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**DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE 'PEDESTRIAN HEART'**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor John Williams, Leader;  
Councillor David Lyonette, Regeneration and Planning Portfolio;  
Councillor Nick Wallis, Highways and Transport Portfolio**

**Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek Members approval for the release of:
  - (a) One NorthEast Single Programme funding, as detailed in the Regeneration Programmes 2005/06 report of this agenda
  - (b) Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding
  - (c) Capital monies approved in the 2005/06 Capital Programme, as detailed in the Capital programme 2005/06 – Release of Funds (section 11) report of this agenda

in order to complete Phase Two main public realm works.

**Information and Analysis**

**Background**

2. Full details of the Pedestrian Heart scheme and process have been set out in previous reports to Cabinet. In November 2004, Cabinet considered consultations of the Pedestrian Heart scheme and agreed the design to proceed to Conservation, Listed Building and planning applications. It also authorised the Director of Development and Environment to agree minor amendments to design and materials in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members.
3. In January 2005 Cabinet agreed to the release of Single Programme funding (£259,000 in 2004/05 and £93,000 in 2005/06) to complete the Phase One enabling works. In addition, Cabinet authorised the Director of Development and Environment to vary future expenditure for additional studies, supplementary works and fees totalling £120,000, required to progress the scheme and released Single Programme funding for those purposes. Funding for the initial design fees had been released previously.

4. Cabinet in January and February 2005 agreed the Traffic Regulation Orders necessary for the scheme.

### **Phasing of works**

5. The proposed phasing/programme is anticipated to be:

February 2005	Commence Phase One enabling works.
February 2005	Conservation area consent and listed building consent. Applications forwarded to GONE to assess and determine.
March 2005	Planning Committee - planning applications assessment and determination.
March 2005	Council to consider LTP and Capital Programme funding availability.
April 2005	Phase Two main public realm works tender process commences.
May 2005	GONE assessment and determination of the conservation area consent and listed building consent applications. Appointment of Phase Two main public realm works construction contract. Early Contractual Involvement commences.
September 2005	Artistic Event to mark the completion of Phase One and commencement of Phase Two works. Commence Phase Two main public realm scheme.
December 2005	Break for Christmas.
January 2006	Resume Phase Two main public realm scheme.
December 2006	Break for Christmas.
March 2007	Complete Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme. (Building Grant Scheme to proceed through financial year 2007/8)

6. Achieving this timetable depends on the outcome of conservation, listed building and planning applications, and on provision and release of relevant funding which is the subject of this report.

### **Phase One enabling works**

7. In January 2005 Tender Panel awarded the Phase One enabling works contract to Hall Construction Services Ltd. The Phase One 12 week programme of works commenced on site on 14 February 2005 and includes:
- (a) Provision of bus priority on Stonebridge, Stonebridge Roundabout and St. Cuthbert's Way (northbound). This will help minimize bus journey times on the alternative routings and also remove buses from general traffic lanes, where practicable
  - (b) Junction improvements at Stonebridge/St. Cuthbert's Way and Freeman's Place/St. Cuthbert's Way.

## **Planning, Conservation Area and Listed Building Consents**

8. In January 2005 the Darlington Town Centre Pedestrian Heart scheme submitted conservation area consent, listed building consent and planning applications. The four applications comprise:
  - (a) Conservation area consent for the demolition of the existing steps, balustrading, railings and disused toilet block
  - (b) Planning permission for the erection of the new steps and associated features
  - (c) Listed building consent for the temporary dismantling of the statue of Joseph Pease
  - (d) Planning permission for the re-erection of the statue of Joseph Pease in a revised location.
9. The two planning applications are expected to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee on 16 March 2005. The applications for conservation area consent and listed building consent will be referred to the Government Office North East (GONE) for determination by the Secretary of State. This meeting cannot, therefore, take any decision which would fetter the decisions of Planning Applications Committee. However, release of funding does not pre-determine the precise design of the scheme to be considered by Planning Applications Committee: funding would be required for any scheme design.
10. Were any of these consents not to be granted, reconsideration of part of the design would be needed and may require reconsideration by Cabinet.

