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**DARLINGTON'S SECOND LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Nick Wallis,  
Highways and Transport Portfolio**

**Responsible Director- John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek the approval of Council for the Provisional Second Darlington Local Transport Plan covering the period April 2006 to March 2011. The report below outlines the requirements that the Plan should meet, for consideration by Members whilst reading the Plan.

**Background**

2. The Transport Act 2000 requires most local transport authorities to produce and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP) in a way that takes into account statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The Government guidance is available at:  
[http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft\\_localtrans/documents/page/dft\\_localtrans\\_504005.hcsp](http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_localtrans/documents/page/dft_localtrans_504005.hcsp). Whilst 'Excellent' Councils are not required to produce a Plan, Local Transport Plans are assessed for Corporate Performance Assessment and for transport funding purposes, so it is in the Council's interests to produce and implement a Plan which meets Government guidance.
3. The new Local Transport Plans will influence the allocation of funding to local authorities. Funding for maintenance will be based on a set formula. About 75% of the funding transport schemes will also be based on a formula, but about 25% of this block will be allocated to authorities that look likely to deliver the best LTPs. This is intended to provide an incentive for good planning and effective delivery.
4. Whilst guideline budgets have already been issued (for Darlington these are £5.529m for maintenance and £8.741m for schemes for the five years), these will be replaced by the new formula-based figures in December 2005.
5. The Government therefore requires the Second Local Transport Plan, submitted by 29 July 2005, to be complete, but provisional. There will be an opportunity to revise the targets and implementation plans in the light of the new funding formula figures and submit a Final Plan in March 2006. Various 'daughter documents' have to be submitted with the Plan, including a Transport Asset Management Plan, a Traffic Management Plan, a Bus Strategy and a Rights of Way Improvement Plan process. An important part of the Local Transport Plan is an Accessibility Strategy; the framework for this needs to be in the Provisional Plan,

with a full Accessibility Strategy submitted with and integral to the Final Plan.

6. The assessments which will determine how much of the additional 25% of funding for schemes each authority gets will be made:
  - (a) In 2005, on the quality of planning in the Provisional Plan; and
  - (b) In 2006, on which Plans contain the targets which could deliver the best progress towards better outcomes (which are largely set by the Government). The 2006 assessment will also look at which Plans are likely to be delivered effectively based on experience.
7. Based on these assessments funding for 2007/8 will be announced in December 2006, with indicative allocations for subsequent years. Retaining the discretionary funding is likely to be based on achieving the targets and outcomes set out in the Plan.
8. Excellent authorities are guaranteed at least the guideline funding allocations to be published in December 2005 (i.e. they will not be penalised for choosing to submit an LTP), but can gain more funding if their Plan is better than average. There will also be reward funding available subsequently for good progress against targets (i.e. for delivering outcomes the Government wants).
9. This report looks at the implications for Darlington's Second Local Transport Plan of Government guidance.

### ***Government Guidance***

10. The Transport White Paper 'The Future of Transport – a network for 2030', was published in July 2004. The White Paper identifies the fact that good transport is essential for a successful economy and society because it assists access to jobs, services and schools and allows people to make the most of their free time. The links to wider objectives have become more recognised at a local, sub-regional, regional and national level; and there is encouragement for transport decisions to be made alongside those for housing and economic growth. The White Paper contains a number of key government commitments and recommendations, based on:
  - (a) sustained investment in transport nationally;
  - (b) the need to improve how the transport system works; and
  - (c) the need to plan ahead in a sustainable way.
11. When formulating transport strategies, the Government expect to see links to the shared priorities that it agreed with the Local Government Association in 2002, in particular, the Shared Priority for Transport.

12. The transport shared priority, which also contributes to the others, has a number of elements as follows:
  - (a) improving access to jobs and services particularly for those most in need, in ways that are sustainable;
  - (b) improving safety;
  - (c) improving air quality;
  - (d) reducing problems of traffic congestion; and
  - (e) improving the local quality of life.
  
13. In terms of the Second Local Transport Plan, which delivers the local transport strategy between 2006 to 2011, the Government expects a document that:
  - (a) sets transport in the wider context;
  - (b) contains locally relevant targets;
  - (c) demonstrates value for money; and
  - (d) contains indicators and trajectories for performance reporting.
  
14. The Government further expects that good plans should demonstrate:
  - (a) that they are clearly based on evidence (both evidence of local travel patterns and evidence of what works nationally);
  - (b) how traffic congestion is being tackled (if this is an issue);
  - (c) how accessibility to facilities is being provided (an Accessibility Strategy must be an integral part of and underpin Plans);
  - (d) how road safety is being delivered;
  - (e) how air quality is being considered;
  - (f) how transport contributes to other quality of life issues; and
  - (g) how best value is being achieved.

