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**BANK TOP MASTERPLAN**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member -  
Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy and Regeneration Portfolio  
Councillor David Lyonette, Transport Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is intended to inform Members of the proposed feasibility and masterplan for Darlington Bank Top Station to be developed in 2015.
2. In addition approval is sought regarding the approach and methodology to procure consultancy support to deliver this document, securing the future of this key economic asset.
3. To gain approval for the expenditure required to undertake the required consultancy work.

**Summary**

4. Darlington Borough Council in partnership with Tees Valley Unlimited LEP (TVU) have secured Local Growth Fund support for a Vision and Action Plan for Bank Top Station and its surroundings.
5. Darlington Bank Top Station is recognised as a key regional asset and catalyst for economic growth in the Town and wider area.
6. To facilitate the sustained growth of the local economy, and to ensure that Darlington Bank Top Station performs at its best, a masterplan is required to form the basis for investment to capture the opportunities presented by changes in the rail infrastructure.
7. The Council and TVU have been working in partnership with Network Rail and the Train Operating Company to develop a brief for consultancy support and to ensure buy-in to any proposals.
8. Darlington Station is an important catalyst for continued local and regional economic growth. The proposed improvements will future proof the station for the introduction of higher speed trains (HS2) on the ECML.

9. A brief has been developed to procure consultancy support to produce a masterplan in the form of a Vision and Action Plan that will be completed by December 2015.

### **Recommendations**

10. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Members endorse the approach taken by the Council and partners to secure investment in Bank Top Station
- (b) The sum of £300,000 is released to develop the masterplan, subject to final confirmation of funding from the Local Growth Fund, via Tees Valley Unlimited.

### **Reasons**

11. The recommendations are supported in order to support the continued growth of the Darlington economy recognising the key strategic nature of Bank Top Station in the sub region for transport and communications.-

**Ian Williams**  
**Director of Economic Growth**

### **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Timothy Crawshaw : Extension 6327

S17 Crime and Disorder	The masterplan will seek to improve the footfall, access and security of station users, tackling a number of issues. The improved economic wellbeing of the area around Bank Top Station, as a key outcome of the masterplan, allied to an improved public realm and natural surveillance will have apposite impact on personal security and reduce anti-social behaviour.
Health and Well Being	The masterplan will seek to improve access and connectivity to Bank Top Station for all modes of transport, with an emphasis on walking and cycling with attendant positive impacts on health and wellbeing. A significant emphasis on boosting the economy and access to jobs will help to get more people into work, contributing to improved health and wellbeing.
Carbon Impact	The masterplan brief has specific requirements for awareness of sustainability in any future plans for Bank Top Station, with specific reference to low and zero carbon technologies.
Diversity	The masterplan will seek to make improvements to Bank Top Station for the benefit of all users. Improvements to the public realm, access and the range of attractions and services in the area will provide benefits for all and diversity will be considered as an integral part of the design process with specific improvements in terms of disabled access.
Wards Affected	Bank Top, All
Groups Affected	None
Budget and Policy Framework	The masterplan is to be externally funded through the Local Growth Fund via TVU with no impact on the Council's budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	<p>The masterplan relates to the condition of 'Growing the Economy' in One Darlington Perfectly Placed and specifically;</p> <p>More businesses and more jobs – the masterplan will form the basis for further investment in Bank Top Station supporting the local and regional economy by improving access to jobs, facilitating economic growth and linking Darlington to major cities.</p> <p>A place designed to thrive – specific reference is made in One Darlington Perfectly Placed to the proposed infrastructure and investment for Bank Top Station.</p>
Efficiency	There is no impact on efficiency

