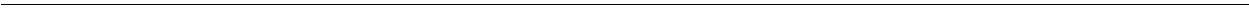




Executive Summary



The North East Assembly, in May 2003, commissioned a consultancy team led by WSP and Carl Bro to undertake a study of the A66(T) Tees Valley Gateway. The aim of this study was:

“To identify potential options across all modes to provide better access to Tees Valley, reduce congestion on the A66(T) Darlington Bypass and to enable economic regeneration consistent with the Tees Valley Vision”

The Tees Valley Gateway Study has explored multi modal options that could be implemented to provide the necessary relief to Darlington Bypass, thus enabling the economic regeneration of east Darlington to take place.

The development of Darlington Great Park and associated development adjacent to the A66(T) is currently limited in order to comply with the Government’s development control policy in respect of motorways and trunk roads in relation to infrastructure capacity.

The study process has involved detailed consultation with key stakeholders as part of a Wider Reference Group involving up to 60 interest groups. The study has been steered by key local and regional representatives comprising of North East Assembly, Darlington Borough Council, Government Office for the North East, One North East, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, North East Transport Activist Roundtable, Highways Agency, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit and Freight Transport Association. The final report summarises the views and recommendations of the consultancy team.

The study has been carried out in accordance with Guidance on the Methodology for Multi-Modal Studies (GOMMS) issued by the Department for Transport. The following detailed assessments of the proposals were carried out:

- Traffic Assessment
- Engineering Assessment
- Environmental Assessment
- Economic Assessment

Regeneration and Development Impact Assessment

Three packages of transport improvements were put together comprising of the following:

■ **Package 1:**

A low cost approach designed to alleviate immediate congestion problems that are forecast by the traffic models, comprising of three identified schemes: junction capacity improvements on the A66; the implementation of a Park and Ride scheme at Morton Palms; and the implementation of a new rail halt at Morton Palms¹. This package can be implemented within 3-5 years once funding is available; and

■ **Package 2:**

An intermediate approach, comprising of the upgrading of the A66 to dual carriageway with associated junction upgrades. This package could be implemented within 5-8 years once funding is available; and

■ **Package 3:**

A high level intervention approach, comprising of two major infrastructure schemes: the Northern and Eastern Bypasses as well as the dualling of much of A66 around Darlington. This package could be implemented within 10-15 years once funding is available.

Potential public transport improvements have been considered throughout the study process and these are detailed in the final report. It is important to emphasise that these predominantly highway based solutions were chosen given that other large scale public transport improvements with in the sub-region were included in the parallel Tees Valley 2010 transport study.

¹ Cost excluded form analysis subject to more detailed work.



PREFERRED STRATEGY

As part of the detailed option appraisal Package 1 was initially identified as being deliverable and consistent with the study objectives. Following feedback from the Highways Agency a hybrid 'Package 1B' was developed following design issues with Package 1 which proposed alterations to Great Burdon Roundabout and the proposed A66(T)/ Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor (DETC) roundabout.

Package 1B was developed to include an offline carriageway alignment to the east of the A66(T) between A67/A66(T) Yarm Road Junction and A66(T) east of Great Burdon Roundabout effectively bypassing the DETC junction and Great Burdon roundabout. Improvements to the size and geometry of the A67/A66(T) junction are proposed. Minor junction capacity improvements are proposed at junctions on A66(T) south of A67/A66(T) junction. The package of improvements also includes the implementation of a Park and Ride scheme at Morton Palms and a new Rail Halt at Morton Palms¹ which form part of Package 1 proposals. A schematic drawing on the proposals is contained in Appendix D. The package measures assumes that the new DETC proposals are an integral part of the scheme.

At an estimated cost of £51.5M, this package is considered to be the lowest cost option that would reduce congestion sufficiently in order for all of the planned development in east Darlington to progress and hence satisfy the study objectives. The justification of a preferred package of improvements was derived from the detailed analysis based on GOMMMS, feedback derived for the Steering Group and Wider Reference Group and an operational assessment of the schemes using micro-simulation modelling techniques.

Package 2, with a scheme cost of £117.7M and a benefit to cost ratio of 2.64, was unlikely to be delivered with in the timescales for the Tees Valley Vision and had a lower benefit to cost ratio than Package 1B. The scheme has potential environmental impacts particularly associated with the proposed new River Tees crossings and adjacent land. However, implementing package 1B could be a step towards the fulldualling in package 2, should that be justified at a later stage.

Package 3, with a scheme cost of £223.3M, was not pursued further due to high scheme costs (and therefore low benefit to cost ratio), high environmental impact and did not fully meet the objectives of the study.

It is recommended that Package 1B is taken forward as the preferred option as part of the Tees Valley Gateway Study – Stage 2. The proposals are deemed to be in accordance with the study objectives to provide better access to Tees Valley, reduce congestion on the A66(T) Darlington Bypass and to enable economic regeneration consistent with the Tees Valley Vision. Package 1B would not preclude further upgrades of the route, should the need be established. It is recommended that the performance of the section of the A66(T) at Blackwell Bridge is monitored as future traffic growth takes place as part of the delivery of the Tees Valley Vision.

¹ Cost excluded from analysis subject to more detailed work
