

Highways Committee

7 December 2012

Transit 15 – Sacriston Bus Turning Circle Replacement Bus Stop



Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider objections received in relation to the proposed introduction of a new bus stop on Durham Road in Sacriston following the bus operator no longer serving the nearby existing stop.
- 1.2 Having considered the objections, the Committee are recommended to endorse the proposal.

2. Background

- 2.1 The existing bus stop at Fynway in Sacriston is located within a bus turning circle and used to be served by all bus services heading along Durham Road in the direction of Durham.
- 2.2 In January 2012, Go North East carried out a consultation on proposed service changes to commence 25 March 2012. This limited consultation (online and via on-bus leaflets) resulted in the company stating they would no longer serve the Fynway bus stop with their 43/44 Diamond service and travel directly to Durham along Durham Road in Sacriston.
- 2.3 Consequently, 4 buses per hour would no longer stop in this area of Sacriston affecting people travelling to Durham and returning from Stanley/Metrocentre/Newcastle and the centre of Sacriston.
- 2.4 Durham Road, passing through Sacriston, is on steep incline and the removal of a bus stop in this area means there is a significant distance to walk for a number of people to the next nearest stops (see Appendix 3).
- 2.5 Following a consultation exercise and subsequent responses, detailed below, the County Council has asked Go North East to reconsider their decision to withdraw the service from the turning circle. However, the company wish to stand by their original decision. They have stated four particular reasons for withdrawing from the turning circle.
 1. The delays caused by vehicles parked in and around the turning circle.

2. The delays caused by buses waiting to exit the junction from the bus stop on to Durham Road.
 3. Diverting from a main route to serve a bus stop like this is not the most natural of bus operations and
 4. They consider the turning circle to be an uninviting environment to wait for a bus.
- 2.6 While the County Council is seeking to address the parking problems in and around the turning circle, Go North East have stated that, irrespective of this action, they do not wish to divert their Diamond service back to serve that bus stop.
- 2.7 Go North East subsequently withdrew the Diamond service 43/44 from the turning circle on 25th March 2012.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 To introduce a new bus stop on Durham Road as a replacement to the one in the turning circle.
- 3.2 This will involve the widening of the carriageway to allow a bus to be stationary in the bus stop without affecting the flow of traffic on Durham Road.
- 3.3 The existing footways will not be altered other than to provide 4 metres of raised kerbs at the bus stop and to introduce a build out and dropped crossing point to the rear of the bus stop. It is proposed that a bus stop pole, with bus stop and clearway sign attached, together with a bus box and clearway marking are provided at the new bus stop.
- 3.4 A plan of the scheme is shown in Appendix 2.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 A total of 32 properties in the vicinity of the proposed bus stop were consulted in February 2012 along with a number of other organisations – see Appendix 3.
- 4.2 The portfolio holder for Economic Regeneration, Neil Foster, and local members, Councillors Allen Turner and Anne Wright, have also been consulted and appraised of the matter. The local members are fully supportive of the proposal.
- 4.3 There were 52 responses to the consultation and these helped to develop a revised scheme design.
- 4.4 A petition of 651 people has been received in relation to the proposed new bus stop. However, this asked people if they would like the bus stop to remain in its current location, in the turning circle. Given the stance of Go North East, there is not an option for the Diamond service to observe the bus stop in the turning circle and it is considered that the original question to petitioners is not now appropriate. This message has been conveyed to the person submitting the petition.

- 4.5 A drop-in session was held in May 2012 at Graham Court in Sacriston in an effort to explain further the reasoning behind the proposals and determine the effect the withdrawal of the bus stop had had on people, as well as a view regarding the proposed location. 40 people attended this session and the overriding feeling was that there was a need for a bus stop in this vicinity but that the best place for the bus stop was in its existing location in the turning circle.
- 4.6 It was at this point that Go North East were written to with a request to reconsider their withdrawal of the service from the turning circle.
- 4.7 Following further amendments to the scheme, another letter was sent to all previous respondents in August 2012 to which there were 10 people upholding their objection.
- 4.8 One email of support and a further 6 respondents, including 5 from the drop in session, are in support of the scheme as well as anecdotal evidence from the local members of a need for there to be a bus stop in this vicinity.
- 4.9 The bus operator has not received any representations about the withdrawal of the service from the turning circle.

5. Objections and responses

- 5.1 There were a number of similar points raised by the 10 respondents upholding their objections. Four of the objectors live at the same address, five live in the vicinity of the stop with a further respondent quoting an address approximately 7 miles away from the proposed new bus stop.
- 5.2 There were a significant number of points raised by respondents and these are detailed, together with their responses in *Appendix 4 Reasons for objection*. Included below is a summary of the main focus of objection and their responses:
- 5.3 **Objection 1:**

The existing bus stop is in a safe location with a shelter. Why move the stop? The problem is with the cars from the garage parked around the turning circle, if this problem is addressed with double yellow lines, there will be no need to relocate the bus stop.

Go North East have chosen to withdraw their Diamond Service (service 43/44) from Fynway bus turning circle and, consequently, there is currently no bus stop to serve passengers wishing to use this bus service in this vicinity. The County Council have asked Go North East to reconsider their decision, in light of the many complaints, objections and representations from residents and bus users, but they have chosen to stand by their original decision.

While the County Council is seeking to address the parking problems in and around the turning circle, Go North East have stated that, irrespective of this action, they do not wish to divert their Diamond service back to serve that bus stop.

The principal reason for Go North East withdrawing their Diamond service from the turning circle is to improve its reliability by reducing delays. They have stated four particular reasons for withdrawing from the turning circle:

- 1. The delays caused by vehicles parked in and around the turning circle.*
- 2. The delays caused by buses waiting to exit the junction from the bus stop on to Durham Road.*
- 3. Diverting from a main route to serve a bus stop like this is not the most natural of bus operations.*
- 4. They consider the turning circle to be an uninviting environment to wait for a bus.*

5.4 Objection 2:

The introduction of a bus stop on Durham Road will cause more congestion on an already very busy road causing difficulties for other road users and car drivers who will be distracted by the buses which cause will more accidents. Adding the bus stop will make it incredibly dangerous for everyone using the road. The bus stop will also be located close to the traffic lights potentially blocking them and just before an already problematic bend.

