

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 10 January 2013

CONTACT OFFICER: John Rice – Assistant Director Regeneration & Estates
Joe Carter – Head of Transport
Kate Pratt – Communications Manager

(For all enquiries) (01753) 875657

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor Swindlehurst – Commissioner for Neighbourhoods & Renewal

PART I **CONSIDERATION & COMMENT**

BUS STATION COMMUNICATIONS

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 Following a request for Review from Councillor Plenty, this report is designed to provide the Panel with the necessary information to conclude whether the communications relating to the bus station project were adequate in relation to:

- a) how the public consultation was managed, and in particular the publicising of the outside nature of the design;
- b) the use of the Slough Citizen; and
- c) the dissemination of information to the elected members.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

2.1 That the Panel draw conclusions as to whether there are any lessons that can be learnt from how the communications were managed during the Bus Station project.

3 Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities

3.1 Priorities:

- Regeneration and Environment

The development of the new Bus Station, as part of the Heart of Slough project, was aimed at the comprehensive regeneration of that part of the town centre. The public engagement and Communications Plan for this were all part of the process.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	None	None
Property	None	None
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	None	None
Employment Issues	None	None
Equalities Issues	None	None
Community Support	None	None
Communications	None	None
Community Safety	None	None
Financial	None	None
Timetable for delivery	None	None
Project Capacity	None	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no legal or Human Rights Act Implications relating to the content of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

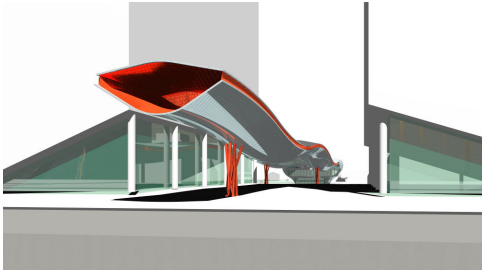
There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA relating to this report.

5 Supporting Information

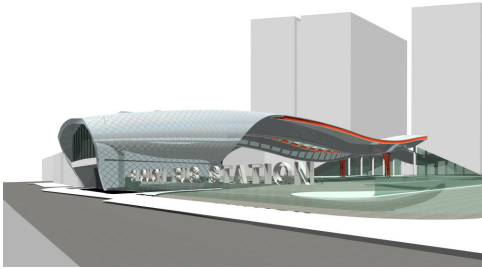
Consultation and outside nature of the Bus Station

- 5.1 The new Bus Station was one of the first elements of the Heart of Slough project to be completed. Therefore, much of the information put into the public domain about the Bus Station had come through the Heart of Slough project.
- 5.2 On 21 January 2008 the Cabinet, in a public meeting, approved the outline Heart of Slough Master Plan and development brief, with approval of further changes to be delegated to the Assistant Director, Property Services in consultation with the lead Commissioners (Resources, and Planning, Transportation and Legal & Democratic Services) if regarded as significant. This decision by Cabinet was taken following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's deliberations on the matter at its meeting on the 17 January 2008, and its comments were taken into consideration by Cabinet in taking its decision.
- 5.3 Following this, the Cabinet, again in a public meeting, approved the outline design of the new Bus Station at its meeting on the 4 December 2008, with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considering the same report immediately preceding the Cabinet. This report included drawings of the proposed design from a number of different angles, including:

View from A4 towards train station



Ground level view



- 5.4 The Heart of Slough Master Plan was approved by the Planning Committee on the 9 July 2009, following extensive consultation which included: writing to 1,526 residents or businesses and 85 external consultees, and putting up 50 site notices. From this the council received two objections and one comment from members of the public to the proposals. This public consultation was in addition to work carried out by the applicant, in this instance English Partnerships.
- 5.5 A prolonged public consultation had been undertaken as part of the preparation for the wider Heart of Slough planning application. This consultation began with the initial draft options in 2001 and culminated in a series of public exhibitions held on 24-26 January 2008. This three day event provided the public with the opportunity to view the plans for the Heart of Slough, including the new Bus Station, in detail at a public exhibition in the Queensmere Centre. This public consultation was attended by over 1,000 people, with 1,200 leaflets on the proposals distributed. The proposal for the new Bus Station, considered by the Planning Committee on the 12 May 2009, was consistent with the concept consulted on as part of the Heart of Slough project.
- 5.6 The proposals for the new Bus Station were considered at the public Planning Committee meeting on the 12 May 2009. The Planning Application S/00071/045 encompassed the demolition of the existing building, Compair House and provision of a new Slough Bus Station facility, including a new access road from William Street, ancillary operational facilities, a feature canopy, public realm works and associated infrastructure. Included in the details of this application was the detail of Passenger Waiting Facilities described as: “a series of designated and semi-enclosed ‘mini waiting rooms’ which will provide protection from wind and rain.”
- 5.7 The applicant, in this instance Slough Borough Council, undertook pre-application consultation with the following stakeholders:
- First Group – operators of the exiting bus station, and proposed operators of the new bus station;
 - Slough Borough Council Transport & Highways Team;
 - Slough Borough Council Planning Team;
 - Slough Borough Council Landscape Team;
 - Development Securities – owners of the proposed bus station site for commercial uses; and

- Scottish Widows Investment Partnership – owners of the Octagon site, located to the west of the site which forms the subject of this statement.

