

Appendix 2 – Riverside Brief

1 – Vision

Darlington Borough Council vision to create a wider multifunctional green infrastructure asset between in the river corridor between the Skerne Bridge and Feethams providing a connection between the river Skerne and the new 4 storey office for Darlington Borough Council to the rear of the Town Hall currently submitted for planning and the future Terrance Hill Cinema retail and restaurant acting as the first step in the regeneration of a more cohesive and centralised town centre for Darlington.

- Liner park to allow pedestrian and cycle access alongside the river Skerne in North and South Direction
- Link park provision to the existing town hall and New office and commercial developments
- Improvements to the river corridor offering high quality stimulating environment
- Primary Access via Riverside Walk with additional entrance from Town Hall
- Riverside communal and public space.
- Desire for future expansion space
- Inclusion of artwork and future artwork / additions
- Habitat creation
- Flood defences

2 - Aims and Objectives

It is important all of those involved in this project understand the key areas of focus:

1. **Safety** – it is critical the project is delivered and operated with safety as a paramount concern. This includes the safety of the construction workforce, the public during and after construction, staff operating and managing the building, the general public using the building and future maintenance activity
2. **Quality** – the facility is to deliver a private sector level of specification for a Local Authority building
3. **Quality** – the facility is to generate sustained local interest and usage
4. **Quality** – the project is to be delivered 'defect free' at handover to the highest standards
5. **Cost** – the project is to be delivered within the agreed cost parameters
6. **Time** – the project is to be delivered on schedule
7. **Sustainability** – the project is to be delivered to minimise its environmental impact during construction and in operation. The team will strive to achieve a low energy consuming facility and score a minimum of 'Very Good' in current BREEAM standards for Leisure
8. **Local impact** – the disruptive impact of the project during construction to the local community will be minimized
9. **Local focus** – the team will focus on the procuring and specifying of local products, materials and suppliers where practical
10. **Partnership** – the facility will be delivered in partnership with Darlington Borough Council and an open, collaborative and non-adversarial approach will be maintained by the team

3 - Design Brief

Introduction

This is an exciting time for Darlington, the proposed Terrace Hill Leisure development and the new building for the Department of Education are due to be completed in the next two years and their shared riverside offers a great opportunity to create a multifunctional riverside environment that complements the Grade I Listed St Cuthbert's church to the north.

A budget has been allocated for these works that is detailed elsewhere in the competition pack.

The River Skerne is one of the main features of the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan and the recently adopted Town Centre Strategy as well as being a key component and deliverable in Darlington's emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy and adopted Darlington Core Strategy.

This section of the linear park, on the western bank of the river, is the first stage of the wider delivery of the vision for the riverside in Darlington that is to be an ambitious, multifunctional and inspirational series of spaces and places that will transform the image of the town and river.

Design Criteria

- a) Flood Management** – the proposed scheme for the area must demonstrate that it takes advantage of the potential to create additional flood storage within any remodelled or re-profiled riverbank and green-space. Flood management is an important strand in the Town Centre Fringe Masterplan and additional storage in this area will assist in the delivery of later phases. It is envisaged that a large proportion of the area will be green-space, profiled in such a way as to reduce the width of the channel in non-flood conditions, with an area that can provide additional storage and unimpeded flow where required. In addition the creation of a varied riverbed with good visual and acoustic qualities would be desirable. The concrete revetment is to be removed wherever feasible through the proposed works. Any final design will be the subject of ongoing flood modelling being undertaken by JBA consulting and will need to gain Environment Agency approval.
- b) Ecology** – the creation of a varied and accessible river edge and environment is a key aspiration allowing natural processes to become part of the management regime. Within the linear park opportunities for a variety of habitats to be created that relate to the topography, proximity to the water's edge and high and low water should be integral to the design solution. Significant biodiversity enhancements should be sought, within the flood management approach, i.e. natural river edge, increased flood storage area and in accordance with the aspirations of the TCF masterplan, e.g. sensitive lighting scheme and appropriate native planting, to protect the river as an important wildlife corridor.
- c) Heritage, Play, Recreation and Public Art** – The site has a number of above and below ground heritage assets, some of which are designated and that have a key role in defining Darlington's' historic development, character and identity. This should be integrated into any proposed design and should also be incorporated into any opportunities for play, discovery, street furniture and public art. It is envisaged that any public art will be woven into the fabric of the scheme as opposed to the creation of an art piece, although the relocation or re-use of existing pieces can be

proposed. Some interpretation or recognition of the former Bishop's palace and any archaeological discoveries made on the site would be a welcome inclusion. There has been preliminary archaeology excavation works undertaken that have identified significant findings and further more extensive excavations are currently being undertaken on site.

- d) Public Realm** – it is envisaged that there will be a degree of hard landscape at the junction of the riverside walkway (hard landscape associated with the buildings), any riverside access and Lead Yard Bridge. Within the public realm there is an aspiration for some formal landscape planting that could include some specimen trees with a crown of sufficient height so as not to prevent natural surveillance and security. Lighting levels are to be designed to promote safety and security whilst also not causing light pollution or harm to the adjoining heritage assets. Within the public realm should be adequate facilities for waste disposal, sitting and informal break out space. It is a requirement that a hard landscaped path, built to take the weight of vehicular traffic be provided on the western boundary of the study area at a width of 3.5m. This will run parallel to the proposed DfE building at a distance of 3.5m and from the front of the Terrace Hill Leisure Scheme at a distance of approximately 6m.
- e) Access** – whilst formal access along the riverside for pedestrians and cyclists is to be created alongside the adjoining development additional access along and to the river is required with opportunities to experience the river for all levels of mobility. Any incursions into areas that may flood should be designed to be resilient enough to withstand the flow of water and inundation as well as be capable of floating if a structure is proposed.

Key Stakeholders

Whilst the Darlington Borough Council is the lead in this project it is recognised that others will wish to influence and have some input into the final design and the successful Landscape Architect will engage with the stakeholders to discuss and present ideas and opportunities for the landscape works. The above criteria will be used to pick a winning design although design teams should be aware that the requirements of the Department for Education and Terrace Hill (as building users and operators) might have an influence over the final design and scheme. This may extend to security arrangements and management plans for example.

Background Information

A number of documents may be of use that are referenced in the brief and available on the Council's website or on request;

Darlington Town Centre Fringe Masterplan (Adopted April 2013)
Feethams Planning and Development Brief (2008)
Darlington Town Centre Strategy
The emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy
Darlington Local Plan Core Strategy

Department for Education building plans (currently a live planning application)
Terrace Hill Feethams Leisure Scheme (soon to be submitted for planning)

In addition a workshop for design teams will be held where initial concepts and points of clarification can be discussed with Council officers