The amount of traffic using the road will not be affected by the proposal. The traffic levels on the road and the number of buses passing is not being altered as part of this proposal and so the road will not be any busier as a consequence.

The movements of buses should be taken into account along with all other traffic using the road and not a distraction as suggested. Such manoeuvres take place at the majority of bus stops on the highway network.

By widening the road, the introduction of a bus stop is possible whereby the bus can stop off the main carriageway (similar to a bus lay-by) and so not cause an obstruction or impede visibility to the general flow of traffic on Durham Road. Therefore, we do not anticipate the proposed new bus stop causing congestion leading to tailbacks to the traffic lights at the crossroads.

Visibility to/from the bend in the road to the south of the proposed scheme will not be reduced, nor will the flow of traffic.

5.5 Objection 3:

This is a busy route for children walking to/from school being the direct walking route of four primary schools and one secondary school with over 800 pupils in total. Introducing this scheme will make it unsafe for children walking this route.

The scheme proposes that the footpath on the western side (opposite side to the proposed bus stop) of Durham Road remains unaltered. The verge between the footpath and the road requires reducing, but there will still be some remaining.

On the eastern side, it is proposed to widen the footpath near the junction to Fynway to provide a pedestrian crossing point. In the area of the bus stop the

footpath is between 1.8 and 2 metres in width which is considered sufficient space for passengers to wait for a bus and other pedestrians to pass. At the same time, the location of the bus stop on the carriageway will allow the main traffic to flow further away from the footpath with only stopping buses being adjacent to the kerb.

The proposed crossing point, at the road's narrowest point, where visibility will also be greatest, will assist people requiring to cross the road at this point. The traffic signals at the crossroads continue to provide a dedicated pedestrian phase allowing crossing from all directions around the crossroads.

Therefore, it is considered the proposals will not make this route unsafe for those using it.

5.6 Objection 4:

Widening the road to three lanes will make it more difficult and dangerous for people to cross the road, in particular children and the elderly.

The road is being widened to accommodate a bus stop and not an extra lane of traffic. A single lane of traffic in each direction will remain, as is at present, together with the bus stopping area.

With regard to pedestrians crossing the road, while pedestrian surveys carried out in this area have shown that very few people cross at this location (and those that do could cross at more suitable points without deviating far from their route), it is accepted that it is likely that passengers walking to and from the proposed bus stop will wish to cross here. For this reason, we are proposing to introduce a crossing point which reduces the width of road pedestrians need to cross.

5.7 Objection 5:

By widening the road on the west side, the grass verge will be lost meaning people will be walking closer to the bungalows (occupied by elderly residents) and the traffic will also be closer increasing noise and vibration to the residents.

Reconfiguration of the existing highway will result in a reduction of the verge to the west side of the road resulting in traffic being approximately 2m closer to the bungalows. There will still be some verge remaining. The footpath on this side of the road will be unchanged and remain in its existing location.

With the small amount of widening and the distance of the bungalows from the carriageway, it is anticipated that any increase in noise or vibration would be negligible.

5.8 Objection 6:

The introduction of the proposed bus stop will mean there will be around 76 buses stopping outside of my house from around 6am to 11pm, This will increase noise and exhaust emissions. There will also be a lack of privacy as buses (especially double deckers) will be able to see

into my rooms which include bedrooms as well as the potential for anti social behaviour especially late at night and when darker.

All buses passing this location will have the opportunity to observe this bus stop. However, it is considered unlikely that all of the quoted 76 buses will need to stop.

It is proposed that the bus stop pole be located as detailed on the attached plan in Appendix 2. Any buses stopping at the bus stop will do so only to pick up and set down passengers and, therefore, vehicle idling time, and hence any loss of privacy, should be kept to a minimum. This arrangement is no different to other locations in County Durham. Whilst it is true that there may be some potential for passengers to see into properties from buses, it is anticipated that this will be limited due to the proposed location of the bus stop. The majority of buses passing are single deckers which would have the same visibility as a number of other vehicles on the road.

It is known that there are occasional situations where antisocial behaviour occurs at or around bus stops. However, these are usually where there is a bus shelter in place. If such unacceptable behaviour occurs, the County Council has a team of antisocial behaviour officers who can help tackle these problems.

5.9 Objection 7:

My property will be devalued by between 15 and 20% due to the location of a bus stop outside. What compensation will I receive?

Claims of devaluation of a property because of the proximity of a bus stop are unsubstantiated. There is no form of compensation that the County Council can offer as a consequence of this.

5.10 Objection 8:

If the proposed bus stop is introduced on Durham Road, where will I be able to park if visiting\delivering\calling in to the business or adjacent residential properties?

With regard to parking in the vicinity of the proposed new bus stop, while parking within the bus box marking will not be permitted, there will still be space to park outside of the marking on the road and the extra road width will mean anyone doing so will not be obstructing traffic. Additionally, the adjacent business has its own car park and resident properties also have their own off-road parking.

5.11 Objection 9:

The proposed bus stop will not have a shelter and be located on a narrow footpath adjacent to a busy road. Will there be room for people to wait whilst allowing others to pass?

The footpath width at the proposed location is between 1.8 and 2.0 metres wide. This is the standard width for a footpath on which there are a number of bus stops throughout the county which operate successfully. Although there

may be times where there are a number of waiting passengers, it is considered that there is sufficient space for people to pass people waiting safely.

Although specific numbers can vary, our survey suggested that, between the hours of 06:30 and 10:00, an average of 3 passengers per bus boarded at the turning circle bus stop with a maximum of 9 on one occasion.

At the new bus stop, it is anticipated that intending passengers will stand adjacent to the bus stop pole.

The current proposal does not include a bus shelter. While the footpath width at this point is considered satisfactory for pedestrians to pass waiting passengers, the introduction of a bus shelter may compromise this access, especially given the lack of space behind the footpath. While it may be a preferred option to provide a shelter at all "boarding stops", often local circumstances prevent this.

5.12 Objection 10:

Will the bus stop not cause a tailback to the traffic signals, especially at peak times.

The road widening will allow the bus stop to be created adjacent to the main traffic flow rather than on the road itself (similar to a lay-by) and therefore not cause an obstruction to the flow of traffic.

6. Current Situation

- 6.1 Following Go North East's withdrawal of services 43/44 from the turning circle in March, they have stated that there have been noticeable improvements in the reliability of the service. Together with other changes on the route, there has also been a reduction in the number of services 'bunching' and a decrease in the lost mileage (parts of the service that are not run at all) on the route.

