

Ryemarket Access Proposal STC 10th September 2009

The concept is not a new one; it was seen and recognised by many of our shoppers in Boots' rear access times. Warm, dry, user friendly, well used and very popular. But with that facility withdrawn we are faced with a need to open up again that New R'd side of the Ryemarket

The fact that units have stood vacant for so long coupled with the footfall expectations that we remember from Boots access days is a platform for this presentation to Ryemarket controllers who seem quite interested.

Two units situated near to Walter Smiths were chosen initially, these because they are vacant and the size of them would be suitable for a proposed entrance/exit albeit with modification or 'side on lock up stall installation' to utilise existing solid walls.

On further examination at the rear Victoria St side of these units pedestrian safety factors were identified. The proximity to both Walter Smiths and to W H Smiths where large vehicles and trolleys operate could present very real safety considerations.

We have approached a cross section of persons representative of our town plus shoppers and pedestrians there has been a 100% acceptance for a Victoria St access. The next move was to look very closely at all of the Victoria St unit possibilities. The 'Card Warehouse' unit was identified as an attractive proposition; here was a well situated unit which was also in line for a Victoria St pedestrian crossing facility. Any considerations were soon dashed when we learned that those vacant premises will soon be occupied.

David Harcourt was informed of the pending proposal; he agreed to assist in an assessment. The brief was to identify pedestrian/shopper safety considerations and concerns with particular regard to the Victoria St area. As a result of visits to the area a 'safety zone' was identified. This being an area which could accommodate the access proposal, provide for safe crossing over Victoria St, with pedestrian/shopper safety being the prime consideration.

The 'safety zone' was identified as; from and between Bonmarche and Adams. All units being removed from delivery vehicle dangers, all with a rear access, each with an in line ability to give an open safe view and to provide for a crossing over Victoria St.

All of the units in this 'safe zone' are currently occupied. It is now our task to push at the Ryemarket controller's door. Already interest has been shown in the initial proposals.

Factors; The Ryemarket has very necessary commercial and costing considerations i.e. the loss of revenue from all or a part of a unit, plus costs of any required modifications. It must be successfully argued that the additional footfall of shoppers generated by the proposed access will bring customers into the very heart of the Ryemarket to the benefit of all of the existing traders, it could be anticipated that vacant units will attract new traders as a result of the increased number of shoppers.

The designated Victoria St units within the 'safety zone' must be our target for this proposal. It may be that some of the traders occupying premises within this area have no particular preference as to the location of their store within the general Ryemarket floor plan. Indeed there could be the simple solution of relocating a trader within the Ryemarket.

There are units of varying sizes vacant and available at this time. Some of these vacant units are identical in size and are arguably better situated for trading purposes than units within our 'safety zone' area. To relocate to a vacant unit of choice may be an attractive proposal to one of the traders in question. This would open up the exact picture for all of the considerations relating to the access proposal; it would allow planning considerations to go forward without undue delay.

Ours is an extremely popular proposal, it is badly needed and will be very well accepted by the residents of Stourbridge. The Ryemarket flagship will benefit as will customers and traders. We should not hesitate the proposals should be widely promoted, but close liaison with the Ryemarket controllers is of extreme importance. Other parties will of course have an interest, DMBC with an overview of the Victoria St considerations and hopefully with multi storey benefits in mind. The new Aldi management, with a newly realised link through to and from the Town via the Ryemarket, may well decide to provide an input toward its success.

I ask that we support this proposal (which has been given notice under our Standing Order No 13) and proceed without delay.

John Shepherd
Stourbridge Township Council
10th September 2009