

BISHOPBRIGGS TOWN CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT

Looking at old photos and postcards of Bishopbriggs town centre, it is easy to see how it has changed over the decades, with the construction of the Triangle, the redevelopment of Churchill Way, and the road (A803) running through the middle of it now much busier and more congested than in the past.

Bishopbriggs High School and Thomas Muir High School have merged to form Bishopbriggs Academy, and in 2009 will occupy the brand-new school building currently under construction on the Thomas Muir site. The Bishopbriggs High School site becoming available for development will create an unprecedented opportunity to reconfigure the town centre.

In December 2006 AMEC Development Ltd (now Muse Development Ltd) and London Merchant Securities Plc submitted an outline planning application seeking consent for a mixed use development that would incorporate the Bishopbriggs High School site. The proposed development includes 3,000m² of retail space, approximately 2,000m² of business space, a civic square, long stay car parking and retention of community facilities, as well as 200 housing units together with associated car parking and open space.

It is vital that this fantastic opportunity to revitalise Bishopbriggs town centre is maximised. While meetings are ongoing between stakeholders and elected representatives, it is of primary importance that local people are asked their views and that these views are taken into account when decisions are made. As the planning board has yet to consider this application, residents and businesses in the area are in an ideal position to influence the proposals before detailed plans are drawn up.

In order to improve public engagement in this process, in August 2007 I sent out a survey to the 9036 households in Bishopbriggs to gauge public opinion on the proposed development. I received 576 completed surveys; a response rate of 6.4%.

Participants were asked nine questions regarding different aspects of the development of Bishopbriggs Town Centre, based on the outline planning application already submitted to East Dunbartonshire Council. The questions covered issues concerning the size of the development, the type of shops people would like to see, and the popularity of existing and proposed amenities. Where appropriate, the survey made reference to the existing site and shop units in Bishopbriggs Town Centre in order to help respondents visualise the size of the spaces involved.

Survey Results

Retail Area – proposed 3000m²

- 46% of people said the area proposed was about right
- 33% of people said it was too little
- 21% of people said it was too much

Business Area – proposed 2000m²

- 46% said the area proposed was about right
- 35% said it was too much
- 19% said it was too little

Housing Area – 200 housing units proposed

- 52% said it was too much
- 31% said it was about right
- 17% said it was too little

Current and Proposed Amenities

- 93% were in favour of keeping the sports hall
- 86% would like to see a quality food retailer such as Marks & Spencer's in the town
- 68% support the idea of a civic square

Shop Preferences

The most popular suggestions for the *type* of shop people would like to see were:

- Clothes Shop - 182
- Shoe Shop – 134
- Small Food Shop, e.g. Deli – 65
- Hardware/Ironmongers – 34
- Bookshop – 28
- Greengrocers – 21

The most popular suggestions for *specific shops* people would like to see were:

- Marks & Spencer's - 66
- Waitrose - 20
- Next - 16
- Independent Retailers - 15
- Primark - 12
- Woolworths - 12

For further details on shop preferences, please see Appendices 1 & 2

Priorities

Respondents were asked to rate their priorities for the development of the town centre from 1 to 6, which gave the following results:

1. Retail (2.05)
2. Long-stay car parking (3.21)
3. Sports Hall (3.72)
4. Housing (3.90)
5. Civic square (3.92)
6. Business space (4.22)

This shows that getting the retail development right is clearly the top priority for residents, and car parking is also very important. Provision of business space is seen as the least important part of the development.

Further Comments

A significant number of respondents indicated that they would also like to see the following incorporated in plans for Bishopbriggs town centre:

- Free and low cost facilities for young people including a park to help keep youths off the streets
- Community patrol officers to discourage and deal with anti-social behaviour
- Better control of litter, particularly rubbish from fast food outlets
- Consideration of any knock-on effects on Strathkelvin Retail Park
- Better enforcement of parking restrictions on Kirkintilloch Road to ease congestion problems

Conclusions

Local people are engaged and interested in what happens to Bishopbriggs town centre. If the development is to be a success, it will require the input of residents through **meaningful consultation** at every stage of the planning process.

Although there is strong support for certain aspects of the project, care should be taken to **preserve existing community resources** as well as look at new ways in which the development can improve the overall wellbeing of the town. Ways of doing this may be by incorporating facilities for young people and **keeping the current Sports Hall**, and looking at ways to improve the local environment.

It is essential that the developers get **the retail provision right, as this was clearly the top priority for residents**. In addition, a third of people would like to see more retail, so it is possible the local residents would support an extension of the planned retail space, especially if high quality retail tenants are secured. There was overwhelming support for a high quality food retailer such as M&S, and an identified need for shops selling clothes and shoes. Consideration should also be given to the vision for the town centre as distinct from the retail park, and how they might best complement one another in terms of retail offer. **The Council's economic development team along with the developers should be involved in attracting key retailers** to Bishopbriggs.