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

12. Darlington Borough Council in partnership with Tees Valley Unlimited LEP (TVU) have secured Local Growth Fund support for a Vision and Action Plan for Bank Top Station and its surroundings.
13. Darlington Bank Top Station is located close to the Town Centre and serves both the East Coast Mainline (ECML) and the Bishop Auckland to Saltburn line. It is a key rail 'gateway' for the Tees Valley and Darlington as well as County Durham and further afield and acts as a transport hub for business and leisure visitors to Tees Valley.
14. Acting as a critical rail "gateway" into and out of Tees Valley, with over 360,000 annual trips to London stations, Darlington station provides regular and fast direct routes to London and Edinburgh and onwards to Aberdeen as well as other destinations across the country. It is the main access point to regional and long distance passenger services, particularly on the East Coast Main Line (ECML), for people living in the Tees Valley and in the surrounding areas of County Durham and North Yorkshire. Darlington is also a key part of the Tees Valley rail network which serves residents, commuters, businesses and visitors. Current rail services bring around 600,000 visitors to the Tees Valley per year, who spend around £72m, supporting 1,400 jobs.
15. Access to the ECML from Darlington Bank Top Station is vital for the Tees Valley economy, worth over £10.7B annually, and provides journey time benefits of around £413M. The ECML is essential for the UK economy as around 49% of GVA is supported by this route.
16. The Tees Valley has a population of over 660,000 rising to 900,000 in surrounding areas and is a major hub for advanced manufacturing, the petrochemical, automotive and aerospace industries.
17. Improvements to Darlington Bank Top Station will facilitate growth in the bulk haulage of energy from waste, biomass and container freight.
18. Darlington Station is an important catalyst for continued local and regional economic growth. Key objectives for the Station are to enable better local rail connectivity, with more frequent and faster trains to the Tees Valley. Also improvements to the passenger experience and better pedestrian access and integration with other travel modes are planned. This will help to future proof the Station for the introduction of higher speed trains (HS2) on the ECML.
19. Allied to this the immediate surroundings of the station are in need of regeneration and the entrances and exits form key gateways to the Town Centre and other strategic regeneration areas such as Central Park, and as such are under-performing. There are a number of development opportunities in the area that form part of the railway estate, in the ownership of the Council or third parties. A revitalised station offer will make a significant contribution to the regeneration of

some of Darlington's poorest wards in line with adopted regeneration priorities. Darlington was the birthplace of passenger railways in 1825 and has always been at the forefront of innovation and it is the ambition of the Council and partners that this is reflected in a bold and exciting vision for the future of Bank Top Station.

### **The Need for a Masterplan**

20. Darlington's economy along with that of the wider Tees Valley sub-region, are growing rapidly and this will impose greater demands on the current facilities and infrastructure. However; currently there are constraints and issues that need to be tackled if the opportunities are to be grasped. Some of the issues include:-
- (a) The location of Darlington Bank Top Station, to the west side of the ECML, means that mainline trains have to use slow speed approach tracks to access the platforms, lengthening journey times in both directions;
  - (b) Local services have to cross the ECML in the current configuration restricting the time-tabling of these services and limiting connections with mainline services thus making them less attractive in comparison to private car use;
  - (c) Freight trains serving Hitachi and Wolsingham Depot have to travel through the Station building, and those from Teesside have to cross the ECML at Darlington South Junction, with those travelling south also needing to complete complicated reversing manoeuvres;
  - (d) Facilities within the station are poor and the points of arrival for both visitors and those departing are poor quality and lead to a poor public realm and areas in need of regeneration;
  - (e) Subways, poor quality footbridges and the approach ramp are all barriers to safe and equitable access to the Station; and
  - (f) The Station is under-performing in terms of onward travel and as a major transport interchange and gateway to the Tees Valley.
21. Under the Business and Usual (BAU) scenario these constraints and issues will continue to limit the growth of the Station as a key strategic access point to the ECML and the sub-region. Furthermore under the BAU scenario the rapid growth of the Tees Valley economy could be constrained by poor quality facilities and a poor passenger experience. In order to sustainably attract frequent services to London, Edinburgh, NE Scotland, Leeds, Manchester and the Midlands, to support the development of local services and to ensure full HS2 connectivity, the configuration of the platforms and station infrastructure need to be addressed.
22. Under the BAU scenario the opportunity for the Station to become a catalyst for the regeneration of the surrounding area will be lost and its role as a key growth hub for the Tees Valley will be undermined, reducing the business case for investment in these areas either as a direct or indirect consequence of the Station improvements.
23. As a key gateway to the Tees Valley, if it is to truly fulfil its potential, the Station needs to project a positive image of the region for visitors and those passing