7. Recommendations and reasons

- 7.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that

The Committee set aside the objections and endorse the proposal to proceed with construction of the bus stop.

Contact: Andy Leadbeater Tel: 03000 268512

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

The scheme to be funded from the Transit 15 budget.

Staffing

None

Risk

Decision is such that a full risk assessment is not required. Any risk is detailed within the report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The proposal will allow people to continue to access bus services in this area of Sacriston.

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

While bus stops can attract anti social behaviour, the is usually associated with certain types of shelter. This proposal does not include a bus shelter.

Human Rights

None

Consultation

As detailed in the report

Procurement

None

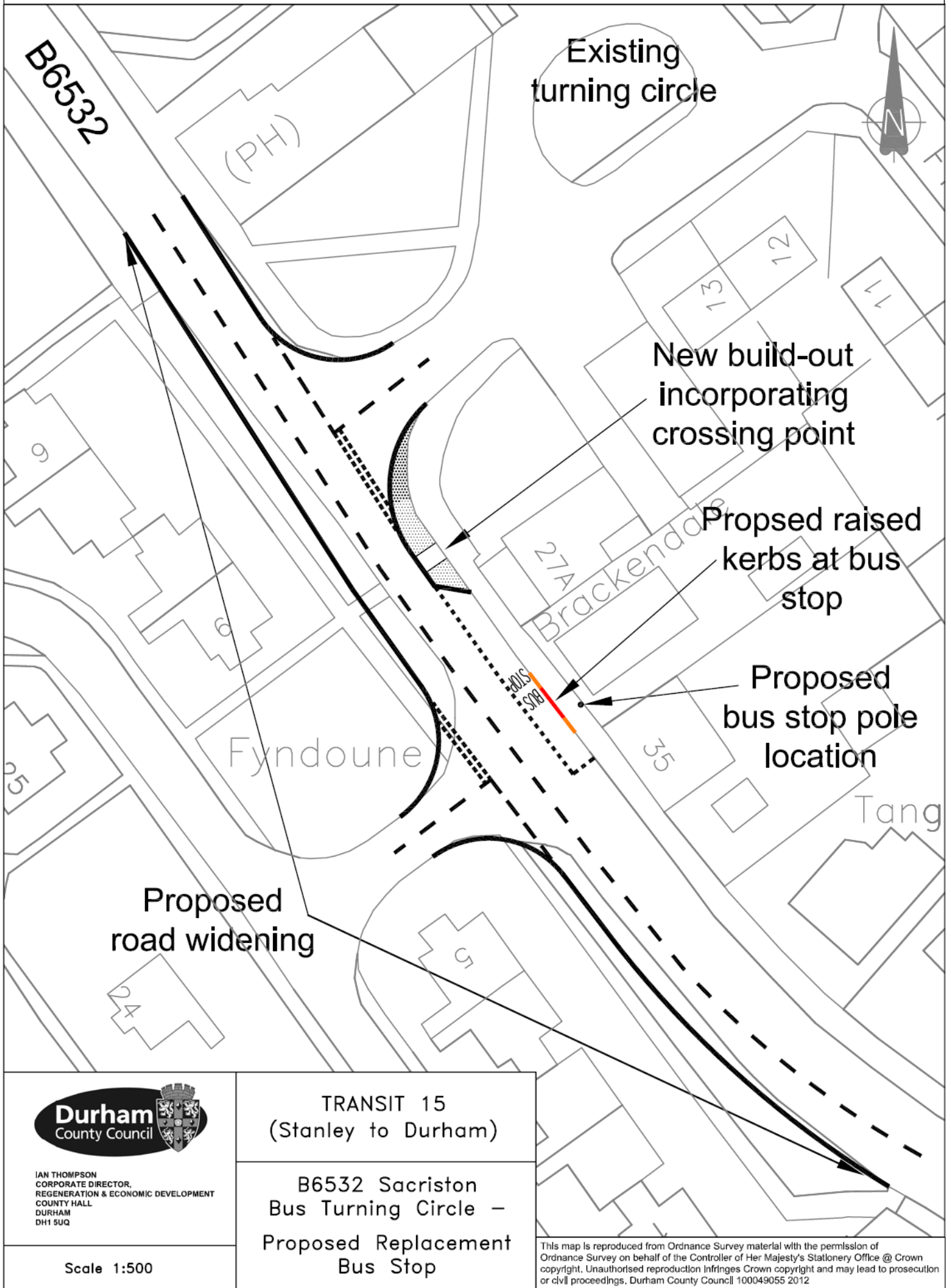
Disability Issues

See Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty above.

Legal Implications

None

Appendix 2 - Consultation Plan



IAN THOMPSON
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REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNTY HALL
DURHAM
DH1 5UQ

TRANSIT 15
(Stanley to Durham)

