

ANNEX 4:

Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor

Introduction

The Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor (DETC) is Darlington's major scheme bid.

This single carriageway road links the A66(T) to Houghton Road to the east of the town centre and enables us to achieve our plans for the economic regeneration of this area of the town (**Figure 1**). It essentially does this through providing the basis for continued development of land zoned for business, beyond the level that would be acceptable to the Highways Agency (the highway authority for the A66(T)) in terms of traffic flows generated and the resulting impacts on trunk road vehicle movements. It also permits a greater degree of accessibility to these development sites (including from residential areas of higher unemployment) by several means of transport including walking and cycling.

The scheme would also:

- improve pedestrian and cycle safety, both on existing roads due to re-routed traffic and on new National Cycle Route 14 (with grade separated crossing of the A66(T)) which is an integral part of the scheme;
- improve travel conditions on McMullen Road, Houghton Road and Yarm Road, through the introduction of measures to help everyone, locking in the benefits of the DETC through physical Corridor of Certainty route action plans and traffic calming such as that proposed at Houghton Green; as well as through travel marketing opportunities.
- improve access to the countryside through improving the existing bridleway into a National Cycle Route giving access

to the South Burdon Community Woodland, creating the potential for a sustainable tourism initiative along the trackbed of the original Stockton to Darlington railway line.

Technical documentation that supports our request for funding approval has been submitted separately to DfT.

Policy

The scheme is an essential part of helping people travel to work, do business in Darlington and access leisure or recreational facilities. It particularly addresses strategy objective C of the Second Local Transport Plan concerned with tackling traffic congestion, including its potential impact on the economy and local environment. (**Table 1**) The scheme also has safety and accessibility benefits both within the scheme area and on adjacent roads. The scheme has a benefit to cost ratio of 3.991, with a net present value of £246,262.

We propose to "lock in" the benefits of the scheme by complementary measures on the roads, which the scheme is designed to relieve and by smarter choices initiatives targeted at relevant areas, in particular Houghton Village and Yarm Road. An example of this, is our partnership with bus operator Arriva, in improving service 21 using sustainable travel demonstration town funds. We will also continue to work with local businesses in developing workplace travel plans to manage the demand for car travel in this developing industrial area of the town.

Table 1 How DETC links to policy

Transport Strategy	Shared Priority	Community Strategy	Intervention
C To tackle traffic congestion on key corridors and its potential impact on the economy and environment by making the most effective use of the transport network	Tackle congestion	Improving the local economy & enhancing the environment	DETC whole scheme
	Improve accessibility		
	Improve road safety	Develop an effective transport system	DETC highway elements
	Improve quality of life		National Cycle Network Route 14
			Houghton Green traffic calming
			Houghton Road & Yarm Road improvements

Status

The scheme is now ready to proceed once funding is secured; with all relevant legal, property and key design issues resolved. An OJEC notice for this scheme has been published and, if funding is secured by the summer, a start on site could be made in November 2006. Should this scheme not be approved in 2006, we are intending to submit it again, as soon as is possible through this Plan.

Cost

The original submission for financial support from the Department of Transport (DfT) in 2000, was made on the basis of comparative projects elsewhere in the region. These costs were then amended in the light of the requirements of the Highways Agency, which agreed mitigation works increasing the cost of the scheme by 33% (i.e. the Highways Agency requirements represent 25% of the cost of the scheme). These works included:-

- the addition of a segregated left turn lane to both the new DETC roundabout and the existing A66(T) Great Burdon Roundabout.
- substantial widening works and carriageway hatch markings on the intervening link to enable safe traffic merging on the trunk road.
- a grade separated crossing for non motorised users, to allow access over the A66(T) at the DETC roundabout

Our submission (i.e. the Transport User Benefits Appraisal (TUBA) and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) assessment) is based on DfT providing funding of £12.040m, with the Council funding the remainder of the £12.5m cost, i.e. £460,000.

The Council is one of the smallest unitary authorities in the country (with a population under 100,000) and has a low resource base. For example, the planning guideline for the Council's integrated transport block averages at £1.49m per annum over the next five years. To contribute substantially to the cost of the Eastern Transport Corridor scheme would be beyond the Council's resources.

As explained previously, about 25% of the cost of the scheme can be attributed to the requirements of the Highways Agency which could not have been anticipated, which would be £3.1m of £12.5m. The elements added by the Highways Agency to a large extent deal with issues on the trunk road which already exist or reflect increasing traffic along the trunk road, and so solve problems which are more within the remit of the Agency than of the Local Highway Authority. The Council would not expect to contribute significantly to increase in cost for that purpose.

The remainder of the cost increase would be from £5.5m to 75% of 12.5m, i.e. £9.4m, an increase of £3.9m. Whilst the assessment is based on the Council contributing £460,000, the Council is able to commit up to £914,000, if required to enhance the acceptability of the scheme to DfT, which would represent almost a quarter of £3.9m.

In practice, in order to progress this scheme, the Council has already spent £819,562, at its own risk, on the design and land acquisition works necessary to submit the scheme for final approval. This investment is significant, given that the Council is a small organisation.

Given the uncertainty over the timing of any funding announcement by DfT, we propose that the funding profile is £6m in 2006/07, £5.5m in 2007/08 and the balance in 2008/09.

Tees Valley Gateway

We see the implementation of the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor as a precursor to the realisation of the proposals contained in the A66(T) Tees Valley Gateway Study. This two part study was commissioned by the North East Assembly and partners (including the Council and the Highways Agency), to investigate how best to achieve the following for the local area – 'a "gateway" to the Tees Valley sub-region through the identification of potential options across all modes to:

- provide better access to the Tees Valley;
- reduce traffic congestion and improve safety on the A66(T) Darlington Bypass; and
- enable economic regeneration consistent with the Tees Valley Vision'.

Phase 2 of this Study reported in 2005 and recommendations have been made to Government about the way forward. In terms of major schemes, it is proposed that an improvement be made to the A66(T) through part dualling the section between Great Burdon and Yarm Road, with on line improvements elsewhere. In the longer term, the option of fully dualling the A66(T) around Darlington remains. As a Highway Agency promoted major scheme, this proposal falls outside of the Council's direct remit, but we will continue to work in partnership with the Agency to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from this intervention particularly for local people.

No timescale has been set for delivery of this proposal at the moment, but it is included in the Interim Regional Transport Board's proposals for after 2011.

Figure 1 Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor



