
DARLINGTON TOWN CENTRE ‘PEDESTRIAN HEART’

**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

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a detailed description and analysis of the design for the Pedestrian Heart of Darlington town centre.
2. To provide Members with a detailed analysis of feedback on preliminary consultation and scheme amendment as a result of these consultations.
3. To seek Members approval for the scheme to progress to detailed design, and to planning and related applications.

Information and Analysis

4. In September 2003, Gillespies were appointed as the lead Consultants to work with Darlington Borough Council to take forward the design principles, established by EDAW and Colin Buchanan & Partners as part of the Town Centre Access Study (2001), and to develop a standard of design in the public realm which improves the access provision and enhances the environmental quality and economy of Darlington town centre.
5. As part of the project team, FaberMaunsell, Kinsler & Partners and Equation were appointed as sub-consultants to Gillespies, offering expertise in transport planning, quantity surveying and street lighting respectively. An artist, Michael Pinsky, was appointed to work with the design team to incorporate artistic element(s) within the design.
6. An important initial stage of Gillespies commission was to undertake:
 - (a) a detailed review of the existing approved scheme, in particular to confirm the extent(s) of the pedestrianised area and the practicalities of the proposed traffic management arrangement;
 - (b) Carry out detailed consultations with all stakeholders.
7. In March 2004, after a detailed review of the existing approved scheme, Gillespies concluded with a revised scheme to create an amended “Pedestrian Heart” in Darlington

town centre. This work involved extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders and the public, and the recommendations were considered by the Joint Town Centre and Transport Forums on 17 March 2004. The proposal was subsequently submitted to the Council's Cabinet on the 30 March 2004 and was approved in principle. The 'next steps' were outlined in the Cabinet report and summarised in this report as being detailed consultation, preparation of Traffic Regulation Orders and detailed scheme design.

Why is Change Required?

8. The Town Centre Development Strategy, formally adopted by the Council and One NorthEast in February 2001, aims to achieve a step improvement in the quality, environment and economy of the Town Centre by:
 - (a) Achieving new development thus bringing new shops and businesses to the Centre, enabling Darlington to better compete with the rest of the region; and
 - (b) Making the Town Centre more attractive to shoppers and businesses thereby encouraging more people to use the Town Centre and to spend more time, and money, when they are there.
9. It is vital to respond to improvements in competing shopping centres if Darlington town centre is to regain trade and better serve people in its catchment area.
10. Critical design elements to achieve the above include the creation of **high quality pedestrian spaces** and maintaining **good public transport access** to the core of the Town Centre.

Darlington Gateway

11. As part of the Tees Valley visioning process, Darlington has been recognised as an area with particular characteristics, namely location and quality of life, which, if capitalised upon, would make a significant contribution to the prosperity of the wider Tees Valley. Darlington also represents an area capable of attracting development and economic activity, which may not establish elsewhere in the Tees Valley.
12. The importance of the Town Centre development to the 'Gateway' concept and the sub-regional economy is recognised in the Tees Valley Vision and has been highlighted in a number of studies and strategies including the Adding to Quality: A Development Strategy for Darlington Town Centre (2001) and the Darlington Town Centre Access Study (2001). These studies have led to the development of the Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme.

Tees Valley Vision

13. The Tees Valley Vision Investment Strategy states:
 - (a) "Darlington is the gateway to and the second largest retail centre in the Tees Valley. The town provides a diverse mix of retail, leisure and cultural facilities and has a unique 'market town' character; different from the other main centres in the Tees Valley".

- (b) "A comprehensive strategy for Darlington town centre is now being implemented focusing on accommodating national retailers, supporting the strong independent retail sector, giving priority to pedestrians and rationalising car parking".

Darlington Community Strategy

- 14. The Darlington Community Strategy focuses on increasing levels of employment in Darlington and recognises the Town Centre as one of the key stimulants to this. The consultation exercise prior to the development of the strategy highlighted how local people recognised the importance of a vibrant town centre to economic growth.

Darlington Economic Regeneration Strategy 2004-2009

- 15. The Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme is recognised as a key driver for economic performance. Theme 4 Objective 5 – 'Ensure an Environment Conducive to Retail Growth' relates to the Town Centre – Pedestrian Heart scheme:

"...Significant investment is in place to develop the Town Centre environment and create a new 'pedestrian heart', which will raise the quality of the public realm and provide new space for events. The principles of high quality design and materials will be central to the environmental improvements, as will the inclusion of public art."

