

## Highways Committee

26 July 2011



### Transit 15

### Responses to public consultation for A177 Shincliffe Bus Lane and A177 South Road Bus Lane

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### Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development, Councillor Neil Foster Cabinet Portfolio Member, Regeneration & Economic Development

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with feedback on consultations with the public for two Transit 15 schemes involving proposed Traffic Regulation Orders for bus lanes at:
  - A177 Shincliffe
  - A177 South Road Durham
2. Having noted the responses to the public consultation and considered the objections to the proposals the Committee is recommended to endorse the proposals and proceed with the implementation of the Traffic Regulation Orders for bus lanes at A177 Shincliffe and A177 South Road.
3. Similar reports presented subsequently to this Committee will address other Transit 15 schemes as and when consultations have been completed or associated orders have been published.

#### Transit 15 Background

4. Transit 15 (T15) is a major public transport project which commenced implementation during the final year of local transport plan 2, LTP2 and will continue through early years of the successor plan, LTP3. Completion of all of the planned schemes comprising the project would see reduced delays and improved reliability for bus services on seven key bus corridors across the county. A number of schemes have already been completed as part of T15.
5. The January 2010 report to this Committee set out the extent of subsequent reporting on the Transit 15 project, the intention of which is to keep Members informed on progress of what is a significant and much-needed £5million+ investment in the bus network. To ensure Members are kept well informed on progress across the whole project, the January 2010 report indicated that the outcome of public consultations, as well as objections to Traffic Regulation

Orders associated with Transit 15 schemes, would be brought to the attention of the Committee.

### **Scheme Background - A177 Shincliffe Bus Lane**

6. This scheme is located on the Coxhoe to Durham Corridor upstream of the traffic signals at Mill Lane, Shincliffe. Queues occur in the westbound direction and traffic can tail back as far as High Shincliffe causing congestion and significant delay in addition to presenting a road safety hazard.
7. In order to facilitate reliable bus services and reduce delays for bus passengers it is proposed to widen the A177 to provide a bus lane inbound into Durham from a point just east of the traffic signals. This bus lane would allow buses to pass traffic queuing on the approach to the signals without increasing delays for other traffic as an inbound lane would still be available for other traffic.
8. A consultation letter and plan of the proposals were sent to statutory consultees and delivered to 40 properties in September 2009. 13 responses were received with 7 of these objecting to the scheme including the Parish Council. The issues raised included concern over the scheme increasing rat running through the village and concern that the bus lane was not long enough to be effective. A meeting was held with the Parish Council in February 2010 to discuss their concerns and following this a survey was carried out to establish the extent of rat running in May 2010. This survey established that there were less than 10 vehicles per day diverting through the village to avoid queues. It was therefore decided to progress the scheme without any amendments and without any traffic calming in the village.
9. An informal consultation on the proposed Traffic Regulation Order required for the bus lane was carried out in July 2010 including statutory consultees and 40 properties in the village. 14 responses were received including 12 objections, these objections raised issues over increasing rat running through the village, the effectiveness of the bus lane and the use of funding for the scheme in the difficult economic climate. In February 2011 proposals for traffic calming in the village via amendments to the A177 junctions were put to the Parish Council for comment.
10. The Parish Council, who had been requested to contribute to any traffic calming, considered the measures would be ineffective and felt they were not worth pursuing.
11. The Traffic Regulation Order for the proposed bus lane was advertised in April 2011 and 6 representations were received including 2 from local members.

### **Responses to Consultation**

12. Nineteen responses have been received to the initial scheme consultation and the informal Traffic Regulation Order consultation, 16 from individual members of the public along with responses from the North East Ambulance Service, Durham Constabulary and the Parish Council.

13. Six representations have been received to the advertised Traffic Regulation Order.

14. **Representation 1**

3 objections from members of the public to the informal consultation were concerned that the bus lane would cause congestion and that this would subsequently increase rat running through the village.

15. **Response 1**

*The A177 is being widened to accommodate two inbound lanes into Durham, a normal traffic lane and a bus lane. This is in comparison to the single inbound lane that currently exists. There would not therefore be congestion as a result of the bus lane and additional rat-running, which surveys showed was a minor problem, would not occur.*

16. **Representation 2**

7 members of the public were concerned that the bus lane was not long enough to be effective.

