Building Control Service

I would like to congratulate Brian Yates and his Staff on being awarded the building control contract for the new £8million Oncology Unit at Musgrove Park Hospital. The work was obtained in the face of fierce competition from several firms of private Approved Inspectors all anxious to be associated with this prestigious new development. The award of this contract proves that we can compete with others and I hope it will persuade some architects and developers to give the local authority service the opportunity to carry out their building control work.

Taunton Transport Strategy Review

The consultation on the Strategy began earlier this month with 450 persons invited to take part in Stakeholder workshops. The strategy will take into account the proposals in the Taunton Deane Local Plan and will be an important element in the delivery of the Vision for Taunton.

During the first week of March 30000 leaflets and questionnaires will be distributed in the area and an exhibition will be held between 10.0 a.m. and 4.0 p.m. at the Old Market Centre from 9th March to 13th March, and at the Municipal Hall between 5.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. on 8th March, 9th March and 11th March. The exhibitions will be manned by officers of both Somerset County Council and TDBC who will be able to offer answers to queries and explain the options being put forward...I am sure that any offer of assistance by Members would be appreciated

Recent plans for Taunton have included a proposal to build an Inner Relief Road from Wellington Road to Bridge Street and the developments of Tesco and Lidl foodstores have built the first parts of the road and made contributions towards the bridge which has planning permission..

Following the Vision for Taunton, the consultants, Terrence O'Rourke have prepared plans for the Town Centre and the recent consultation carried out shows strong support for the plans which do not include the Inner Relief Road.

The evidence so far suggests that the opportunity for high quality, riverside developments at the heart of the town centre would be lost if the Inner Relief is retained in the plan.

It is up to us to ensure that, in our discussions with individuals and organisations we make it absolutely clear that the Tangier site cannot deliver the Vision and the Inner Relief Road.

Station Road /Priory Bridge Road

The majority of work in the approved scheme was completed in advance of the programme, and the activation of the new signal arrangement was completed on 6th February, 2004 .

It is apparent from comments received and personal experience that the traffic is moving much better than it has for a long time, but we shall need to monitor the traffic flows and gauge the reaction of the public before we finally pass judgement on the success of the scheme.

I should like to congratulate the County Council and Somerset Highways on completing the alterations ahead of schedule with the minimum disruption to the road users, residents and businesses.

We have been informed by Somerset Highways that the road will be planed and resurfaced with a new stone mastic asphalt (SMA) – It has a high resistance to rutting, is extremely durable and has significant traffic – noise reducing properties. It is also planned for other roads in the town centre to be given the same treatment and this work will also be planned so that minimum disruption is caused.

SWARMS A358 – A303

The Highways Agency has delivered its report but has avoided making a recommendation between the two schemes but it does say that building a dual carriageway through the Blackdown Hills would have “large adverse” impacts on the environment and that widening the A358 would be cheaper and have only “slight averse” impacts on the landscape.

Transport 2000 called on the government to shelve plans for the Blackdown Hills route, which it said would be “the most controversial tarmac ever laid”. Friends of the Earth rejected the need for a second strategic road to the South West but said that the alternative to the Blackdown Hills route is “the lesser of two evils”

If Taunton is to progress as a Principal Urban Area (PUA) it is essential that the dualling of the A358 is agreed by the Minister and that works on the scheme with improvement to Junction 25 proceed as quickly as possible.

Councillor Cliff Bishop