
FEETHAMS PROGRAMME – BUS AND COACH IMPROVEMENTS

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

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the release of funding in relation to the delivery of improved bus and coach infrastructure in Feethams.

Summary

2. The Feethams Planning and Development Brief was adopted in 2008 and establishes the objectives in respect of the Feethams Area.
3. There are a number of projects in the Feethams area that form the Feethams programme. The coordination of all these elements is critical to successful delivery of the overall programme. The development of the DfE offices sees the first physical contribution towards these objectives, which we anticipate will soon be accompanied by the Feethams Leisure Development and the Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP), subject to planning approval.
4. The Bus and Coach Passenger Waiting Facilities Improvement Project at Feethams is a key element of the programme and will help address issues currently experienced by bus operators and bus and coach passengers in the Town Centre.
5. The scheme was included in the Capital Programme approved by Council on 27 February 2014 and Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement (TVBNI) funding has been identified to advance this project. This report seeks Cabinet approval to release the funding in respect of this project to advance detailed design and construction.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Cabinet release £0.477million Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement funding to enable the detailed design and delivery of the Bus and Coach Waiting Facility Improvements Project as detailed in this report.

Reason

7. The recommendation is supported as the scheme will reduce traffic congestion on Tubwell Row and development in the Feethams area is likely to attract more demand for bus facilities. The project will improve passenger waiting facilities for bus and coach passengers

**Ian Williams,
Director of Economic Growth**

Background Papers

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

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The design of each development within the Feethams Area will take into account the need to design out opportunities for crime and anti-social behavior, as per the Council's Design of New Development Supplementary Planning Document.
Health and Well Being	Improvements in accessibility have positive impacts on Health and Wellbeing.
Carbon Impact	The scheme seeks to maximise opportunity to access the development by sustainable and public transport modes.
Diversity	The recommendations do not have any specific diversity implications. Accessibility will be considered through the formulation of the design.
Wards Affected	Central.
Groups Affected	None.
Budget and Policy Framework	These recommendations do not result in the change of any policy framework but the development will aid the delivery of the Local transport Plan and Core Strategy. The recommendations have no impact on the MTFP.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The recommendations in this report will help achieve One Darlington: Perfectly Placed's goals of improving the environment within the Town Centre and the mix of uses within it.
Efficiency	The recommendations in this paper do not result in any efficiencies for the Council.

MAIN REPORT

Feethams Overview

8. The Planning and Development Brief for the Feethams Area was adopted by the Council in 2008. This brief sets out the following objectives for Feethams:
 - (a) Provision of uses which substantially raise the level of attraction in the town centre and drawing more people to the town centre;
 - (b) Provision of uses which draw people across town, providing footfall past the indoor market and market square, helping rebalance the town centre in context of major redevelopment proposals for Commercial Street to the north;
 - (c) Delivery of a development that cherishes and respects the key environmental features such as St Cuthbert's Church, the River Skerne, the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings;
 - (d) Creation of good pedestrian and cycle links;
 - (e) Outstanding design quality which creates an impressive gateway to this part of Darlington; and
 - (f) Attract new businesses to the town with higher wage employment.
9. These objectives continue to be relevant to the development of the Feethams Area and are reflected in the strategic policies for the town centre as set out in the Core Strategy.
10. The Brief identified that, the objectives will be achieved through a number of infrastructure improvements/enhancements including an improvement in the facilities for bus and coach travellers, improvements to the existing public realm within and around Feethams and upgrading the town hall forecourt to improve linkages and amenity for the town. These infrastructure improvements will complement the significant committed and future development opportunities in the area.
11. There is a need to co-ordinate the development of Feethams as a Programme to ensure that all objectives are addressed and that projects are developed and managed in a way which ensures that the overall vision is achieved. This will allow a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of individual projects and ensure that resource and funding conflicts and dependencies are considered in relation to the whole area. The elements are:-
 - (a) DfE Offices
 - (b) Riverside Park
 - (c) Leisure Development and Cinema
 - (d) Multi-Storey Car Park
 - (e) Inner Ring Road And Stonebridge
 - (f) Feethams Bus and Coach waiting improvements
 - (g) Traffic and Pedestrian Management Review
 - (h) Development opportunities

(i) Parking Contingency plans

12. A plan of the Feethams Area is included in **Appendix 1**. An update on the other programme elements will be brought to a future meeting of Cabinet.

Bus and Coach Passenger Waiting Facilities Improvements

13. The need to improve bus and coach infrastructure within the Feethams area, were strong themes which emerged through the preparation of the Feethams Brief and the Town Centre Regeneration Plan, and are as such reflected within the objectives for the Feethams Area.

14. More recently, the operation of bus services through the town centre has been reviewed following concerns about bus congestion at some stops and pedestrian congestion particularly on Prebend Row, which has enabled the Council to secure funding to help resolve these issues, as described below, as well as helping to achieve the objectives for the Feethams Area.

15. Market research undertaken by NWA Consultants in February 2013 amongst bus and coach passengers and those that do not use buses or coaches concluded that:

- (a) 73.1% of bus users rated the bus stop they usually use as 'good'
- (b) Positive aspects of bus stops included 'good shelter', 'real time information' and 'adequate seating'.
- (c) The improvements that people wanted to see were 'bigger shelters', 'more space', 'more seating' and 'better lighting'.