17. **Response 2**

*A longer bus lane could not be accommodated without removing the existing pedestrian refuge adjacent to the Church. The bus lane still saves a minute's journey time for bus passengers in the morning peak and would be the only bus lane on the Coxhoe to Durham route.*

18. **Representation 3**

5 members of the public and the local members questioned the use of finances for bus lanes in the current financial climate.

19. **Response 3**

*It was indicated that financial restrictions were already reducing revenue spending on subsidies to maintain bus services and that capital schemes such as this one that will reduce running costs for operators were more vital than ever to maintain bus services.*

20. **Representation 4**

The Parish Council's objection concerned rat running and effectiveness of the bus lane and was responded to as above.

21. **Representation 5**

The Ambulance Service supported the scheme.

22. **Representation 6**

Durham Constabulary commented on the proposed road markings for the scheme and their suggestions were accommodated.

23. The six objections to the advertised Traffic Regulation Order included 3 from members of the public, one from the City of Durham Trust and 2 from local members.

24. **Representation 7**

The City of Durham Trust were concerned over the provision of a retaining wall as part of the works and over extending the works outside the highway boundary. It was explained that the retaining wall, shown in the initial consultations, was not now required and that the scheme did not extend beyond the highway boundary. The Trust subsequently withdrew their objection.

25. The 3 members of the public raised the following points:

26. **Representation 8**

Funding being used for bus lanes in the current financial climate.

27. **Response 8**

*The financial restrictions are already reducing revenue spending on subsidies to maintain bus services and capital schemes such as bus lanes that will reduce running costs for operators are more vital than ever to maintain adequate bus services.*

28. **Representation 9**

The bus lane would create longer queues increasing journey times for motorists and resulting in additional rat running through the village.

29. **Response 9**

*The A177 is being widened to accommodate two inbound lanes into Durham, a normal traffic lane and a bus lane. This is in comparison to the single inbound lane that currently exists. There would not therefore be congestion as a result of the bus lane and additional rat running would not occur.*

30. **Representation 10**

The bus lane would only benefit a limited number of buses and that these benefits would only be at peak periods of traffic.

31. **Response 10**

*The bus lane would benefit 6 buses per hour in the morning peak with a time saving of up to a minute and would benefit approximately 300 passengers per day. These savings would occur at peak traffic times when most passengers were travelling and when most delays normally occurred.*

32. **Representation 11**

The bus lane would make the approach to Mill Lane traffic signals more complicated as traffic would need to move from the central inbound traffic lane to the nearside lane after they have passed the end of the bus lane.

33. **Response 11**

*The layout would require vehicles to change lanes after the end of the bus lane but this is an arrangement used at a number of locations across the County and has not resulted in any significant problems.*

**Local Member Consultation**

34. Both local members objected to the A177 Shincliffe bus lane questioning the use of finance on bus lanes in the current financial climate, expressing concerns over congestion and supporting public concerns over the potential for rat running through the village. The response indicated that financial restrictions were already reducing revenue spending on subsidies to maintain bus services and capital schemes such as bus lanes that will reduce running costs for operators were more vital than ever to maintain adequate bus services and that the A177 is being widened to accommodate two inbound lanes into Durham, a normal traffic lane and a bus lane compared to the single inbound lane that currently exists. There would not therefore be congestion as a result of the bus lane and additional rat running would not occur.

35. As members of the Transit 15 Working Group, both Arriva and Go North East support the proposals.

**Scheme Background – A177 South Road Bus Lane**

36. This scheme is on the Bishop Auckland to Durham transport corridor and is located on South Road in Durham south of the New Inn traffic signals. Queues occur in the northbound direction and traffic can tail back as far as the park and ride site near Mount Oswald golf course.

37. In order to facilitate reliable bus services and reduce delays for bus passengers it is proposed to widen the A177 to provide a bus lane inbound into Durham from a point just south of New Inn signals to a point just north of the signalised pedestrian crossing at the pedestrian access of St Mary's College. This bus lane would allow buses to pass traffic queuing on the approach to the signals without increasing delays for other traffic as a single inbound lane would still be available for other traffic.

38. A consultation letter and plan of the proposals were sent to statutory consultees and delivered to 9 properties in August 2010. 6 responses were received. 2 from members of the public, one from the City of Durham Trust, one from Elvet Residents Association, one from the Durham Branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England and one from Durham Constabulary with 4 of these objecting to the scheme.