B6532 Sacriston
Bus Turning Circle –
Proposed Replacement
Bus Stop

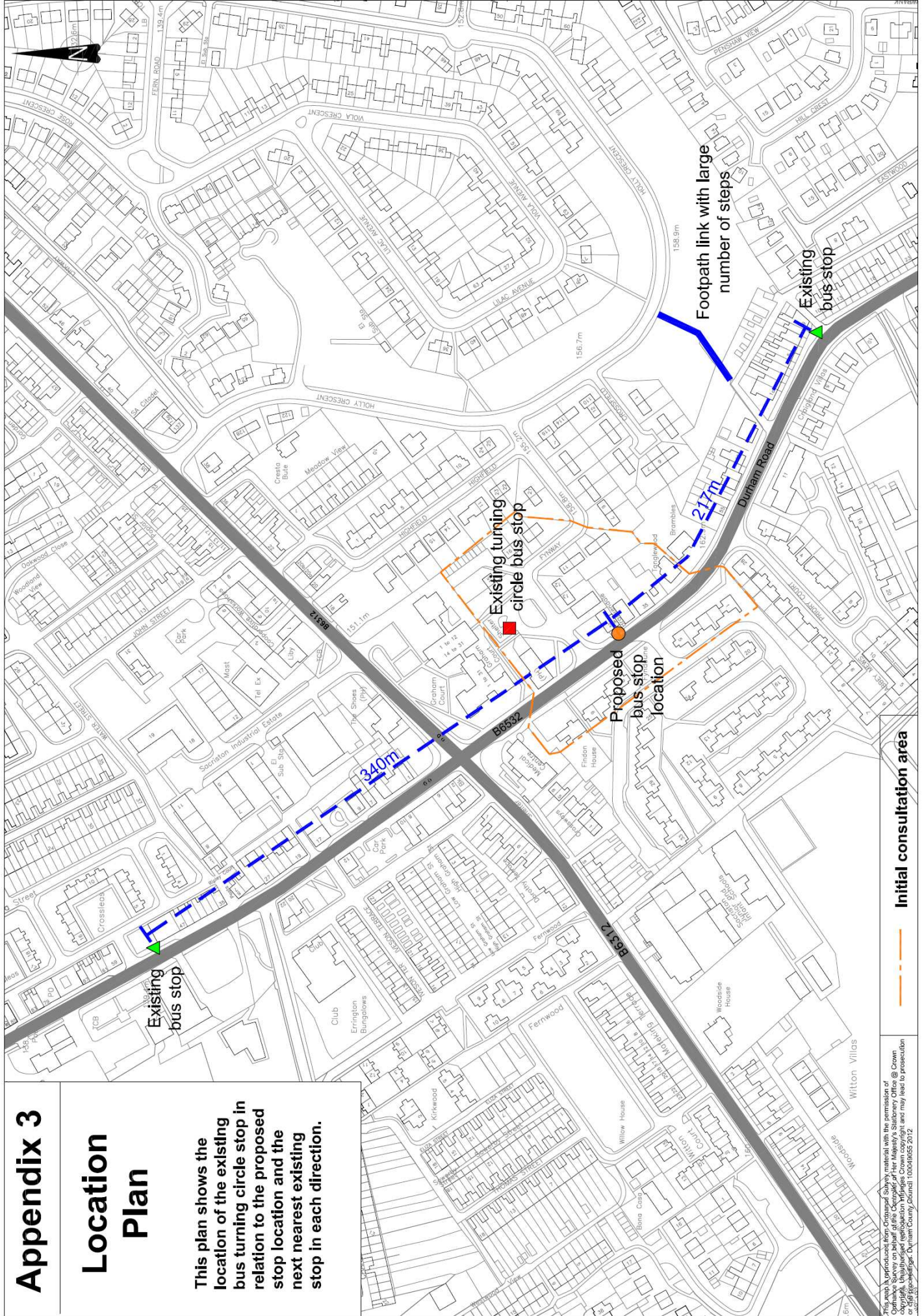
Scale 1:500

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Appendix 3

Location Plan

This plan shows the location of the existing bus turning circle stop in relation to the proposed stop location and the next nearest existing stop in each direction.



Initial consultation area

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Appendix 4: Reasons for objection

The following are the detailed points raised by, principally, one objector to the proposed scheme but seeks to include responses to all of the points raised within the consultation.

- 1. The proposed bus stop location is close to the junction with Fynway and opposite the junction into Fyndoune, this will cause additional hazards and reduce visibility. Paragraph 243 of the Highway Code: “Do not stop or park opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space. There isn’t currently a parking space opposite this junction, therefore the Highway Code clearly states that stopping is not allowed.**

The proposal will provide a dedicated stopping area for buses. It has taken into account the various junction locations, vehicular accesses and pedestrian desire lines as well as the visibility of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike and is considered safe on road safety grounds. Surveys have been undertaken at the busier times of the day to determine pedestrian movements, the use of the existing bus stop around these times and vehicle movements at the Fynway junction.

- 2. The proposed bus stop will be 220cm from my living room window. When working nightshift, there will be buses stopping outside my bedroom window every 15 minutes during the day.**

All buses passing this location will have the opportunity to observe this bus stop. However, it is considered unlikely that all of the quoted 76 buses will stop as not all will have people to board or alight.

It is proposed that the bus stop pole be located as detailed on the attached plan in Appendix 2. Any buses stopping at the bus stop will do so only to pick up and set down passengers and, therefore, vehicle idling time, and hence any loss of privacy, should be kept to a minimum, as is the case at many other bus stops in County Durham.

- 3. Buses will be stationary for long periods of time at the bus stop, especially during driver change overs.**

Buses changing drivers only took place on the Service 13. We are informed by the bus company that while some driver changeovers continue to occur in the turning circle, most are now arranged at an alternative location along the route. There would be no driver changes taking place at the proposed new bus stop and, hence, it is unlikely that buses will be stationary for any period other than to pick up and set down passengers.

- 4. You have stated that ‘a number of options’ have been assessed and were considered unsafe or unsuitable from a highway perspective, what options were considered? Which location could be more dangerous than the area you have chosen on Durham Road?**

One of the solutions considered to resolving the current issue was to introduce a new bus stop outside the Robin Hood public house. However, this was

considered unsafe due to the road width, the vertical alignment road and its proximity to the traffic signals.

Incorporating a bus lay-by into the junction area itself was also suggested. However, the geometry of the layout combination did not allow this to fit in the space available and created a direct conflict between the access to the east side of the road and stopping buses.

Other locations along Durham Road showed insufficient width, lack of forward visibility, lack of visibility for other users or no suitable crossing point.

The option that is proposed allows the provision of a crossing point for pedestrians with a road width no greater than existing, a place for the bus to stop whilst not interfering with flowing traffic (i.e. not having to overtake on the opposite side of road), good visibility for traffic using Durham Road and for vehicles exiting the junctions.

- 5. There is a school bus which currently collects pupils from Durham Road. How will this take place if this area becomes a bus stop?**

It would be expected that this bus would use the proposed bus stop as service buses would.

- 6. Is a bus stop needed at all in this area as there are other bus stops nearby?**

Without a bus stop in this area, there is a significant distance between the next two nearest stops (see Appendix 2). The road through Sacriston is on a steep gradient and these two factors combined would make bus services difficult to access for a number of people in this part of Sacriston.

- 7. I may lose valuable business as motorists vision will already be restricted by a bus stopping, they will easily miss the signs which advertise my shop.**

It is not expected that buses will stop directly outside your business and therefore, it is not anticipate that the bus stop would have any detrimental effect on the advertising of your business.

Any buses which do stop will only be for the time it takes to pick up and set down passengers and, for the most part, the view will be unrestricted by buses.

