

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE**

**COMMITTEE DATE: 2 June 2010**

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<b>APPLICATION REF. NO:</b>	<b>10/00269/DC</b>
<b>STATUTORY DECISION DATE:</b>	<b>21 June 2010</b>
<b>WARD/PARISH:</b>	<b>CENTRAL</b>
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Haughton Road rail bridge</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION:</b>	<b>Construction of pedestrian bridge/Cycle bridge over East Coast main line to provide improved access to Darlington College campus buildings with associated landscaping works.</b>
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	<b>Director of Corporate Services</b>

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**APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

This is a full application for the erection of a pedestrian and cycle bridge over the east coast main railway line immediately to the south of the existing Haughton Road Bridge and adjacent to the Darlington College. The application also includes associated landscaping works at either end of the proposed bridge incorporating a new footpath link. The bridge would be of a lightweight monolithic construction, which uses a fibre reinforced polymer material. The bridge deck would be split into two halves colour and tactile coded to separate cyclists from pedestrians. The bridge would have a total span of some 64m and would be approximately 4m wide.

The application is more or less a resubmission of a scheme that was approved in September 2006 (Ref: 06/739). However, where as the previously approved scheme incorporated a single skewed cable stay supported on stainless steel pylons on the opposite side of the bridge structure, this has been omitted from the current application.

An accompanying Design and Access statement with the application sets out amongst other things the objectives of the proposed development. The statement explains that the cycle route along Haughton Road is part of the strategic cycle network in Darlington, which aims to provide a safe, continuous route north east of the town to the town centre.

The new bridge is required as the existing road bridge is considered too narrow and heavily trafficked to provide a safe cycle route. Other than improving access for both pedestrians and cyclists between the town centre and the northeastern part of the town, it is envisaged that these improvements will also benefit the new Darlington College and the recently approved Central Park development.

## PLANNING HISTORY

The site forms part of the recently approved Central Park development, which identifies the land for the construction of a new cycle and pedestrian bridge.

## PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

The following policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan are considered to be relevant:-

E10 - Protection of Key Townscape and Landscape Features  
E11 - Conservation of Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows  
E12 - Trees and Development  
E14 - Landscaping of Development  
E16 - Appearance From Main Travel Routes  
E29 - The Setting of New Development  
E46 - Safety and Security  
R1 - Designing for All  
T13 - New Development - Standards  
T36 - Cycle Route Network  
T39 - Conditions for Pedestrians

## RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

**Darlington Association on Disability (DAD)** has lodged a holding objection on the grounds that it considers some of the gradients of proposed pathway to the bridge are severe (1:12) and therefore will be very difficult or impossible for many wheelchair users who self propel to negotiate. Whereas the existing road bridge doesn't have the same severity as what is proposed and demonstrates what can be achieved. DAD state that accessing the bridge falls under policy R2 (Access for People with Disabilities) of the Local Plan.

**The Council's Highways Engineer** has no objections to the proposal on highway or other traffic grounds. He confirms that the proposed gradients (at 1 in 12 or less) would not be in conflict with government advice in 'Manual for Streets' and 'Inclusive Mobility', and considers that an objection could not be sustained.

**Railtrack** has been consulted on the application but at the time this report was written no response had been received. Any comments received will be reported verbally by officers at the committee meeting.

Similarly any comments from the Council's Transport Policy Section and Arboricultural Officer will be reported to members at the committee meeting.

## PLANNING ISSUES

The main planning issues to be addressed are: -

- Visual Amenity
- Residential Amenity
- Highway /Access Implications

### **Visual Amenity/**

The scale, form and design of the proposed bridge are considered acceptable and would not cause any detriment to the appearance of the locality.

The scheme would necessitate the removal of some self-sown seedling trees on the eastern side of the proposed bridge, which are not considered to be worthy of retention. Nevertheless their loss would be more than compensated by the proposed tree planting scheme. The landscaping scheme also includes generous tree planting on the western side of the bridge, which complements that of the adjoining college site and is designed to provide a safe route for pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Residential Amenity**

The location of the bridge is such that there would be no adverse effects on the amenities of residential properties nearby, the nearest of which lie on the opposite side of Haughton Road, approximately 30m away from the proposed bridge. Nonetheless the Design and Access statement accompanying the application indicates that the proposals include for provision of approach lighting, lighting to the cycle and pedestrian walkway and effects lighting which are not included with the application. Consequently it would be prudent to attach a condition to any approval requiring precise details of lighting to be submitted, in order to control light spillage and potential pollution that might prejudice local residential amenity.

### **Highway/ Access Implications**

The Council's Highways Engineer raises no objections to the proposed development.

As to the objection raised by DAD regarding access problems policy R1 of the Local Plan is applicable. Policy R2 relates solely to access into buildings whereas policy R1 encompasses all development. The general thrust of policy R1 is that new development should ensure that the general environment is accessible to and useable by all members of the community.

DAD's concern is the proposed gradient of the approach path on the southwestern side of the bridge, which is 1 in 12 whereas the path on the opposite side of the bridge slopes more gradually. Whilst a gentler gradient would be preferable the design is largely governed by the fact that Network Rail regulations dictate that all new bridges must provide a specific clearance between the track and underside of the bridge (EEC requirement). This has resulted in the proposed bridge being higher than the existing road bridge, therefore increasing the gradient of the approach path to the bridge on the southwestern side. Notwithstanding this the Council's Highway's Engineer has advised that the proposed gradient at 1 in 12 would not conflict with the Department for Transport advice in 'Manual for Streets' and in 'Inclusive Mobility'. Consequently the proposal complies with Policy R1.

The existing footways along both sides of the existing road bridge will still be available for use and provide a shorter route along Haughton Road into and from the town centre. Furthermore it is likely that the new pedestrian bridge would result in reduced pedestrian movements across the existing road bridge therefore potentially providing an easier passage for wheelchair users, along the narrow footway here should they wish to choose the existing route. Therefore the new

bridge would lead to a clear improvement in the overall standard of accessibility between the college and wider Central Park area and the town centre

## **SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

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.

## **CONCLUSION**

The design, scale and form of the proposed bridge are considered acceptable in this location. The development respects the amenity and general character of the area. The application is not considered to raise any issues in relation to residential amenity, highway safety or crime prevention and would not conflict with government advice on standards for mobility. The new bridge would provide a clear improvement in the overall standard of accessibility.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED PURSUANT TO REGULATION 3 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING GENERAL REGULATIONS 1992 AND SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

- 1) A3 Implementation Limit (Three Years)
- 2) B5 Detailed Drawings (Accordance with Plan)
- 3) E3 Landscaping (Implementation)
- 4) Prior to the commencement of any development precise details of external lighting shall be submitted to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved details.

REASON - In order to safeguard the amenities of nearby residential properties

## **SUGGESTED SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION**

The design, scale and form of the proposed bridge are considered acceptable in this location. The development respects the amenity and general character of the area. The application is not considered to raise any issues in relation to residential amenity, highway safety or crime prevention and would not conflict with government advice on standards for mobility. The new bridge would provide a clear improvement in the overall standard of accessibility. It is considered to comply with the development plan policies applicable to it as set out below:

### **Borough of Darlington Local Plan (1997)**

- E10 - Protection of Key Townscape and Landscape Features
- E11 - Conservation of Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- E12 - Trees and Development
- E14 - Landscaping of Development
- E16 - Appearance From Main Travel Routes
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