The Scheme

- 16. **Appendix One** illustrates the approved public realm and town centre traffic management arrangement as agreed in March 2004. Key features of this scheme include:
 - (a) Extended pedestrianised area to include West Row and Blackwellgate. This effectively creates an extension to the pedestrian 'heart', extending the pedestrian area at Pease's statue (Prebend Row/Northgate/Bondgate) and along High Row/West Row in the vicinity of the Indoor Market/Binns Department Store. This is necessary to attract visitors down to the south of the Town Centre, which is especially important with the proposed Commercial Street Shopping Centre potentially pulling the main focus to the north.
 - (b) One-way town centre loop along Priestgate westbound, Prebend Row southbound and Tubwell Row eastbound. This loop would be used by buses, cyclists, taxis, disabled and servicing vehicles. This is important to achieve adequate penetration into the Town Centre.
 - (c) One-way southbound along Northgate/Crown Street from the St Cuthbert's Way roundabout to the junction with East Street.
 - (d) One-way eastbound on Houndgate.
- 17. General support was received for these proposals and various comments made, which have been taken in to account in the developing the design.

The Proposed Design

18. Substantial design work has now been completed based on the approved concept layout that was displayed at the public exhibitions.
19. The following paragraphs give a description of the proposals and incorporate original concept proposals and modifications as a result of the consultation feedback and analysis. The latest concept design plan is attached as **Appendix Two**. Alternatively the plans can be viewed on Darlington Borough Council website – www.darlington.gov.uk - click on the Pedestrian Heart logo.
20. The Pedestrian Heart project signals the start of a programme of town centre improvements in Darlington, which will enhance the Town Centre experience and create a quality environment and a stimulating place for living, shopping, entertainment, meeting, eating and relaxing. By re-organising and re-designing the traffic system such as buses, taxis, cars and delivery vehicles a series of pedestrian spaces will be created that are inviting, safe and accessible for all to use. There is an emphasis on high quality design, reinforcing the character and heritage of Darlington through a modern, but sensitive palette of materials.
21. Key features of the design include:
 - (a) A dedicated one-way bus loop will be created around Priestgate, Prebend Row and Tubwell Row to provide direct public transport access to the heart of the Town Centre. Most of the bus routes that currently use West Row, Blackwellgate, Northgate, Bondgate and Prospect Place will use the bus loop.
 - (b) This will create a large area of new pedestrian space along High Row, West Row, Blackwellgate, (part) Northgate and Prospect Place. This space will be completely pedestrianised during the day, with service access allowed between the hours of 5pm and 10am.
 - (c) As well as re-organising the buses to create this new environment, changes to the way all vehicles such as taxis, service vehicles, blue badge holders are allowed to use the space is also necessary. These new arrangements are shown in the access plans (these plans can be viewed on the Darlington Borough Council website – www.darlington.gov.uk - click on the Pedestrian Heart logo) and form **Appendices Three to Seven**.
 - (d) To deal with the change in level from High Row to West Row a single set of high quality steps will run the full length of the scheme providing a subtle and simple response to the level change. The step profile will take on a more classical form with curved edges to soften them creating the feel of a more traditional flight of steps and reflecting the detail on the existing steps and retaining wall copings.
 - (e) The two intersecting ramps that cut through the elegant line of steps are likely to be ‘dogleg’ ramps which are compact and can therefore more easily be positioned on key pedestrian desire lines for the wheelchair/pushchair/elderly users outside of the Cornmill Shopping Centre and the entrance to the indoor market. These ramps also provide better permeability because of their compact nature, unlike the long intersecting ramps, previously proposed, which would require handrails along their full length acting as barriers to key pedestrian desire lines.