16. Further analysis of the data identified that the more negative scores and associated comments were mainly regarding the stops on Prebend Row (Stands F and G) and Stand M (outside Joseph Pease public house on Tubwell Row). In particular there were concerns regarding insufficient room on the footway so that passengers waiting for buses and pedestrians walking along the pavement were in each other's way. In addition, their concerns were raised about too many buses, particularly on Tubwell Row and Prebend Row.

17. Following discussions with Arriva, the main commercial bus operator, we proposed the following phased approach:

- (a) Reallocation of bus services to different bus stops within the town centre to address the overcrowding on the footpath and congestion on the road;
- (b) Widening the footpath along Prebend Row to increase the waiting area for passengers; and
- (c) Relocate Stand M to Feethams outside the Town Hall where there is an opportunity to create a much better waiting environment for passengers and improving the movement of buses (and other traffic) along Tubwell Row to reduce congestion.

18. The first phase took place on 27 October 2013 when bus services were reallocated with frequent services operating on Prebend Row and less frequent

'out of town' services operating from stops on Tubwell Row. This has resolved the pedestrian congestion and phase II of widening the footway along Prebend Row, is no longer required. Monitoring of the bus services is ongoing by the Council and Arriva's town centre supervisors.

19. Initial highway designs have been completed to provide one bus stop (Stand M) with two raised kerbs to cater for two buses at a time and a layover stop. In order to provide good quality passenger waiting facilities and ensure that pedestrians can still use this footway with ease the design has incorporated widening the footway, providing bus shelters and creating a stepped access to the town hall forecourt. At the north end level access to the forecourt will be retained (as now) to ensure that there is good level access to the town hall reception and Customer Service Centre. The design does not require the relocation of Resurgence, though this may be considered as a separate option.
20. Market research for the coach stop on Feethams indicated that the location was good and less than 7% thought it was difficult to get to. However almost 50% thought the facilities were 'poor'. The main improvements that were requested were 'more enclosed shelter', 'toilets', 'more seating' and 'heated indoor waiting area'. However 71.5% stated that they would be willing to use existing facilities at the Dolphin Centre or another building.
21. It is proposed to improve the current waiting area with see through panels between a number of the columns, more seating, improved lighting and better signs to existing facilities for toilets and refreshments.
22. The concept design is presented in **Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c**.
23. The scheme is funded by the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvement Project (TVBNI) and Local Transport Plan funding (LTP). Cabinet has already released the initial TVBNI funding, but additional funding has been allocated to these town centre improvements and the Inner Ring Road scheme by TVBNI Board and Cabinet is asked to release this additional TVBNI funding on £0.477m in order to fund this scheme. The LTP funding was released by Cabinet for these town centre improvements in February 2013 (Special Cabinet 19 February 2013 – Third Local transport Plan – Delivery Plan 2013/15).

Financial Implications

24. This paper seeks the release of £0.477m of TVBNI funding to enable the design and construction of the Bus and Coach Waiting Facility Improvement project to advance.

Procurement Advice

25. The majority of the work will be undertaken as part of the normal highway construction programme delivered by the Council. However, the modification to the Town Hall forecourt retaining wall to create steps requires specialist design and construction. The work needs to be delivered by April 2015 due to funding constraints and because of this there will be insufficient time for us to run our own

procurement. There are two options are now being considered to procure this work within the timeframe:-

- (a) A direct award to a Member of the North East Highway Alliance under a Service Level Agreement. The North East Highway Alliance consists of all 12 North East Local authorities who have formed an alliance to have an improved focus on efficiencies by working together, joint procurement; sharing best practice and cross boundary working. If this option is pursued a report will be taken to Council waiving contract procedure rules as per rule 18.
- (b) Utilising a framework, such as the North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO) contractor's framework, or the Stockton Borough Council Construction Framework. Both of these are OJEU compliant frameworks

Equalities Considerations

- 26. The Feethams Planning and Development Brief was developed in partnership with the public through a process of engagement and consultation. As part of this there were specific workshops held with various protected characteristic groups and the results of these were fed in to the design process and the finalised Brief. As the design of any of the detailed components develop this will be tested with various groups and stakeholders, prior to securing any required consents and construction.
- 27. Each individual project will consider equality issues as the project advances.
- 28. In respect of the Bus and Coach Passenger Waiting Facility Improvements project, the most significant issues which are likely to arise are providing access to bus and coach services for all users, as well as access to the Town Hall forecourt and to ensure that there is space for pedestrians to use the footway.
- 29. There will need to be consideration particularly for those with visual impairments and those with limited mobility, including wheelchair users. These will be considered during the design phase of the project in order to ensure that all groups are considered and the designs discussed with key stakeholders and consultees, including Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) at an early stage.

Consultation

- 30. Consultation was undertaken during the preparation of the Feethams Planning and Development Brief, the responses of which were considered prior to the finalisation and subsequent adoption of the Planning and Development Brief in 2008.
- 31. Arriva, as main bus operator in Darlington, was consulted with and has agreed the proposals in respect of the Bus and Coach Passenger Waiting Facilities Improvements Project. Wider community and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken as the design advances.

Conclusion

32. The interest in development of the Feethams area is growing with the DfE office development, the anticipated leisure development and forthcoming Multi Storey Car Park, subject to planning approval. There are however several infrastructure improvements identified as required in order to realise the vision as set out in the Feethams Planning and Development Brief. The release of the TVBNI funding will enable the design and construction of the Bus and Coach Passenger Waiting Facilities Improvements Project which will contribute towards this aim.