## **Phase Two Main Public Realm works**

11. In January 2005 Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) meetings were held between Gillespies (the Council's designers for the Pedestrian Heart scheme), Council officers and the five contractors short-listed to tender for the Phase Two main public realm works.
12. Following these meetings the Phase Two main public realm works were re-programmed to be tendered in April 2005 for appointment of the preferred contractor in May 2005. Once appointed the construction contractor will enter in to an anticipated three month Early Contractor Involvement period with Council officers and Gillespies to ascertain the most cost and programme effective option for proceeding with the works on site.
13. Phase Two enabling works are then programmed to commence at the beginning of September 2005 followed by an Artistic event, to celebrate the new traffic management system, once completed. The main public realm works will then follow.
14. The Phase Two Enabling works consist of:
  - (a) Significant changes to traffic flows within the town centre, removing motor vehicles from some of the most important streets used by pedestrians - Northgate (south of Crown Street), Prospect Place, Bondgate (part), West Row and Blackwellgate.

- (b) Retention of high quality public transport access to the heart of the centre by creating a one-way bus loop around Priestgate, Prebend Row and Tubwell Row. The majority of buses will enter the town centre via Northgate roundabout and travel along Northgate, Crown Street and then onto the loop, before exiting the town centre at the Stonebridge roundabout.
  - (c) Access restrictions to High Row and other parts of the town centre to give greater priority to pedestrians for longer periods of the day.
15. Key features of the Pedestrian Heart Phase Two works include (subject to decisions on the four planning-related applications):
- (a) A large area of new pedestrian space along High Row, West Row, Prospect Place, Blackwellgate and Northgate (part). This will be completely free of motor vehicles during the day, with service access allowed only to some parts between the hours of 5pm and 10am.
  - (b) A single set of high quality steps to run the full length of High Row and providing the opportunity to return the High Row area to a simpler, less cluttered appearance, echoing its character up until the 20th century but in a modern and practicable way. At night the steps will be lit to highlight the strong contemporary lines and to make them clearly visible for pedestrians.
  - (c) A ramp (or ramps) integrated into the steps to provide access for people with mobility difficulties (level access will also remain available at the northern and southern ends of the steps).
  - (d) High quality surface materials of mainly natural sandstone paving and granite.
  - (e) Use of the newly-pedestrianised space on West Row available for the twice-weekly open market, which could extend to wrap around the indoor market, whilst still using the Market Place.
  - (f) Creation of an informal event space at the northern end of High Row, where the steps will curve towards the Pease statue, which would be restored to close to its original location.
  - (g) Incorporation of a series of raised planters within the steps. An avenue of trees planted within them will help 'green' and soften the pedestrian space.
  - (h) Bench seats which will be positioned behind the planters on the repaved, pedestrianised, High Row. A contemporary 'back to back' design will provide users with a choice of views, out over the lower part of the centre or back onto bustling High Row.
  - (i) A procession of new streetlights which will march along Northgate, through the High Row area and along Blackwellgate. They will follow the line of the steps and tie the north and south of the town centre together.

- (j) A water cascade is being considered for installation below the ramp to create gentle background noise and movement. This signifies the location of the market historically and the washing down of the streets at the end of the day. The cascade would be lit at night to create a vibrant, dynamic feature and focal point to the space. The detailed design of this has still to be finalised. Drawings are indicative only at this stage. The operation, maintenance and health and safety aspects of the water feature design are currently under investigation. A decision on whether to go ahead with the water feature needs to be taken in the light of this further work.
- (k) Celebration and highlight of key landmarks. The centre of Darlington has a diverse set of buildings that represent all periods in architecture from the 1700's to the present day. It is proposed that the buildings on High Row will be lit chronologically to emphasise their architectural development and lighting would fade in and out of each period. The implementation of this will form part of a different phase of works as much of the lighting would require owner and other planning consents.

16. A plan of the scheme is **attached**.

### **Costs**

17. The Pedestrian Heart works have been envisaged as taking place in two main phases:
- (a) Phase One 'Enabling works' are the works to the Ring Road, entrance points to the town centre etc. to enable traffic and buses to be re-routed, removing traffic from the Pedestrian Heart and creating a bus loop. The cost of this phase is now budgeted at £420,000. Funding for this is already released
  - (b) Phase Two works propose the use of high quality material paving and related works to most of what is considered to be the Pedestrian Heart: High Row, West Row, Prebend Row and Blackwellgate. Good quality material paving and related works are proposed for Northgate, Bondgate and Tubwell Row. These works include additional natural sandstone and the proposed Water feature. It is envisaged they will commence in autumn 2005/6, following Early Contractual Involvement. The cost of the phase (including preliminaries and contingencies) is now estimated at £5,350,000
  - (c) A Chronological lighting feature and new Christmas lights are costed at £229,000.
  - (d) An artistic event is planned to mark the completion of the Phase One Enabling works and commencement of the Phase Two main Public Realm works.
  - (e) Shop Front Building Grant allocation; partly to help bring vacant properties back into use is costed at £150,000 (£25,000 in 2005/6, £50,000 in 2006/7 and £75,000 in 2007/8). This grant scheme will also require private retailer match funding in the region of £100,000 (£16,000 in 2005/6, £34,000 in 2006/7 and £50,000 in 2007/8).
  - (f) Professional fees, scheme studies and reports (for design and construction works) are costed around £650,000. Most of the funding for fees has already been released.