- (f) The additional benefit of these ‘dogleg’ ramps is in terms of their character; the long intersecting ramps had a feel perhaps less in keeping with the Darlington townscape. The ‘dogleg’ ramps, however, form subtle buttresses similar to the existing streetscape and granite build outs, with the potential to incorporate some form of decorative ballustrading around the perimeter of the ramp similar to that which exists at present. Gillespies are working closely with Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) who are satisfied with the dimensions proposed.
- (g) At night the steps and the ramps will be lit to highlight the strong contemporary lines and to make them clearly visible for pedestrians.
- (h) High quality surface materials are proposed for the Pedestrian Heart. The character of Darlington’s streetscape is typified by Yorkstone and granite setts. The proposed scheme looks to incorporate more natural stone paving into the design to reflect this. It is proposed that paved areas with wide granite kerbs will help delineate key pedestrian space and also act as a ‘stage’ for the surrounding buildings and architecture. The service access road would remain in high quality granite setts. This palette of materials will help to tie the Pedestrian Heart in to the surrounding streetscape more readily and also strongly reflect the character and heritage of Darlington.
- (i) The surrounding streets of Prospect Place, Northgate, Priestgate, Tubwell Row and Blackwellgate will be in good quality materials, providing a homogenous feel to the townscape.
- (j) The twice-weekly market can be, in part, wrapped around the indoor market on West Row, Tubwell Row and potentially on Horsemarket, to provide a more prominent location, whilst still using the Market Place. The Market Place will then have additional space, which can be used more extensively for events and will actively encourage a café culture.
- (k) Several informal event spaces are proposed. The main space will be located at the top of High Row where the steps will wrap around a central stage creating an amphitheatre. Other smaller event spaces are located around the Market Cross and at the end of Blackwellgate.
- (l) Britain in Bloom will be celebrated by planting in a series of raised Corten steel planters that wrap around the event spaces and by hanging baskets on the new light columns. The Britain in Bloom concept has been taken even further with a series of individual granite planters running, in split sections, along the entire length of the High Row steps. These are situated immediately in front of the seating to provide a pleasant outlook and provide more planting space than at present to make a real impact in the town.
- (m) A water cascade is proposed to be set into the steps, opposite Tubwell Row as a focal point to this area of pedestrian space. The water feature signifies the location of the market historically and the washing down of the streets at the end of the day. The bar code design represents an appropriate local product of Darlington. The cascade will also be lit up at night to create a vibrant, dynamic feature and focal point to the space. The whole feature bridges the past market activity with present day commerce. The cascade will require regular maintenance and as with the whole scheme will require

increases in revenue funding to cover enhanced maintenance. Detailed design will have to resolve safety and maintenance issues.

- (n) A series of new seats are proposed along High Row. This seating creates a vantage point looking out over the Town and a view in the other direction to busy High Row. The traditional black ornate railings may be to be reused to create handrails for the steps and the rest of the street furniture such as lighting columns and bollards will tie in with this theme.
 - (o) Trees are proposed to run alongside the High Row to help screen the vehicular spaces and reduce dust and visual intrusion. The trees will also help 'green' and soften the pedestrian space.
 - (p) Where possible, and where underground services permit, trees will be introduced in Blackwellgate, Bondgate and Tubwell Row to provide an introduction to the Pedestrian Heart. The interface with CCTV will be addressed.
 - (q) A procession of new streetlights will march along Northgate, through the Pedestrian Heart and along Blackwellgate. This strong avenue will follow the line of the steps and tie the north and south of the Town together.
 - (r) Key landmarks will be highlighted and celebrated. It is proposed that the statue of Joseph Pease is moved slightly, subject to the necessary permissions, to something approaching his original position, overlooking High Row. This is a prominent and focal location that reflects the importance of the statue in the town's history. The Market Cross will be incorporated into a small events space and seating area.
 - (s) There is an emphasis on removing clutter to create a simple spacious feel to the scheme and so bollards and signage will be kept to a minimum.
 - (t) The proposals look to create a spacious feel to High Row which can accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, service vehicles and seating. Therefore the service bays on the bus loop on Prebend Row, as shown in the original concept plan, have been moved to allow for this extra width on High Row. The service bays will be relocated just around the corner on the top of Tubwell Row, which provides a more satisfactory loading bay location for the retailers as well.
22. In addition to Michael Pinsky being part of the design team (and generating the idea for the Water Cascade) he has also developed two other concepts which require further investigation and consideration:
- (a) ***“Life Pulse”***
 - (i) *Life Pulse* will adapt the existing lighting columns for the scheme. *Life Pulse* will register visitors' heart rates and illuminate them. The differences between the participants' pulse rates will create ever-changing rhythms and patterns between the lights
 - (ii) The participants will put their hands on either side of any of the lighting columns and will wait until the column announces that their pulse has been read. The column will speak out the frequency of their pulse rate and will broadcast this

rate from the light. This pulse rate will be maintained until a new pulse rate is read. Each lighting column will be able to read and broadcast a pulse rate.

- (iii) This concept has been derived from the strong links that the centre of Darlington has on the 'heart' of the community. "This is LOCOMOTIONTOWN, where the railways first ran: this is QUAKERTOWN, where sharing took root; this is DARLINGTON, that wears its heart within its name." W.N.Herbert.

