
A66 TEES VALLEY GATEWAY STUDY

**Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Nick Wallis,
Highways and Transport Portfolio**

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

Purpose of Report

1. To brief Members on the proposals put forward in the A66 Tees Valley Gateway Study for the future development of the A66(T) and recommend a response from this Council.

Information and Analysis

2. Arising from the Tees Valley Vision, regional partners (North East Assembly (NEA), Government Office North East (GONE) and One NorthEast) agreed to commission a study on what could be done to alleviate the potential constraint to economic development imposed by the single carriageway section of the A66(T) linking Tees Valley to the motorway network. Darlington Borough Council and Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit have represented the Tees Valley on the Steering Group for this study. The NEA acts as client.
3. The issue is important for future development of the Airport, links to the Port, generally to development of the Tees Valley, and projects in the western part of the Tees Valley and east Darlington in particular.
4. Commissioning the Study has been beneficial in raising the profile of the problem since the need for a scheme to address this issue is now recognised in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy.
5. A draft final report from the Study has now been prepared and the **Executive Summary is attached**. The full report is available at www.tvgateway.org.uk. The train of argument in the report is essentially:
 - (a) Full dualling ('Package 2') would resolve the constraint on development which the capacity of the A66(T) poses, and has a reasonable cost-benefit ratio.
 - (b) However, at a cost of about £118 million, GONE/DfT and Highways Agency advise that funding and implementation of Package 2 is likely to take a long time to achieve because other competing schemes will be tackling more severe congestion problems.
 - (c) The 'Preferred Scheme' in the report ('Package 1B') involves dualling from the existing dual carriageway section east of Darlington to the A66(T)/A67 junction (with Yarm Road). The remaining section to the A66(T) would still be single carriageway,

but with the possibility of some junction improvements. At a cost of about £52 million, this is the lowest cost scheme which should prevent the Highways Agency directing refusal of planning permission for new development envisaged in the future. This scheme and all the others considered in the final sift, include the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor as this scheme was considered to be part of the base case for the local highway network.

(d) The Preferred Scheme could be a step towards full dualling at a later date, should that be justified. Monitoring of the functioning of the remaining single carriageway section is advised.

6. Consultation is now taking place and the North East Assembly is seeking comments by 4 February 2005.
7. The Highways Agency have confirmed that, if the Preferred Scheme was implemented, then the A66(T) could accommodate the key developments schemes in Darlington set out in the Study.
8. Following publication of the final report, it will be presented to Government with the aim of the preferred Scheme achieving a place in funding programmes.

Comments

9. Package 2, the full dualling of the single carriageway sections of the A66(T), is recommended as the best highway option, given the need in the long term to protect the Council's aspirations for the economic regeneration of Darlington and the wider Tees Valley vision for the economy. However, the arguments put forward in the Study report about funding possibilities and the Highways Agency's current views on the acceptability of Package 1b are noted. Therefore, it is suggested that members respond to the NEA calling for the full dualling of the A66(T) in a phased manner, justified on the usage and safety of the local highway network.

Legal Implications

10. 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

11. 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

12. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's Policy Framework.

Decision Deadline

13. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does represent an urgent matter, because of the consultation timetable set by the North East Assembly.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that Members:-
 - (a) inform the North East Assembly that Package 2 (full dualling) would be the preferred scheme from the Council's viewpoint in the long term, with Package 1B being considered as an initial phase, on the understanding that the Highways Agency will not, in the interim, object to the key developments as set out in the Study;
 - (b) stress that the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor scheme is a necessary precursor to any highways based solution to the A66(T) corridor.

Reasons

15. The recommendations are because:
 - (a) Package 2 is seen as the best solution in terms of traffic management, safety, public perception and alternative modes for the long term economic growth of both Darlington and the wider Tees Valley the preferred scheme. However, package 1B is acceptable as an initial phase of the larger scheme as a shorter term highway solution to the transport needs of the area;
 - (b) the Gateway Study assumes that the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor is constructed and in use as a base case.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

Tees Valley Gateway Study - Final Report

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