15. The Department for Transport's (DfT) 'Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans' (December 2004) is highly prescriptive about the policy approaches, the types of measures which need to be implemented and the types of target which need to be set. For example, referring to the national shared priorities, it says "the key strategies to help local government deliver these outcomes are":
- (a) freer flowing local roads, delivered through a range of measures including congestion charging, and powers under the new Traffic Management Act 2004;
  - (b) more, and more reliable, buses, enjoying more road space;
  - (c) demand responsive transport services - using buses, car sharing, minibuses, taxis and private hire vehicles to provide accessibility to areas, and to sections of the community, where conventional transport services are unsuitable;
  - (d) looking at ways to make services more accessible, so that people have a real choice about when and how they travel;
  - (e) exploiting the potential of existing and new technology – for example in managing demand for transport services, improving the capacity of existing networks, improving safety, and providing better, more reliable transport information;
  - (f) joined-up transport and land use planning so that new developments do not cause congestion to worsen;
  - (g) promoting the use of school travel plans, workplace travel plans and personalised travel planning to encourage people to consider and use alternatives to their cars; and
  - (h) creating a culture, and an improved local environment, so that cycling and walking are seen as an attractive alternatives to car travel in both urban and rural areas.
16. The Guidance does not promote as solutions new road building, significantly increasing road capacity nor encouraging more car use. A Local Transport Plan which focussed on measures for increasing or easing car travel would not therefore be viewed positively by the DfT. Their view would be that it is not possible to accommodate all the potential growth in car travel by building new roads or increasing the capacity of existing roads; so the DfT view is that it would not be possible to tackle congestion by increasing road capacity, since increasing road space will attract more traffic. The Guidance makes clear that the way to tackle congestion (and to create better car travel for those who need to travel by car and freer traffic conditions for businesses) is (in their view) to encourage some trips which can easily be made by other modes to switch to other modes.
17. However, there are undoubtedly parts of Darlington where increasing highway capacity, for example improving junctions, can help to tackle congestion. Similarly the number of car parking spaces in the town centre needs to increase. The **draft Plan attached** for Members' consideration is therefore a careful balance between these differing views, recognising the prescriptive Guidance from the DfT, but creating a Plan to meet Darlington's needs.

## **The Provisional Plan**

18. Darlington is a compact town with an existing pattern of sustainable travel behaviour, yet with an increasing traffic congestion problem. It has the potential for excellent accessibility and the suggested aim of the Plan is to improve this by all modes, with a focus on sustainable means of travel (public transport, walking and cycling), but also bringing forward specific proposals to tackle traffic congestion, further improve road safety and deal with parking issues as part of the work to improve accessibility for all. Essentially it is a plan to promote travel choice.
19. The top priority in the Community Strategy for Darlington, agreed by all partners, is to enhance the economy. Darlington's Economic Regeneration Strategy relies on two special characteristics working in conjunction with each other; Darlington's quality of life and its accessibility. The Transport Plan, aimed at improving accessibility in a sustainable way and enhancing quality of life, is therefore a key contributory factor in the shared, long term vision for the Borough.
20. The **document attached** is complete in terms of the main text. The Annexes (which largely provide background and technical material) have not been supplied to Members' in printed form to save paper, but can be supplied upon request either electronically or in hard copy. One Annex is included, a longer-term Transport Strategy for Darlington, which provides a context for the five-year Local Transport Plan.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

21. Extensive consultations took place with the public and a full range of stakeholders and partners before the draft Plan was written, in accordance with best practice. For example, the Local Transport Summit held in March brought together high quality data about travel with local transport stakeholders, people from all sections of the Darlington communities, local organisations and international experts. This innovative process has attracted national attention. In addition, questionnaires went in the Town Crier, and a range of meetings (including with Darlington Transport Forum) and focus groups were held. The draft Plan was informed by these consultations and was then sent back out for consultation to ensure that it reflects earlier comments.
22. The outcomes of these consultations are described in Chapter 2 of the Plan.
23. This draft Plan has been considered by Transport Forum on 4 July and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 7 July, and comments incorporated where appropriate.

## **Legal Implications**

24. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

25. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Council Policy Framework**

26. The issues contained within this report are required to be considered by Council.

## **Conclusion**

27. The **attached draft of the Provisional Second Local Transport Plan for Darlington**, covering the period 2006 to 2011, is based on an analysis of travel and transport in Darlington, the Darlington Community Strategy, consultations and best practice. It also reflects prescriptive Guidance from the DfT about the content and transport solutions to be included in Local Transport Plans. It proposes a 'Darlington' approach to transport, but consistent with the DfT's approach. It is a strategy which would improve travel in Darlington for all types of trip, by all sections of the community and by all modes – a strategy to improve the accessibility of Darlington people to jobs, education, shopping, leisure services and health.

## **Recommendation**

28. Council are recommended to approve the attached draft of the Provisional Second Local Transport Plan and Transport Strategy for Darlington.

## **Reasons**

29. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) To meet Government's request to prepare a Provisional Second Local Transport Plan by 29 July 2005;
  - (b) To provide a Plan to guide the Council's transport spending and actions between 2006/7 and 2010/11.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

## **Background Papers**

Department for Transport, Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans, December 2004  
Local Transport Plan Annexes

Simon Houldsworth : Extension 2701  
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