(b) *Chronological lighting scheme*

- (i) The central core of Darlington has an amazingly diverse set of buildings that represent all periods in architecture from the 1700's to the present day. These buildings will be lit chronologically to emphasis these architectural developments and lighting would fade in and out of each period. Through the duration of an evening each period of architecture would have its moment of glory. Buildings that would normally be marginalised, those with a simple everyday façade or those built in the last forty years, would have their opportunity to influence the townscape.
- (ii) The implementation of this may have to form part of a different phase of works as much of the lighting would involve building mounted fixings and therefore owner consents.

23. In parallel to the main design work, Darlington Borough Council have been working with Transport Consultants, Faber Maunsell to develop a traffic management scheme for Darlington Inner Ring Road, to ensure that there is no adverse effects on the traffic and to improve conditions for buses. Key features of the scheme include:

- (a) Provision of bus priority on Stonebridge Roundabout, St. Cuthbert's Way (northbound), St. Augustine's Way and Bondgate (westbound). This will help minimize bus journey times on the alternative routings and also remove buses from general traffic lanes, where practicable.
- (b) Maintaining existing highway capacity for general traffic. Journey times for general traffic movement around Darlington Inner Ring Road are not expected to increase with the proposed scheme. Where bus lanes are proposed, capacity is maintained either through carriageway widening (St. Cuthbert's Way northbound) or by making use of existing 'dead' carriageway (St. Augustine's Way and Bondgate).
- (c) Junction improvements at Stonebridge/St. Cuthbert's Way and Bondgate/Greenbank Road.
- (d) Improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities across St. Cuthbert's Way, St Augustine's Way and Bondgate.
- (e) Proposed additional bus stops on Bondgate.

24. In addition to the above, the Council has also designed and consulted on traffic management proposals for 'corridor of certainty' improvements along North Road. In particular this should help to reduce northbound queuing traffic on North Road.

Consultation

25. Public and stakeholder consultation of the scheme is an important part of developing the design. Consultation and publicity have consisted of the following:
- (a) Scheme design information issued to key stakeholders including special interest groups such as CABE, English Heritage, Darlington Civic Trust, 'hard to reach' and community groups, and other key stakeholders such as the bus operators, Darlington Association of Disability (DAD), Town Centre businesses, residents and retailers, inviting them to the consultation exhibition or for meetings. Over 500 letters have been issued.
 - (b) Meetings held with stakeholder groups such as Darlington Civic Trust, DAD, the bus and taxi operators, the indoor and outdoor market traders, emergency services, etc. Discussions with bus operators, in particular, have been extensive.
 - (c) Scheme design/Consultation/Exhibition information published within the Northern Echo, Darlington & Stockton Times, Herald & Post, Darlington Town Crier, and numerous professional magazines and aired on local BBC breakfast news.
 - (d) Scheme design literature contained on the Darlington Borough Council website (www.darlington.gov.uk), under the Pedestrian Heart logo link.
 - (e) Public Consultation Exhibition held Wednesday 7 July (10am – 4pm); Thursday 8 July (10am – 5pm); Friday 9 July (10am – 4pm) and Saturday 10 July (10am – 3pm). Very large numbers of people visited the exhibition and discussed the scheme.
 - (f) Additional presentations have been made available to retailers in some specific parts of the town centre, when requested. Additional presentations have also been made to special interest groups such as Growing Old Living in Darlington (GOLD) and the Darlington Rotary Club.
 - (g) On 5 July 2004 the Town Centre Board received a Pedestrian Heart scheme briefing on the proposed concept design and access plans prior to commencement of public consultation.
 - (h) On 6 July 2004 two presentation sessions were held to enable all Darlington Borough Council Members the opportunity to be fully briefed on the proposed concept design and access plans for the Pedestrian Heart scheme prior to commencement of public consultation.
 - (i) On 15 July 2004 the Town Centre Board received a further briefing and update regarding the feedback received during public consultation.
 - (j) On 26 July 2004 the Joint Town Centre and Transport Forum received a briefing on the proposed concept design and access plans in order to seek views and approval on the scheme design.
 - (k) On 29 July 2004 the Darlington Partnership Economy & Environment Sub Group received a Pedestrian Heart scheme briefing on the proposed concept design and access

plans in order to seek views on the scheme design.

- (l) On 2 September 2004 a report and presentation were taken to Environment Scrutiny Committee to ensure Members were fully briefed and given the opportunity to ask any questions.

Key Issues Arising from Consultation

26. 343 questionnaires were completed as part of the Public Consultation Exhibition. The tick-box content of these questionnaires has been analysed, indicating that the responses are very positive.