## **Funding**

18. The Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme has secured £60,000 of LTP capital funding for 2004/5 for the Phase One Enabling works.
19. In December 2004 One NorthEast, to fund the implementation of the scheme, approved a Single Programme capital bid for £3,259,000. The funding profile is detailed below:
  - (a) £259,000 in 2004/5
  - (b) £1,500,000 in 2005/6 (including £25,000 for an Artistic Event)
  - (c) £1,425,000 in 2006/7
  - (d) £75,000 in 2007/8.
20. The building grant scheme requires private retailer match funding in the region of £100,000 (£16,000 in 2005/6, £34,000 in 2006/7 and £50,000 in 2007/8).
21. At the Council meeting on 10 March 2005, Council formally considered the Capital Medium Term Financial Plan, (CMTFP) and the Capital Programme, including the recommendation of £2.5million corporate funding for the Pedestrian Heart scheme. Prior to commencement of spend Cabinet is required to formally release this funding.
22. Further match funding is sought from LTP - £500,000 (in 2005/06) and £140,000 (in 2006/07). The Local Transport Plan funding allocated to the Council by the Department for Transport for 2005/6 and the indicative allocation for 2006/7 are sufficient to accommodate this. Prior to commencement of spend Cabinet is required to formally release this funding.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

23. There has been widespread consultation on the Pedestrian Heart scheme, the outcome of which was considered in detail by Cabinet in November 2004, when it was decided to proceed with the design agreed at that meeting.
24. Consultations are currently being carried out on the Conservation, Listed Building and planning applications. The results of these consultations will be reported to Planning Applications Committee.

## **Legal Implications**

25. 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**

26. 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**

27. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

## **Decision Deadline**

28. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter. Environment Scrutiny Committee and Resource Scrutiny Committee have already considered some matters covered in this report.

## **Key Decisions**

29. In accordance with the Council's Constitution this matter is classed as a Key Decision and has been advertised in the Forward Plan as the projects involved affect a large number of residents in the Borough.

## **Conclusions**

30. The Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme achieves the fundamental objective of helping the Town Centre economy and attracting more trade, whilst achieving a better balance of pedestrian priority and bus accessibility across the Town Centre. Release of Corporate resource and LTP funding ensures the Phase Two works can proceed to programme and we take full advantage of the Single Programme match funding. Conservation Area Consent, Listed Building Consent and planning permission is still required for parts of the scheme, but funding would be required for any design and release of funding does not prejudice decisions on those applications.

## **Recommendation**

31. It is recommended that Members:
- (a) Release the Single Programme funding (£1,407,000 in 2005/06, £1,425,000 in 2006/07 and £75,000 in 2007/08);
  - (b) Release the Corporate Resource (£1.25million in 2005/6 and £1.25million in 2006/7);
  - (c) Release the Local Transport funding (£500,000 in 2005/6 and £140,000 in 2006/7);

- (d) Authorise the Director of Development and Environment to make any further changes required to the detailed design and materials in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Planning and Highways and Transport;

to complete Phase Two main public realm works.

### **Reasons**

32. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To progress the Pedestrian Heart scheme;
- (b) To enhance the economy, environment and ease of use of the town centre;
- (c) To allow full use to be made of external funding;
- (d) To allow the results of decisions on applications, further detailed design work and issues arising from contractors to be taken into account.

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

### **Background Papers**

- (i) Reports to Cabinet - 'Darlington Town Centre Access Study' - November 2002 and April 2003
- (ii) Reports to Cabinet – 'Darlington Town Centre Pedestrian Heart' - March 2004, November 2004, January 2005 and February 2005
- (iii) Reports to the Joint Town Centre Forum and Darlington Transport Forum - March 2004 and July 2004
- (iv) Report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee – September 2004
- (v) Report to the Transport Forum - September 2004
- (vi) Report to the Resource Scrutiny Committee – December 2004
- (vii) Report to Tender Panel – January 2005
- (viii) Designs and cost estimates from Gillespies and other consultants.

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