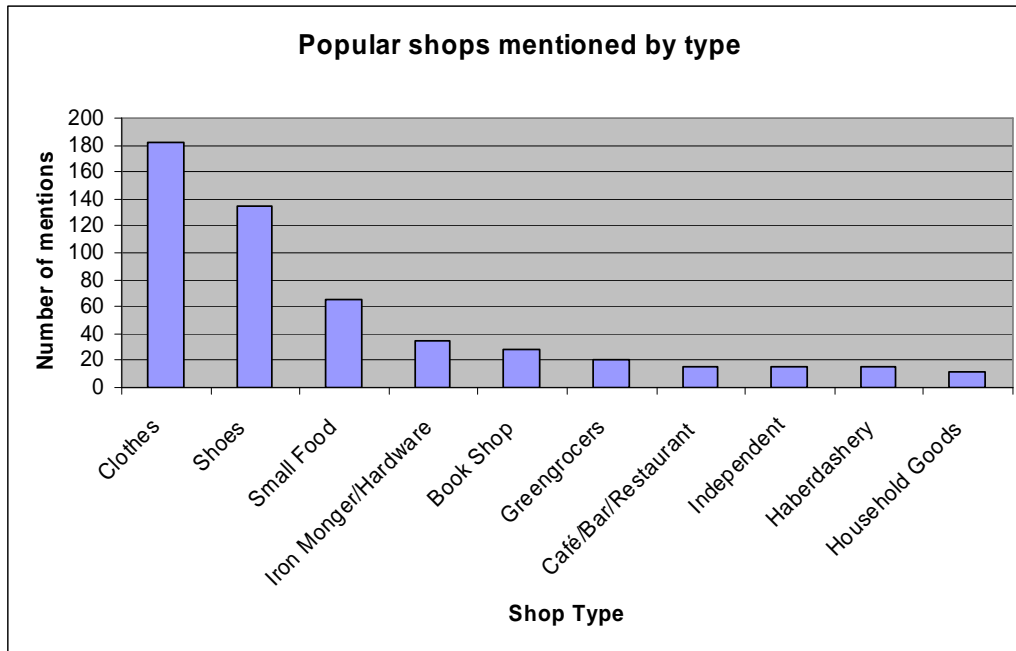
While from the developer's perspective, provision of long stay car parking is less financially attractive than retail or residential development, it is clearly very important to residents. **The Council should work with the developers to ensure sufficient parking, including long stay**, is factored into the detailed plans.

Public opinion with regards to the proposed residential development was less supportive, so further consultation as well as a **more detailed explanation of the as yet unspecified nature of the housing units will be needed** at an early stage if the development is to win the support of local residents.

Perhaps surprisingly, the idea of a civic square was opposed by nearly a third of people, and it also did not feature highly on the priority list. **Further consultation work would be helpful to establish whether some alternative provision of community space would be preferable.**

Muse have indicated a desire to **involve local residents in the process through public exhibition of the proposals** and seeking feedback. This is encouraging, but it must be at a sufficiently early stage in the process, and taken seriously, so that public opinion can help to shape the final plans.

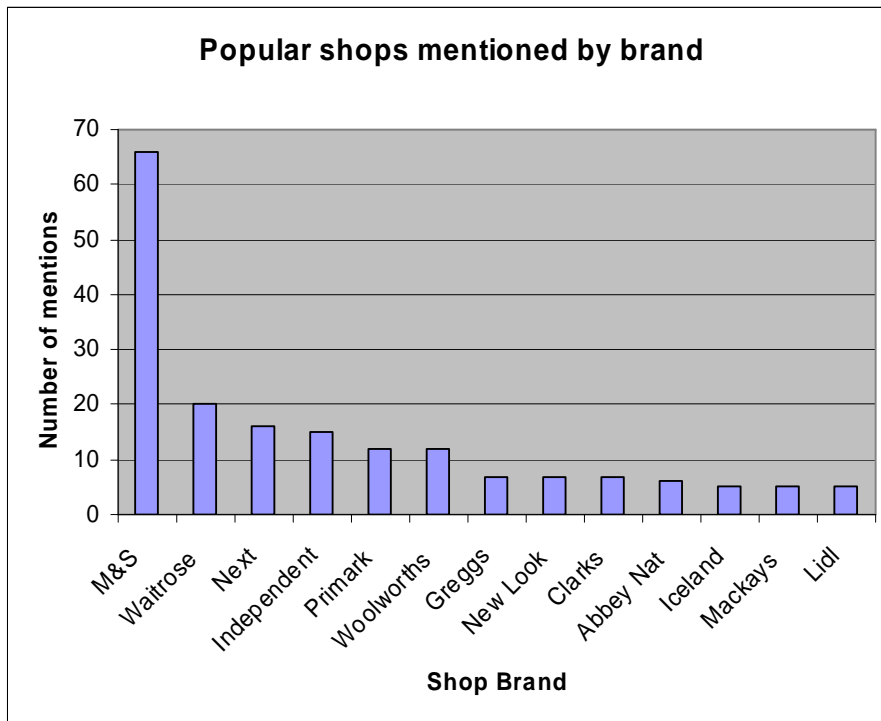
Appendix 1: Popular shops mentioned by type



The following mentions were also recorded:

Shop Type	Number of Mentions
General Store	9
Toy Shop	7
Gift Shop	7
Newsagent	6
DVD Rental	6
Pets	5
Stationary	3
Sports	3
Pound Shop	3
Computers	3
Interior Designer	3
Art	2
Furniture	2
Cinema	2
24 Hour shop	1
Play Area	1
Garage	1
Litter Wardens	1
Hairdresser	1
Seated Area	1
Florist	1

Appendix 2: Popular shops mentioned by brand.



The following mentions were also recorded

Shop Brand	Number of Mentions
HMV	4
Game	4
WH Smith	4
JJB	4
Starbucks	4
Matalan	4
Borders	3
Sainsburys	3
Watt Bros	3
H&M	2
Subway	2
Peckhams	2
Ann Summers	2
BHS	2
Pizza Hut	2
Blacks	2
Barratts	2
Dunns	2
Lakeland	2
Monsoon	2
BHS	1
Internationale	1

Shop Brand	Number of Mentions
Maplin	1
PC World	1
TK Maxx	1
M&Co	1
Aldi	1
B&Q	1
Debenhams	1
Boots	1
Fat Face	1
Carphone Warehouse	1
Tesco	1
Shoe fayre	1
Brantans	1
Au Naturelle	1
Music Shop	1
PDSA	1
RS McColl	1
Gap	1
Farmfoods	1
River Island	1
Costa	1