- (a) 80% agreed that the new design and layout is good (compared with 13% who disagreed).
- (b) 81% agreed that the pedestrianisation plans will make the town centre safer (compared with 9% who disagreed).
- (c) 57% said they would shop in or visit the town centre more often if it were pedestrianised as planned (compared with 13% who disagreed with the statement and 30% who neither agreed nor disagreed).

27. Analysis of the questionnaire comments and further stakeholder meeting comments has been recorded and analysed by Gillespies, who have produced a report (refer to **Appendix Eight**) categorising comments into one of four areas:

- (a) Valuable comment - incorporation in to the detailed design of the scheme.
- (b) Good comment - further research and investigation work required before potential incorporation in to the scheme.
- (c) Comment noted, however, impractical suggestion which cannot be incorporated in to the scheme.
- (d) Comments referred to Darlington Borough Council for a decision.

Valuable Comments that will be incorporated into the overall scheme

28. Category (a) points have already been incorporated into the scheme proposals. Many comments under this heading were concerns expressed by the Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) group. These included:

- (a) the lack of blue badge parking around the library building
- (b) Crown Street becoming a 'difficult and dangerous' place to cross
- (c) the lack of a 'pedestrian only' area on High Row
- (d) 'poor surfacing' on Horsemarket

- (e) a lack of disabled parking along Skinnergate during ‘core hours’.

29. These issues has been resolved through:

- (a) providing additional parking to Crown Street (South) and East Street. This is in addition to the existing parking retained and new parking proposed on Quebec Street, Priestgate (East) and the Crown Street Car Park. This provides a large amount of Blue Badge parking in close proximity to the Library
- (b) the introduction of build outs in the road or a light controlled crossing on Crown Street to ensure a formal pedestrian crossing area. In conjunction there are a series of pavement build outs and several formal pedestrian crossing points proposed on Crown Street to allow safer pedestrian movement across the proposed bus loop
- (c) the introduction of a slight kerb to denote a ‘pedestrian only area’ outside the core hours, when service vehicles use High Row
- (d) proposals to resurface access zones to proposed disabled parking areas on Horsemarket using a material that is sympathetic for disabled users, and that will also deal with the transition between the Market Square and the proposed Darlington Heart scheme
- (e) Disabled parking to remain available for the statutory time along Skinnergate.

30. In addition a large proportion of the consultation comments have been explored as the scheme progresses through detailed design and have now been incorporated into the scheme proposals. These include:

- (a) More seating needs to be provided for town centre – *back to back seating to be used as and where appropriate, ensuring provision of quality seating within the scheme*
- (b) Concerns over the choice of materials, requiring consideration in more detail – *proposals now look to incorporate vernacular materials such as natural stone paving within the ‘pedestrian only’ area along High Row and West Row/Prebend Row area*
- (c) Careful balance between removing clutter and adding a layer of detail to enrich the town – *a simple set of high quality steps will run the full length of the scheme, with proposals to incorporate planting, a water feature, seating etc., and the celebration of key landmarks and incorporation of events areas*
- (d) Concerns that there are not enough planting areas to fulfil the Britain in Bloom objectives – *proposals now look to incorporate additional planters within sections of the steps*

Good Comments, will look at in more detail during the detail design stage

31. A large proportion of the consultation comments are grouped as category (b) actions. These are comments that will explored as the scheme is progressed through the detail design stage. A summary of these points are highlighted below:

- (a) Detail design of street furniture such as seating, railings to reflect of heritage of town.

- (b) Water Feature- concerns over vandalism, maintenance, and safety.
 - (c) Organization of market and how it is accessed in terms of servicing and integration of the outdoor market with the indoor market requirements.
 - (d) Concerns that the character and heritage of Darlington is not reflected, ballustrading and railings are strong historic precedent and should be incorporated into the scheme (*refer to section 35 point (f) for further information*).
 - (e) Durham County Council have pointed out that there may be archaeological deposits beneath Pedestrian Heart site which will need a watching brief by archaeological contractor when below ground deposits are likely to be disturbed.
 - (f) Need to consider skateboarders and blades within design.
32. One of the main concerns relates to retaining the character and heritage of the town, maintaining a sense of place and responding the features that typify Darlington. The design proposals will place a strong emphasis on reflecting the heritage of Darlington through the street furniture, materials and details. For example this could be through using a classical profile to the steps, bespoke railings and seating details or lighting columns.

