

**CABINET
5 JULY 2022**

IMPROVEMENTS TO CONISCLIFFE ROAD

Responsible Cabinet Members – Councillor Alan Marshall, Economy Portfolio

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To gain Cabinet approval for the allocation of £700,000 from the Tees Valley Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF) for improvements to Coniscliffe Road which will act as a catalyst for economic growth and town centre recovery, creating a vibrant social space, to encourage and retain footfall in the town centre.

Summary

2. The report sets out the proposed strategic interventions which would contribute to the development of a café culture, moving away from the declining, traditional retail space, and enhance the feeling of safety, wellbeing, and ownership of the space. In addition, the improvements will encourage more people to visit and spend their leisure time and money in the area's cafes/ shops, in turn benefitting the local economy by supporting businesses, jobs, tax revenues, etc.
3. In 2019 the Council was allocated £10m from the Tees Valley Indigenous Growth Fund with a further £2m being allocated in 2022. It is proposed to utilise this funding to invest in the upgrading of Coniscliffe Road to create a focal point for outdoor dining and hospitality together with a social space for local people and visitors to the town.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that Cabinet:-
 - (a) Support the upgrading and improvement works to Coniscliffe Road set out in this report, to meet a range of aspirations: accommodating pavement café culture, strengthening green infrastructure, promoting active travel – cycling and walking, supporting local businesses and creating a safe, attractive, and working streetscape for the future.
 - (b) Allocate £700,000 from the Tees Valley Indigenous Growth Fund for upgrading and improvement works in Coniscliffe Road and note that a further £240,000 will be match funded through Darlington's Town Board Fund.

- (c) Designate the works required as a non-strategic procurement.

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) To contribute to the further economic wellbeing and vitality of the Town.
- (b) To comply with the Council’s Procurement Rules.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

- (i) Groundwork - Skinnergate, The Yards and Coniscliffe Road

Mark Ladyman: Extension 6306

S17 Crime and Disorder	This paper supports and complements the actions detailed in the Darlington Town Centre Footfall Strategy to reduce ASB in the Town Centre.
Health and Well Being	No direct impacts
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No direct impacts
Diversity	No direct impacts
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework. Any works highlighted in the report will be met through Tees Valley Indigenous Growth Fund.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Council Plan	The report supports the Council Priority of Growing Darlington’s Economy
Efficiency	The report aims to utilise the Councils and partner resources in a collective more efficient manner.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Does this report impact have no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers - No

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Growing Darlington's Hospitality and Retail Economy

6. This Council together with many local authorities across the country have been working with local business to explore measures that can be put in place to help hospitality businesses get up and running again following the Covid 19 pandemic and the restrictions that were imposed. These actions have included relaxing existing licensing requirements and the promotion of measures how town centres can be used differently to enable businesses to operate in outside settings.
7. In 2020 and in response to social distancing requirements the Council actively promoted the development of outdoor hospitality settings in the town centre with the provision of safe seating areas and temporary road closures to allow businesses to operate safely and effectively. The main areas which benefited from this initiative were Skinnergate and Coniscliffe Road east of West Street. These temporary arrangements have proved very popular with businesses and customers however the temporary measures are time limited and if the Council wishes to continue with the promotion of outdoor hospitality settings a permanent solution is required.
8. To assist in the development of a permanent solution the Council employed the services of Groundwork to develop concept designs and deliver community planning events and consultation with local stakeholders for the Skinnergate, The Yards and Coniscliffe Road areas of Darlington. The proposals for Skinnergate and the Yards will form part of the Town Fund intervention programme however Coniscliffe Road is outside of the original project scope and would require additional funding to deliver the proposed scheme. Project costings have been carried out and it is estimated that the overall project will require funding of £940,000. It is therefore recommended that £700,000 from the TVCA Indigenous Fund is used resource the scheme and associated improvements. A further £240,000 will be matched funded through Darlington's Town Board Fund.

Groundwork - Skinnergate, The Yards and Coniscliffe Road

9. Groundwork was appointed in 2021 to develop initial concept designs and carry out a consultation process focusing on the whole length of Skinnergate, Post House Wynd, Buckton's Yard, Clarks Yard, Mechanics Yard, and Coniscliffe Road east of West Street (referred to as 'the area') including reference to the function of adjoining streets and key destinations off the area including Duke Street, Northumberland Street, Grange Road and Houndgate.
10. The first step of the process was to analyse the existing layout and function of the streets and working closely with Council officers to develop concept designs to take to public consultation. The officer steering group included DBC's Highway Design Engineers, Transport Policy Officer, Traffic Manager, Towns Fund programme manager, Assistant Director for Economic Growth, Public Transport Officer and Town Centre Partnership and Events Manager. This group was able to give context for the design, highlight current issues, outline aspirations for the project and provide professional advice to ensure that

the final designs would be deliverable. The initial designs were also shared with elected members and the Town Centre Reference Group.

11. Once concept designs were agreed, the aim of the consultation was to engage with as many people as possible who live, work or visit the area, including local residents and businesses. Key stakeholders were also contacted to provide input, including bus operators, cycle groups and disability groups.
12. Key Design Points: Coniscliffe Road:
 - (a) Pedestrianisation of the east end of Coniscliffe Road: emergency access only
 - (b) Two-way access to Hogarth Court
 - (c) Redirected bus route made permanent
 - (d) Two-way cycling access permitted
 - (e) Pavement café areas
 - (f) Pocket Park
 - (g) Widened footpaths
 - (h) Street trees planted into extended tree pits where possible
 - (i) Raised planting containers
 - (j) Planters providing hostile vehicle mitigation
13. Analysis of the first phase consultation results was used to amend the concept designs. A second phase of consultation followed this.
14. The report (**Appendix A**) provides an overview of the design development, consultation, processes undertaken and the results of the feedback from residents, businesses and the wider community. It provides detail of the concept designs, the rationale behind the designs and subsequent changes to the designs, feedback from the consultation and finally recommendations for the Council, based on this feedback from people who engaged.
15. Following the consultation process several engineering/delivery options were considered that captured the feedback from stakeholders. The proposed option is detailed in **Appendix B** with a budgetary project cost of £940,000.

Financial Implications

16. Overall cost of the scheme is £0.940m, of which, £0.700m to be funded from the TVCA Indigenous Fund and £0.240m will be matched funded through Darlington's Town Board Fund.

Procurement Advice

17. All procurement activity will be carried out in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Consultation

18. A comprehensive consultation and engagement process has been carried out by Groundwork.