- 8. Often I wait for at least 10 minutes, avoiding 6 or 7 buses and countless cars before being able to cross quickly. How can you justify introducing a bus stop on this extremely busy pedestrian and motorist route is completely beyond me.**

This stop is being proposed due to the withdrawal of services to the exiting nearby stop. The proposal will not alter the existing volume of traffic passing along this road. A build-out incorporating a dropped kerb crossing point will be introduced at the point where the road is narrowest and visibility is greatest.

- 9. The drop-in session did not allow everyone to attend due to the time of day it was held and a true picture of people's views would not have been received. Why was the bus operator not there? It was not suitable for a**

question and answer session. Could a well planned public meeting not be held or a public enquiry?

The main focus for the drop-in session was to provide face-to-face help for people to understand the proposals and the reasons for them being put forward. There were, at the time, a number of misconceptions regarding the extent and reasons for the scheme.

40 people attended the session and it was considered a success and gave a representative view of the proposals at the time and the overriding feeling of people that there was a need for a bus stop in this vicinity but that the best place for the bus stop was in its existing location in the turning circle.

The bus operator was invited and accepted the invitation to the event. Unfortunately, their representative was unable to attend due to circumstances beyond their control.

10. What about the 651 person petition objecting to the proposal?

The wording of the question suggests, to those who sign the petition, that there is a choice of a bus stop being on Durham Road or in its existing location in the turning circle. There is no mention of the fact that should there be no bus stop on Durham Road, as proposed, service 43/44 would not be serve this area of the village.

Therefore, it is considered that the question does not reflect the true situation and is not wholly appropriate to be taken forward as an objection in the Highways Committee report.

11. Durham County Council and local councillors are failing to listen to the majority of people, the people they are there to represent, as opposed to bowing to the wishes of the commercially run bus company and the as yet unknown beneficiaries of the potentially vacant old bus stop area.

The County Council have limited powers over a bus company to dictate the route a service should or should not take, nor which stops it will serve. It would be hoped that an agreement can be made regarding such issues but unfortunately in this case the bus operator does not agree to the use of the existing stop.

It is for the residents of Sacriston, present and future, that the County Council and local councillors are seeking to ensure bus services are accessible to all who may wish to use them. As well as objections to the proposals, there have been 7 specific responses of support as well as anecdotal evidence of a need for there to be a bus stop in this area.

12. No one wants the new bus stop.

As well as objections to the proposals, there have been 7 specific responses of support as well as anecdotal evidence of a need for there to be a bus stop in this area.

13. What will happen when more than one bus arrives at the stop at the same time?

The timing and frequency of bus services along this route are such that two buses should not arrive at the same time. As the route from the proposed new bus stop to Durham is the same for all services, it is unlikely that a second bus would need to pick up passengers. However, if this situation does occur, either the length of the bus box will accommodate two buses, or the bus driver would have to wait in a safe location before accessing the bus stop, as would happen at any other bus stop in the county where this situation occurs.

- 14. Young people coming to and from the college will be seriously affected as there are so few crossing points on Findon Hill currently. The proposed bus stop is directly placed on a crossing point that was identified as a hot spot by the Highways Department as needing a Crossing Patrol Attendant.**

While pedestrian surveys carried out in this area have shown that very few people cross the road at this location (and those that do could cross at more suitable points without deviating far from their route), it is accepted that it is likely that passengers walking to and from the proposed bus stop will wish to cross here. For this reason and to assist anyone else wishing to cross along this part of the road, we are proposing to introduce a crossing point which reduces the width of road pedestrians need to cross.

This proposal does not involve the introduction of a crossing patrol attendant. The traffic signals at the crossroads have a dedicated pedestrian phase to allow all pedestrians to cross safely.

- 15. The bus company have stated as one of their reasons not to serve the turning circle, that the existing bus stop in an 'uninviting place to wait'. Does the Council agree with this? The proposed stop will not have a shelter and therefore be less inviting in bad weather.**

The shelter located in the existing turning circle could be improved by introducing a newer shelter allowing visibility from all sides.

Although the proposed location does not allow for a shelter to be installed, this site is more prominent for waiting passengers to be seen by passing traffic and therefore less secluded.

- 16. Deliveries to this area will be extremely problematic as they will have to negotiate three junctions, a heavy traffic flow and a bus stop. It is already difficult enough to travel the small streets of Sacriston, driving a large delivery vehicle, without problems on the main thoroughfare.**

The proposed scheme will not alter the volume of traffic using this road. The bus stop will be visible by other vehicles and will operate in the same manner as the other bus stops in the area.

- 17. I don't for one minute think that whatever restrictions you introduce will have any effect on the garage and I will probably still find it difficult to access the car park.**

The introduction of the Traffic Regulation Order allowing parking restrictions to be imposed on this area, will allow enforcement of illegally parked cars. As this location is within a Civil Parking Enforcement area, it is possible for the County Council appointed traffic enforcement officers to issue fixed penalty notices.

- 18. I fail to see how this proposal can be deemed to be safe from every perspective whether that be a motorist, a pedestrian, or even a bus user waiting at the stop – it is extremely dangerous.**

The proposal has taken into account the various junction locations, vehicular accesses and pedestrian desire lines as well as the visibility of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike and is considered safe on road safety grounds. Surveys have been undertaken at the busier times of the day to determine pedestrian movements, the use of the existing bus stop at these times and vehicle movements at the Fynway junction.

The “road” directly adjacent to the footpath will be an area for buses to stop, not a running carriageway for general traffic. This means passing traffic will be around three metres away from the kerb and therefore waiting passengers. It is expected that only buses will enter the bus stop area and anticipated that intending passengers will be aware of a stopping bus.

- 19. This bus stop was located on Durham Road until the 1970’s when it was moved to the turning circle location due to traffic levels. You are now proposing to move the stop back onto Durham Road and traffic levels are higher than in the 70’s.**

At that time, the road would not have been wide enough at that point on the road to accommodate a bus stop without affecting the flow of traffic. This is why the road requires widening so as to allow the bus stop to be adjacent to the main traffic flow rather than on the road itself.

- 20. Do you know the bus stop will be in close proximity to a Health Centre and 3 extremely busy junctions that together service approximately 500 residences?**

The proposal has taken into account the various junction locations and is considered safe on road safety grounds. The presence of the Health Centre and the number of residents in the area suggests that there is a need to retain a bus stop in this area of Sacriston.