Comments noted, but not considered valid or relevant within the context of the project

33. A key theme to the comments that emerged from the consultation is the proposals for the bus loop around Crown Street and Priestgate. The concern being that these streets are narrow and that there will be increased noise and pollution.
- (a) An air quality assessment has been undertaken by Faber Maunsell. The results have shown that the forecast for 2005 and 2010 levels of all 5 key pollutants were well within acceptable limits
 - (b) Many of the general public raised concerns over the lack of parking in the town centre and the forthcoming charges - the scheme does not affect car parking charges or numbers.
 - (c) A number of the public raised the issue of provision of toilets in the Town Centre. Provision of modern facilities would be extremely difficult within the constraints of the layout of the streets and existing provision is considered adequate.

Comments referred to DBC for consideration

34. There are a number of comments and concerns on which the consultants have specifically sought the Council's guidance. The proposed response to these issues is shown in italics below.
- (a) The DAD group have major concerns over the lack of parking and access provision for Blue Badge holders; this could be partly resolved by providing more dedicated blue badge parking within the Abbott's Yard Car Park. *Blue Badge holders can use, without charge, any space in Abbott's Yard (although they would not be wide enough for wheelchair users): it is proposed to monitor the usage of dedicated spaces (which are generally well used at present). Abbott's Yard spaces are popular with other*

shoppers as well as Blue Badge holders, and dedicating more spaces to Blue Badge holders would result in a loss of supply to others. Paragraph 29 explains other changes to benefit Blue Badge holders.

- (b) Extending the vehicle-free hours from 10:30 am - 4:00 pm to 10:00 am – 5:00 pm has raised some concerns from a number of retailers. These retailers are generally located on Skinnergate and the Yards who will be affected by the new servicing hours. *Extending the vehicle-free hours will greatly benefit shoppers and should ultimately attract more trade to the town centre. It is suggested that during the traffic regulation order process specific problems of individual retailers be considered further. After careful consideration the proposals for Skinnergate have been amended to retain the existing service access regime but change the times of restriction to coincide with core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm.*
- (c) There is strong support for and against the proposals for allowing cyclists to cycle within the pedestrian areas. *Unless cyclists are allowed through the town centre, there would be a serious gap in the town's cycle network, forcing cyclists to use the inner ring road for cross-town journeys, which would raise serious safety concerns. Dedicated cycle lanes through the pedestrianised area were considered but experience elsewhere has shown that these are less safe for pedestrians. Experience of towns elsewhere that have allowed cycling in pedestrianised areas is that cyclists will use the areas responsibly and this is best practice recommended by Government. Anyone using a bike in an anti-social way is likely to cause problems in the town centre even if cycling were not allowed. A fuller consideration of this issue is set out in **Appendix Nine**. It is therefore proposed that cycling is allowed initially, for a six-month trial period, but that this is carefully monitored, and the results of the trial formally considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.*
- (d) Location of the market stalls and whether they should be relocated from the Market Place. *The design allows for the market either to continue in the Market Place or to wrap, in part, around the indoor market. The specific location can be determined nearer to the completion of implementation.*
- (e) There have been a number of concerns from local residents and the Civic Trust regarding the removal of the existing balustrades, steps and railing as they regard these elements are part of the heritage of Darlington and should be incorporated into the new scheme. *The proposed scheme aims to provide a new chapter for the main pedestrian space, providing a modern interpretation of the historical precedents. The proposals look to interpret the essence of what makes Darlington unique- the change in level. The grand set of steps proposed celebrate this change in level; reflecting the pre-1901 streetscape in its simplicity and boldness, whilst also reflecting the current layout with its formal terrace arrangement. In 1992 a comprehensive restoration of the ornamental railings, stonework, balustrading along High Row etc. was commenced. Numerous features of the 1901 ornamental terrace arrangement were needed to replace severely dilapidated or missing sections. A fuller consideration of this issue is set out in **Appendix Ten**.*
- (f) An important consideration for the project is the after care/maintenance. An increase in revenue funding for the aftercare of the streets should be considered. *Gillespies have been asked to produce a maintenance plan which can be considered for future*

revenue budgets. In early years the maintenance cost will reduce when the scheme is new, but appropriate long-term maintenance is vital.