Use of Slough Citizen

5.8 The Heart of Slough project (which includes the new bus station) has its own Communications Plan and has so far included the following communications activities:

- a dedicated Heart of Slough website www.heartofslough.com providing up-to-date information and news about the different elements of the project
- comprehensive information and presence on the council's website
- a page in nearly every edition of the council's magazine, The Citizen, dedicated to the latest Heart of Slough developments
- strict branding guidelines so all elements of the project are easily recognisable to the public as being part of the Heart of Slough project
- a wide range of media relations activity including official openings, walkabouts, launches, live radio broadcasts and press releases targeting the local and trade press.
- advertising in the local papers, at Slough train station, on buses and bus shelter sites in Slough, including the opening of the new bus station
- a display at Slough library
- marketing material including postcards, posters and banners

5.9 **Citizen articles**

The following articles have been included in the Citizen between August 2009 – December 2012:

Article	Edition
Heart of Slough masterplan approved and work is on its way	August/September 2009
Heart of Slough latest news	December/January 2009/10
Heart of Slough news - demolition of the bus station starts	February/March 2010
Heart of Slough is beating	August/September 2010
Keeping pace with the Heart of Slough	October/November 2010
The shape of things to come	December/January 2010/11
Heart of Slough update	February/March 2011
Subway under Brunel roundabout permanently closes	April/May 2011

Residents consulted on the new library and cultural centre	April/May 2011
Heart of Slough new bus station opens for business	June/July 2011
New bus station formally opens	August/September 2011
End of the road for Brunel roundabout	October/November 2011
Infrastructure update	December/January 2011/12
Station forecourt improvements enter the next phase	February/March 2012
Mature trees make a welcome return	April/May 2012
Multi-million pound upgrade of Slough Train Station officially launched	June/July 2012
Major regeneration partnership including The Curve	December 2012/January 2013

5.10 **Media releases and coverage**

The Communications Team issued 34 media releases about the Heart of Slough project between July 2009 and November 2012 and achieved 180 items of coverage between June 2010 and November 2011.

5.11 **Advertising**

As part of the overall communications plan for the Heart of Slough project, messages about the demolition of the old bus station and the start of construction of the new bus station were heavily communicated using a combination of media launches, radio broadcasts and photo opportunities.

An advertising campaign was also implemented once the new bus station started to be built and adverts were placed in Slough Railway Station, the local newspapers, on the back of buses, and on bus shelter sites across the town.

Once the building was complete, the opening of the new bus station was supported by an advertising campaign that included advertising on bus shelter sites across Slough, in the local newspapers and the placing of posters in Slough libraries, MyCouncil and the leisure centres.

Dissemination of information to elected members

5.12 This element of the request raises the question of how officers and Cabinet Members disseminate information to the backbench elected members.

5.13 During the Bus Station project, officers used the Cabinet Members to provide information to the wider elected member body in order to facilitate the dissemination

of information, rather than respond to individual members directly. The idea behind this was to ensure that all members had access to the same level of information as the project progressed.

6 **Conclusion**

- 6.1 This report details the communications that were involved during the Bus Station project. The Panel should consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt from how the communication of the Council's plans in respect of the new Bus Station were handled, and provide recommendations on how communications should be dealt with on future projects should they feel this is required.

7 **Background Papers**

- 1 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Special Meeting Minutes (20 December 2006)
- 2 - Cabinet Meeting Minutes (20 December 2006)
- 3 - References from Scrutiny Report and Cabinet Meeting Minutes, Cabinet Meeting (21 January 2008)
- 4 - Public asked to have their say on Heart of Slough plans, Slough Borough Council Press Release (24 January 2008)
- 5 - Heart of Slough – Update on Scheme Progress & Approval of Bus Station Design & Key Terms with Development Partner, Cabinet Meeting (4 December 2008)
- 6 - Heart of Slough – Update on Scheme Progress, Cabinet Meeting (20 April 2009)
- 7 - Planning Application S/00071/045 Report and Minutes, Planning Committee (12 May 2009)
- 8 - Heart of Slough – Update on Scheme Progress, Cabinet Meeting (7 December 2009)