- 21. Will the bus drivers vision be affected and will he be distracted by the busy road and pedestrian traffic especially during peak times? Similarly will the vision of car drivers and pedestrians be affected?**

It is not anticipated that this proposed bus stop will be any different for bus drivers than many similar ones on the highway network. Motorists travelling towards Durham will have a clear view of a stopped bus and the road ahead. Pedestrians wishing to cross the road will have a build-out incorporating a crossing point allowing visibility in both directions similar to that at present and will have a road width to cross of the same if not less distance. The traffic signals at the crossroads continue to provide a dedicated pedestrian phase allowing crossing from all directions around the crossroads.

- 22. Will there be lighting at this bus stop and where will it be located? Will I have added light pollution?**

It is not proposed to change any of the current street lighting.

- 23. Have you allocated a safe, recommended crossing point from the bungalows to the bus stop? If not why not?**

We are proposing to introduce a crossing point which reduces the width of road pedestrians need to cross and provides suitable visibility. The traffic signals at the nearby crossroads continue to be the safest point to cross the road.

- 24. The residents of the bungalows will lose the environmentally friendly grass verge and the path will stay where it is, making the safest stretch of path on Durham Road extremely unsafe. It will also mean the loss of the only two trees on the main road through the village.**

Only part of the verge will be removed and this path will be as safe, if not more so, than any of the other paths in the area. The widening of the carriageway would mean two trees are affected. It is planned to introduce new trees to replace those lost by the proposed scheme.

- 25. How safely will traffic travelling north and south merge back into two lanes before and after the new bus stop?**

The proposal involves widening the road to facilitate only two lanes of traffic, one north and one south, and an area for a bus to pull off the southbound lane to pick up and set down passengers. This area will only be used by buses. Therefore, the only merging of traffic would be a southbound bus, when pulling away from the new bus stop. Clearly, the bus driver must drive with the usual due care and attention while making this manoeuvre, as they would at any other time throughout the journey.

- 26. What do you think the business impact will be on Sagittarian Embroidery as an employer of 4 people?**

It would not be expected that there would be an impact on this business due to the introduction of this scheme.

- 27. Has a risk assessment been carried out?**

While a specific risk assessment is not carried out on such proposals, the County Council's safety audit team have been consulted and consider the proposal to be safe on highway grounds.

- 28. What will happen to the bus turning circle area should this proposal to relocate the bus stop go ahead? There are many rumours that there is a hidden agenda and this has been planned as a means to sell off the land for other purposes?**

While Go North East are currently serving the turning circle once an hour with Service 13, it is expected that, if the new bus stop is introduced on Durham Road, this service will also be withdrawn from the turning circle. If this is the case, consideration will be given to the future use of the turning circle. At this moment in time, there are no plans for the turning circle other than the proposed introduction of parking restrictions which seek to aid all traffic in this area.

- 29. I also have an upstairs lounge with a bay window that I enjoy sitting in, why should I be on eye level with bus passengers? This is disturbing for**

me and my family and depending on the time of day probably frightening for the bus passengers, what is your suggestion to counteract this?

The buses using the stop will not be stationary directly outside your house and they will be slowly accelerating away from the stop similar to buses leaving the turning circle whereby acceleration is delayed by the exit from the junction. Therefore, it is anticipated that visibility into your property would not be any different to what may occur at present. The majority of buses passing are single deckers which would have the same visibility as a number of other vehicles on the road.

30. How will my bin/recycling be collected, where do you suggest I leave them?

It is understood that the new bus stop would not affect the collection of refuse and bins will be collected from the same place as present.

31. How will I clean my windows particularly the upstairs windows safely and how will I cut the bungalow hedge safely when waiting passengers will be there for over 16 hours per day?

Given that it is unlikely that passengers will be waiting directly outside your house, it is anticipated that you would clean your windows in the same manner as you do at present.

It is not anticipated there will be a constant queue of waiting passengers at the bus stop for 16 hours a day. As such, it is anticipated that you would carry out this work with the same regard to the general public currently using the footpath.

32. The added expenditure of council monies (especially in such hard times when a perfectly acceptable bus stop is already in operation, surely the money could be put to a much greater use. Does the government regeneration fund, where the money is coming from, realise this?

The funding being used for this scheme was provided by the Department for Transport specifically for the improvement of bus journeys and the passenger experience on corridors leading to Durham City. As this proposal will introduce a bus stop in an area which otherwise will no longer be served by the majority of bus services, it is appropriate for such funding.

33. As the bus company operates subsidised services, do you not have influence on this matter?

The County Council only has direct influence over the services being provided by the bus operator on behalf of the council. It would be hoped that discussion can take place between the two parties over any issues. However, in this case the bus operator has declined the request to continue serving the turning circle bus stop.

34. In November 2011 I heard a rumour exactly the same as our above proposal....I tried looking on your website under all the obvious titles of bus stop, transport, planning etc but nothing brought up any relevant info. On 2nd February 2012 I was brought a leaflet headed "Diamond Consultation".... Showing the same information as your subsequent letter

dated 16th February....On 4th February I went to see Mr Turner and Mr Jones MP. Mr Turner stated DCC knew nothing about the proposal.

Problems of access to the turning circle by buses, as a consequence of indiscriminate parking, have existed for some time and the County Council, working with the bus operators, have sought solutions to this problem over this period. Consultation was only carried out in February when a suitable solution was formulated and after the County Council had been made aware of Go North East's intention to withdraw the Diamond service from the turning circle.

However, as you have pointed out, Go North East did carry a consultation on the withdrawal of the Diamond service from the turning circle in January prior to this. As soon the County Council were aware of Go North East's intentions, officers sought to stop or delay any proposed changes until such time as an alternative bus stops could be provided in this area of the village.

35. The cost of this scheme must be astronomical?

The design estimate for the scheme is £112,000. However, this may change following detailed design should the scheme progress.

36. Anyone who lives in Sacriston knows this is an accident waiting to happen for all concerned and in particular the vulnerable members of our village like the elderly and school children.

The proposal has taken into account the various junction locations, vehicular accesses and pedestrian desire lines as well as the visibility of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike and is considered safe on road safety grounds.