- (g) Some concerns have been raised by Durham Constabulary regarding the operation of the proposed bus gate on St Cuthberts Way. *Discussions are currently taking place between the design consultants and the police to try to resolve these issues.*
35. Further discussions are also continuing with Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) in relation to issues they have raised. At a recent meeting, solutions to blue badge parking re-organisation were agreed, but DAD remained opposed to three elements of the design:
- (a) the removal of the two steps that separate the High Row carriageway from the pavement - *(refer to section 29 point (c) for further information on the proposal to introduce a slight kerb to denote a 'pedestrian only' area, which is hoped will now satisfy this concern).*
 - (b) the reduction of blue badge parking and the taxi access on High Row;
 - (c) the proposal to allow cycling within the pedestrian zone.
36. On 2 September 2004 a report and presentation were taken to Environment Scrutiny Committee, to enable the Committee to consider the scheme and the comments received. The Committee recommends:
- (a) the re-location of the 'Locomotion' flower display on High Row - *this is being considered as part of the detailed design process*
 - (b) commemorative paving slabs within the pedestrian areas - *this is being considered as part of the detailed design process*
 - (c) incorporation of anti-skateboarding elements in to the design proposals - *this is being considered as part of the detailed design process*
 - (d) the re-use of the High Row railings and balustrading in another location in the Town - *where practical and in keeping with the proposed scheme, the High Row railings will be incorporated within the new scheme. The detailed design process is also reviewing the possibility of re-using the granite blocks and steps as kerbs ensuring the sustainability of materials and an element of historical continuity within the town centre. Where it is not possible to re-use materials such as the balustrading, these features will be removed and new locations of their use/display will be considered.*
 - (e) the proposed changes to service access times be considered carefully with the possibility of leaving Skinnergate's service access times the same as at present – *after careful consideration the proposals have been amended to retain the existing service access regime but change the times of restriction to coincide with core hours of 10.00am to 5.00pm.*

- (f) careful consideration regarding free access of cycles within the pedestrian areas rather than using specific cycleways - a *full consideration of this issue is set out in Appendix Nine. It is proposed that cycling within the town centre is allowed initially, for a six month trial period, but that this is carefully monitored, and the results of the trial formally considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet*

Planning, Conservation Area and Listed Building Consents

37. The Council will need to seek the necessary consents under Planning and related Acts and, as a matter of course, a Conservation Area Consent application for demolition of the existing walls and ballustrading, and a Listed Building Consent application for the re-positioning of the Joseph Pease statue have to be referred to the Secretary of State. Prior to referring the necessary applications to the Secretary of State they would be considered by the Council's Planning Applications Committee. This meeting cannot, therefore, take any decision which would fetter the decisions of Planning Applications Committee in due course.

Funding Implications

38. The Pedestrian Heart works have been envisaged as taking place in three main phases:
- (a) Phase 1 '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. This is envisaged to commence in early 2005. The cost of this phase is about £387,400
 - (b) Phase 2 is the high quality material paving and related works to most of what is considered to be the Pedestrian heart: High Row, West Row and Prebend Row. This is envisaged to commence in spring 2005/6, immediately after the enabling works. The cost of the phase is about £3,788,100
 - (c) Phase 3 comprises the re-paving of Northgate (between the Pedestrian Heart and the ring road), part of Prospect Place, part of Bondgate, part of Tubwell Row and Blackwellgate in quality materials. This phase is envisaged to commence in Spring 2006 and cost about £2,368,500
39. A Single Programme bid has been completed and submitted to Tees Valley Partnership (TVP) for appraisal. The bid seeks approval for the previous Darlington Gateway allocation, plus addition funding. Capital works funding is sought for £259,000 in 2004/5, £1,475,000 in 2005/6, £1,425,000 in 2006/7 and £75,000 in 2007/8 totalling £3,259,000. Revenue funding is sought for £25,000 in 2005/6 to fund an artistic event to mark the end of the current traffic management of the Town Centre and the start of the public realm works and new traffic management regime. Funding has also been sought within these amounts for a shop front grant scheme, partly to help bring vacant properties back into use, at a cost of £150,000 (£25,000 in 2005/6, £50,000 in 2006/7 and £75,000 in 2007/8). This grant scheme will 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).

40. In addition, the Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme has secured, for capital works, £70,000 of Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding for 2004/5, £500,000 LTP for 2005/6 and £140,000 LTP for 2006/7.
41. If the Single Programme funding bid is successful (which should be known later in 2004), then the Single Programme and LTP funds will cover the majority of the estimated cost of the works. However, in order to carry out the full scheme for all parts of the town centre described in this report, additional funding of £2.5m will be required. It is recommended that the full scheme is put out to tender so that a definite cost can be obtained. Consideration of whether to cover the funding gap from the Council's capital programme or from borrowing can take place through the 2005/6 budget process. A decision about the extent of works and funding can then be taken in the light of the tender information.