### **Responses to Consultation**

39. The main issues raised included concern over the perceived limited benefits of the scheme and the loss of a row of lime trees in the wooded area to the east of the A177 where the road was being widened.

40. **Representation 1**

3 members of the public, the City of Durham Trust, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England objected to the loss of trees.

41. **Response 1**

*The loss of the row of lime trees due to the widening to provide the bus lane was unavoidable but a further row to the rear of this first row would be retained. The remaining trees would preserve the tree lined appearance of the road and still screen the University buildings to the rear of the trees.*

42. **Representation 2**

Elvet Residents Association requested information on the benefits of the scheme and suggested diverting the proposed eastern footway to the east of the wooded area in order to try and save the loss of trees.

43. **Response 2**

*The bus lane would provide time savings for bus passengers of up to a minute in the morning peak and up to a minute and a half in the evening peak and 12 service buses along with park and ride buses would benefit from these savings. These benefits would result in the financial benefits of the scheme being significantly higher than the costs. The suggested footway diversion would not reduce the loss of trees as a verge of the same width would still be needed to accommodate diverted public utilities. Diverting the footway would also have security implications for pedestrians.*

44. A Traffic Regulation Order to create the bus lane was advertised in April 2011 and only one objection to the Order was received from the City of Durham Trust.

45. **Representation 3**

The City of Durham Trust were concerned that the Council's case appeared to be justified purely on financial grounds and that this did not sufficiently take into account the loss of trees and that the current layout of trees restricted the views until a surprise view of the city was revealed at the end of South Road.

46. **Response 3**

*There are substantial time savings for bus passengers and a high number of passengers receiving these benefits. The financial benefits were significantly higher than the costs. With respect to the loss of trees it was indicated that schemes were judged on a variety of factors and not just cost and that the loss of trees close to the existing road would not have a substantial environmental impact as the presence of trees immediately to the rear of those close to the road would still preserve the tree lined appearance of the road, would still screen the University buildings and would restrict the views of the city coming down South Road albeit to a lesser extent than the existing situation.*

47. **Representation 4**

Durham Constabulary queried the proposed bus and traffic lane width on the scheme and asked if the narrow footpath on the west of the A177 could be widened to avoid the issue of students walking on the road at busy periods. The response confirmed that the bus lane would be 3.5 metres wide and that the two normal traffic lanes would be 3.25 metres wide and that widening the western footpath on the west of the A177 would be investigated at the detailed design stage. Following the provision of this information Durham Constabulary indicated that they were supportive of the scheme.

48. Local members have been consulted and no objections were raised to the A177 South Road scheme.

**Recommendations and Reasons**

49. **A177 Shincliffe Bus Lane**

It is recommended that the responses to the public consultation exercise are noted and, having considered the objections to the Traffic Regulation Order, the Committee endorses the implementation of the bus lane order.

50. **A177 South Road Bus Lane**

It is recommended that the responses to the public consultation exercise are noted and, having considered the objections to the Traffic Regulation Order, the Committee endorses the implementation of the bus lane order.

51. **Background Papers**

LTP3, the current Local Transport Plan for 2006-2011  
Report to Highways Committee on 15 January 2010 item no 7  
Public consultation information note  
Consultee letters and responses record file  
Copies of correspondence have been placed in the Members Resource Centre.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

Estimated scheme costs A177 Shincliffe Bus Lane - £190,000, A177 South Road-£490,000. Scheme costs to be met from the £5million Transit 15 budget which is already in place from an uplift in the LTP2 Integrated Transport Block from the Regional Funding Allocation confirmed by the Department for Transport in January 2010.

### **Staffing**

None

### **Equality and Diversity**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Crime and disorder**

None

### **Sustainability**

The objectives of the T15 project (as sent out in the public consultation information note) seek to maintain core ridership and improve the attractiveness of buses as an alternative mode of transport in preference to the car for people who have a practical travel choice. Achievement of the objectives through implementation of the project is more sustainable.

### **Human rights**

None

### **Localities and Rurality**

As detailed in the report.

### **Young people**

Improving the attractiveness and reliability of public transport may influence some young people at an early age as to travel choice and lifestyle. It is recognised that there is heavy reliance on bus travel by young people.

### **Consultation**

As detailed in the report

### **Health**

Achieving the objectives of the T15 project as outlined in the public consultation information note would result in modal shift from car use to public transport for people, with some corresponding health benefits associated with walking to and from the bus stop.