37. Do you know why the bus stop was moved to its current purpose built location in the 1970s?

We are not aware of the specific reasons for the change at that time. However, we would suggest that it could have been for the same reasons as were identified during investigation into the current issue where the road width has proved too narrow to accommodate a bus stop safely and the potential for traffic to build up behind a stationary bus, thus causing congestion across the traffic signals. Due to the specific location, it is not possible, and would not have been possible at the time, to widen the road to allow the bus to leave the main carriageway as we are proposing in this new location.

38. Do you know there are 76 buses including double deckers per day that will be stopping, waiting and changing drivers on the busy main road from 6.29am to 11.15pm, do you think this is safe?

We are aware of the number and frequencies of the bus services travelling along this section of road and, therefore, having the opportunity to serve this bus stop.

Buses changing drivers only took place on the Service 13. We are informed by the bus company that while some driver changeovers continue to occur in the turning circle, most are now arranged at an alternative location along the route. There would be no driver changes taking place at the proposed new bus stop.

- 39. How will the buses turn round from this stop that's why the present bus stop is a turning circle?**

There is no longer a requirement for bus services passing this location to 'turn around'.

- 40. What do you anticipate the problem of 2 or even 3 buses all turning up at the same time will be, as I have witnessed many times?**

The timing and frequency of bus services along this route are such that two buses should not arrive at the same time. Clearly, from your observations, this is not always the case. As the route from the proposed new bus stop to Durham is the same for all services, it is unlikely that a second bus would need to pick up passengers. However, if this situation does occur, either the length of the bus box will accommodate two buses, or the bus driver would have to wait in a safe location before accessing the bus stop, as would happen at any other bus stop in the county where this situation occurs.

- 41. Do you know the bus stop will be opposite the only pedestrian and vehicular access to the elderly resident's bungalows?**

While there is an alternative pedestrian route to Dunelm from Witton Road, we have considered the access to the estate in the proposed design.

- 42. Do you know that working parents dropping their children off at the local schools use the area in the bungalows to park, as there is no room to park safely outside the village primary schools?**

While we were not aware of this issue, we do not consider that this increase in traffic to and from the estate would have any impact on the safety of the proposed bus stop.

- 43. Do you realise that the residents on the bungalows have frequent visitors day and night from carers, emergency ambulances, patient transport as well as regular visitors of friends and family?**

While not aware of the specific visitors to these bungalows, we do understand that this could be the case. However, we do not consider that such traffic would have any impact on the safety of the proposed bus stop.

- 44. Do you know how many of the residents of the bungalows have mobility scooters, wheelchairs, or limited mobility?**

We are not aware of the numbers of residents with reduced mobility but do not consider this to be a factor that would compromise the proposed design and location of the new bus stop.

- 45. Do you realise that residents of the bungalows and Durham Road are extremely worried about the safety and security issues of having many strangers 'legitimately' watching their every coming and going from their own homes at very close quarters?**

We are aware of the concerns of some residents in this area but would suggest that this is no different to many other bus stop locations across County Durham

and the likelihood of your suggestion occurring would be low given the actual proposed location of the bus stop pole and, thus, queuing point.

46. Will school childrens' vision be affected by the stationary and moving buses?

Children walking along the adjacent paths should not be affected by the proposed new bus stop. Indeed, when the bus stop is clear, pedestrians will be further away from the traffic flow at this point. For those wishing to cross the road, a crossing point is to be provided within the design of the new bus stop and the traffic signals provide a dedicated pedestrian phase allowing crossing from all directions around the crossroads.

47. Will the older population's vision be affected by the stationary and moving buses?

The same is true for the older population and, indeed, any other pedestrian, as the children in the above point.

48. Will waiting, alighting and existing bus passenger's vision be affected by the traffic on the busy road?

Bus passengers will be in the same situation as the pedestrians in the two points above with regard to walking along the footpath and crossing the road. It is not anticipated that oncoming traffic will significantly obscure their view of an arriving bus any more than at any other bus stop on a main highway.

49. Will cyclists be able to safely negotiate oncoming traffic, 3 busy junctions, pedestrians and stationary and moving buses all at the same time?

Cyclists will be able to use the carriageway in the same manner to elsewhere on the highway network where a bus lay-by is provided in similar circumstances.

50. Do you think the residents of Durham Road will have clear vision to join the main road from their private drives?

Residents will have the same circumstances to joining the main road as at present. Should a bus be stationary at the bus stop, motorists should wait until it is safe to join the highway.

51. Do you think the traffic joining the busy main road from the bungalows and Priory Court and Fynway will have clear vision?

Traffic joining Durham Road from the various junctions should have vision similar to the current situation. The proposed design moves the 'give way' line at the Fynway junction forward allowing visibility past any stationary bus at the proposed bus stop.

52. Do you know that there is a 'One Point Centre' (formerly Sure Start) located at the Secondary School FCC on Findon Hill, and do you know that there is a steady stream of parents/carers together with pushchairs and toddlers that walk this route?

We are aware of the various facilities and schools in the area but do not consider that the proposed new bus stop will have a detrimental impact on current pedestrian movements.

53. How do you plan to allow mobility impaired/disabled passengers to wait safely on this proposed site where space is extremely limited?

It is considered that the current footpath width of between 1.8 and 2.0 metres is sufficient to accommodate such waiting passengers and allow other pedestrians to pass.

54. How will wheelchair users access the bus in this particular location?

As with a number of bus stops across the county, a raised kerb will be provided as part of the bus stop to allow easier access onto buses.

55. How many bus passengers on average use this bus stop?

Although specific numbers can vary, our survey (carried out prior to the withdrawal of the Diamond service from the turning circle) suggested that, between the peak hours of 06:30 and 10:00 when it may be assumed the passenger numbers would be highest, an average of 3 passengers per bus boarded at the turning circle bus stop with a maximum of 9 on one occasion.

56. Do you think that this bus stop will encourage more bus users as hoped as apparently there is to be no bus shelter?

While we seek to encourage the use of public transport, this proposal seeks to replace the facility recently withdrawn from the turning circle. The intention of this bus stop is to provide an option for people in this area of Sacriston to access the 43/44 service without having to walk the significant distances up/down significant gradients to/from the remaining bus stops. While it may be a preferred option to provide a shelter at all "boarding stops", often local circumstances prevent this.