Next Steps

42. Future work will focus on:
- (a) Traffic Regulation Order preparation and process
 - (b) Artist continued involvement in the design process and a 'temporary event' to mark the start of the scheme build
 - (c) Progression of detailed design and working drawings
 - (d) Progression of the tender process for the first phase enabling works and subsequent phases of works
 - (e) Detailed scheme cost estimates
 - (f) Further design work on ring road to ensure bus journey times are stabilised
 - (g) Progression of the required planning consent applications, conservation area consent application and listed building consent application.
 - (h) Consideration of funding and the extent of work by Cabinet
43. The programme is anticipated to be:

September – December 2004	Detailed design work, working drawings and tendering
November 2004	Consideration by Cabinet
November / December 2004	Traffic Regulation Orders advertised
December 2004	Single Programme funding approval
January / February 2005	Cabinet to consider any objections to Traffic Regulation Orders and funding availability
January 2005	Planning Consents, Conservation Area Consent and Listed Building Consent Applications consideration
February 2005	Commence Phase One enabling works
April 2005	Commence Phase Two enabling works and main scheme

November 2005	Break for Christmas
January 2006	Resume Phase Two main scheme
April 2006	Commence Phase Three public realm works
October 2006	Complete Darlington Pedestrian Heart scheme (Building grant scheme to proceed through financial year 2007/8)

44. Achieving this timetable depends on: (a) the outcome of the funding application to ONE/TVP and other funding considerations ; (b) whether there are objections to the TROs which require a public inquiry to be held and (c) the outcome of conservation, listed building and planning applications.
45. The Director of Development and Environment has delegated powers (with the agreement of the Cabinet Member with the Highways and Transport Portfolio) to consult on and publicise Traffic Regulation Orders, and to make the Orders unless any objections are received.
46. In order to control costs better, and to get an earlier definition of costs on a project of this nature, both the Council's consultants and One NorthEast have recommended that potential contractors should be consulted early in the design process. This has been effected by advertising under European Union rules for expressions of interest and selecting a shortlist of contractors prior to tendering. Shortlisted contractors will be given equal opportunities to comment on draft designs and methods, before being asked formally to tender in the normal way. This can be achieved without committing any contract for the works. Tendering Panel has considered a selection of contractors, in accordance with Standing Orders.

Legal Implications

47. 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.
48. 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

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

Decision Deadline

50. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter. However, the matters covered in this report have already been considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Conclusions

51. 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. It is therefore concluded that this scheme should be taken forward as the 'next steps' and programme indicate.

Recommendation

52. It is recommended that Members:

- (a) agree that the design of the Darlington Town Centre Pedestrian Heart scheme as set out in this report and accompanying plans proceeds to Conservation Area Consent, Listed Building Consent and Planning Applications;
- (b) agree the responses to issues raised by consultees as set out in this report;
- (c) note that transport issues will be considered by Cabinet at a later date, in the light of any objections to Traffic Regulation Orders;
- (d) authorise the Director of Development and Environment to agree any minor amendments to the design and materials which may result from further detailed design work, from consideration of applications or from discussions with potential contractors, in consultation with the Leader, and Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Planning and Highways and Transport.

Reasons

53. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) to enhance the economy, environment and ease of use of the town centre;
- (b) to allow full use to be made of external funding as soon as it becomes available.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

- (i) Reports to Cabinet - 'Darlington Town Centre Access Study' - November 2002 and April 2003 Report to Cabinet – 'Darlington Town Centre Pedestrian Heart' - March 2004
- (ii) Report to the Joint Town Centre Forum and Darlington Transport Forum - March 2004
- (iii) Report to the Joint Town Centre Forum and Darlington Transport Forum - July 2004
- (iv) Report to the Transport Forum - September 2004
- (v) Designs and cost estimates from Gillespies and other consultants
- (vi) Questionnaires, letters and emails from consultees and the public.

Appendices

- One – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Alternative Bus Access and Public Realm plan
- Two – Darlington Pedestrian Heart concept design plan
- Three – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Blue Badge Access plan
- Four – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Cycle Access plan
- Five – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Service Access plan
- Six – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Taxi Access plan
- Seven – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Private Vehicle Access plan
- Eight – Darlington Pedestrian Heart Consultation Analysis Report
- Nine – Report to consider cycling within the town centre
- Ten – Report to consider the proposed removal of the ornamental stonework, steps, ballustrading, and railings along High Row

Richard Alty: Extension 2946

Louise Allen: Extension 2042

bb/ec