through, attracting further investment and visibility for the region. It is anticipated that the Vision and Action Plan will be multi-layered identifying opportunities at national, regional and local level as well as the impact on the immediate environs and the user experience.

### **Developing the Brief for Consultants**

24. Recognising the complex multi-disciplinary nature of the masterplan the Council and TVU have developed a brief for consultancy support with the assistance of Network Rail and the Train Operating Company.
25. The brief is intended to procure a multi-disciplinary consultant with experience in heavy rail infrastructure to deliver a number of key products to inform and describe the vision for Bank Top Station and capture the economic opportunities presented, allied to the influencing of the emerging rail infrastructure plans.
26. The main products and deliverables of the brief are:-
  - (a) A transport and connections study identifying the key access and connectivity required for the Station;
  - (b) Plans for the required rail infrastructure and the implications for platforms and access;
  - (c) A commercial audit of the land and property within and around Bank Top Station;
  - (d) Building surveys of the Station buildings and those earmarked for development;
  - (e) A heritage statement identifying the key areas of significance of the heritage assets;
  - (f) An options and investment appraisal for the Station and the area around;
  - (g) The economic and business case for investment in Bank Top Station to secure the necessary rail infrastructure and to capture the wider economic opportunities for Darlington and the sub-region;
  - (h) A masterplan and vision for the Station presented in an accessible and engaging way for the public and stakeholders;
  - (i) A funding and procurement strategy to ensure the smooth delivery of investments;
  - (j) An action plan that identifies the key deliverable to achieve the vision and the responsibility of individual partners;

- (k) An analysis of the opportunities for sustainable development and technologies to be included in the masterplan;
27. In addition to the above a final and crucial key deliverable with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between partners and stakeholders to form a common bond ensuring the long term delivery and sustainability of the agreed actions.
28. A project team will be established to manage the commission with members drawn from the Council, TVU and the rail industry. This will be managed in line with the Council's own Capital Project Management framework. The overall commission will be under the auspices of the Tees Valley Transport and Infrastructure Group. At key stages in the commission wider stakeholders will be engaged to ensure buy-in and consensus around the emerging ideas.
29. Before adoption the masterplan will be presented to Members for approval and subsequent adoption as appropriate.

### **Timescale**

30. The timetable for delivery is outlined below:-
- (a) Invitation to Tender – March 2015
  - (b) Appointment of Consultant – April 2015
  - (c) Milestone 1 – Initial Reports and Studies - July 2015
  - (d) Milestone 2 – Draft Vision and Action Plan - October 2015
  - (e) Revisions to draft document November / December 2015
  - (f) MOU signed December 2015
  - (g) Final document delivered December 2015

### **Procurement**

31. The consultant will be procured via OJEU compliant frameworks.

### **Financial Implications**

32. The masterplan is to be wholly funded externally through the Local Growth Fund, via Tees Valley Unlimited. There will be an investment in officer time on behalf of the Council to provide project management support and technical expertise but this is anticipated to be minimal.

### **Corporate Landlord Advice**

33. In the immediate area around Bank Top Station there are a number of Council assets that will be included in the study and form a part of the masterplan. Officers from the Estates team will be consulted and included in the proposed plans for the area.

### **Consultation**

34. Stakeholders from Network Rail, the Train Operating Company and Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) have been involved in the development of the brief for consultants and all have indicated their buy-in and agreement with the content. The brief has passed due diligence with the funding body, TVU.