57. Where do you think the bus travellers will stand?

It is anticipated that intending passengers will queue from the bus stop pole and alongside the hedge line of the adjacent bungalow.

58. Where do you think they will shelter from the elements?

Unfortunately, without increasing the width of the footpath, it is not possible to provide an appropriate shelter at this location.

59. Do you think they will block access gates/doors?

If queuing as described above, intending passengers will not obstruct any access gates or doors.

60. Will there be a litter bin, if yes where will it be located?

A litter bin can be provided at the bus stop, if necessary. The lack of a litter bin at the existing bus stop would suggest either there is not a need for one or there has not been a request for such an item of street furniture.

61. How often will the litter bin be emptied and by whom?

If a litter bin is required, it will be emptied as part of the usual cleaning regime for other such items within the village.

62. How do you propose to deal with the smell from the bin in between it being emptied?

The bin will be emptied regularly similar to other bins in built up areas.

63. How are you going to address the Health and Safety issue of smokers at the bus stop being in such close proximity to vulnerable school children and non-smokers like myself and my family who will need to 'run the gauntlet' to avoid inhaling smoke or being accidentally burned? How does this fit in with this weeks government project?

It is considered that this bus stop would be no different to any other bus stop without a shelter or, indeed, any other public place where smokers may gather.

64. Do you think bus passengers want or need this change of location?

The strength of local opinion would suggest that the most suitable place for the bus stop for local passengers is at its current location. However, Go North East have made it clear that they have no intention to serve this bus stop with their Diamond service and, in light of this, it is considered that the proposal for the new stop represents the safest, suitable alternative for local residents and bus users.

65. Do you know if this mad plan goes ahead the residents of Sacriston will lose the only two trees on the main road through the village?

The widening of the carriageway would mean two trees are affected. It is planned to introduce new trees to replace those lost by the proposed scheme.

66. What do you anticipate the business impact will be on Sagittarian Embroidery as an employer of 4 people? I assume you have a duty of care as a labour council?

It is not anticipated that this proposal will have an impact of the business of Sagittarian Embroidery.

67. Or, is it just the garage that is afforded your duty of care?

The County Council seeks to treat everyone in a fair and proper manner in any given situation.

68. Will we be allowed to park illegally and obstructively as the garage currently does?

Motorist should not park illegally or obstruct the highway. As you may be aware, the County Council is progressing measures to resolve the issue of indiscriminate parking in other areas of the village, including the turning circle.

69. How many seconds do the bus company anticipate saving by the move?

The bus company have not specifically quantified the anticipated time saving of this withdrawal from the turning circle but have stated that they have seen a significant increase in the punctuality of this service as a consequence of this and other changes on the route.

70. What evidence do they have or who says it will be quicker as they will be merging instead of pulling out in to the same flow of traffic?

As stated in the point above, the bus company has stated that they have seen a significant increase in the punctuality of this service as a consequence of this and other changes on the route.

71. Why can't you improve the existing turning circle? The residents have several suggestions: Please consult with us!

A scheme was proposed to introduce physical measures to resolve the issues of indiscriminate parking in and around the turning circle. However, Go North East wish to stand by their original decision and not serve the turning circle. While we continue to progress measures to resolve the issue of indiscriminate parking in and around the turning circle, it is clear that this bus stop is no longer an option for the Diamond service 43/44.

72. Do the bus company have a duty of care to passengers and DCC?

Go North East are a commercial company and carry out their business accordingly.

73. Why are DCC allowing themselves to be blackmailed by the bus company?

The County Council have very limited scope in stipulating the route of a commercial bus service.

74. Why don't DCC refuse to give this company the subsidy currently worth 3.5 million (albeit a reduction of 1.2 million) on previous years and encourage smaller companies to tender?

All County Council public transport tenders are procured through an approved procedure which allows any company to compete for contracts. Clearly, it would not be appropriate, or indeed legal, to refuse to award a company a contract, for which it has been successful, on the basis that they have amended one of their commercial services in an effort to improve its punctuality.

75. What will happen to the old site?

At present the bus stop in the turning circle is still served by Service 13. Should the bus operator cease observing this bus stop, consideration will be given to the future use of the turning circle. At this moment in time, we know of no plans for the turning circle other than the proposed introduction of parking restrictions which seek to aid all traffic in this area.

76. Will the Council look at a proposal to buy the old site?

While not adopted highway, the turning circle is already in the County Council's ownership.

77. I understand both of my properties will be reduced in value by 15 to 20% how much compensation will I receive?

Claims of devaluation of a property because of the proximity of a bus stop are unsubstantiated and I can confirm that there is no form of compensation that the County Council can offer as a consequence of this.

78. Are you infringing on my human rights by subjecting me to excessive CO₂ emissions?

Go North East state they have one of the cleanest bus fleets of its size in the country. The Diamond Service 43/44 is operated with Euro5 Standard for emissions.

79. Where do you anticipate passengers waiting and sheltering from the elements will be under my bay window or at the side of my house, please tell me?

As stated above, it is anticipated that intending passengers will queue from the bus stop pole and alongside the hedge line of the adjacent bungalow. Clearly, no intending passenger, or, indeed, unauthorised member of the public should trespass on your property and, if this occurs, it would be a matter for the Police. I accept that it would be difficult to stop waiting passengers, or any other pedestrians, sheltering below your bay window but would suggest that this is likely to give only limited shelter to the elements.

80. What about maintenance to my property after all it is currently 104 years old!?

This proposal is not anticipated to affect the maintenance of your property.

81. What about deliveries will the post van be allowed to stop?

The proposal allows space to park outside of the bus box markings and the extra road width will mean anyone doing so will not be obstructing traffic.

82. When we built a bungalow in 1983 we were refused permission for one car to come on to the main road as it was deemed too dangerous, at the very spot where you proposed to allow 76 buses to stop, wait and pull away. Will you explain how this makes sense please?

The proposed bus stop involves the widening of the carriageway to allow this bus stop to be provided safely. Buses stopping at the bus stop will already be on the highway and heading in the same direction of the traffic flow it is leaving and subsequently joining.

83. It is ironic that we wanted the bungalow 20 yards back from the main road but the Council insisted that we build in line with the rest of the houses in the street therefore making another 'bad call'. Would you agree?

We are not in a position to comment, with hindsight, on the decisions made by planning officers 29 years ago.