

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 9 February 2015 at 9.30 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Kay (Vice-Chairman), B Armstrong, H Bennett, O Gunn, K Hopper, O Milburn, S Morrison, R Ormerod, P Stradling, R Todd and J Turnbull

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Allen, D Bell, I Geldard, D Hall, D Hicks, J Robinson, J Rowlandson, M Wilkes and R Young

Also Present:

Councillor W Stelling.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Allen, D Bell, I Geldard, D Hall, D Hicks, J Robinson, J Rowlandson and M Wilkes.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the item of business on the agenda.

5 Bus Shelter – Opposite 50 Manor Road, Medomsley

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development regarding a proposal to erect a bus shelter opposite 50 Manor Road, Medomsley (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee received a presentation which highlighted the following:

- location plan

- current bus stop layout
- proposed shelter style
- area of consultation
- photograph of location

(for presentation see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that the eight properties directly affected by the proposals had been consulted. This included seven houses opposite the bus stop and the adjacent, Bishop Ian Ramsey CE Primary School. The report explained that both local members (Councillor A Shield and W Stelling) had been consulted and informed of the issue but their views had not been expressed in the report, however, both Councillors had differing views regarding the proposal.

In terms of the objections received to the proposal, the Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that:

- he recognised the fact that increases in anti-social behaviour could and did take place in other parts of the County, in and around bus shelters. However, other shelters in the immediate area did not attract anti-social behaviour;
- it was considered that vandalism would not be an issue in the area concerned;
- the proposed shelter would not contain a seat to deter congregations of youths and there was no reason why people living in the area, wishing to use the bus service, should be deprived of a facility;
- There were no issues with the design of the bus shelter and similar styles of shelters were used within other conservation areas;
- the erection of any bus shelter at a well-established bus stop would not impact on people's privacy, given that passengers already waited in that location for a bus;
- the proposed shelter would not cause any sort of impediment for anyone wishing to cross the road.

The Committee then heard from Councillor Stelling, one of the local members for the Leadgate and Medomsley Electoral Division. Councillor Stelling expressed his disappointment that the report contained no location plan or indeed a plan of the consultation area. He then referred to a scheme whereby himself and Councillor Shield, as local members, replaced some older stone bus shelters with new Perspex shelters to combat anti-social behaviour. Where there had been the appetite from residents for a shelter, both Members had agreed that they would fund the shelter out of their respective Neighbourhood Budgets.

Councillor Stelling explained to the Committee that the consultation had become confused and out of sync. Word had spread and residents of Hunters Close and Handley Cross and had lobbied the Council with support for a shelter, however, the fact of the matter remained that the majority of residents, directly in the initial consultation area and the

school did not wish for a shelter to be placed in the location concerned. Councillor Stelling also explained that in 16 years of being a Councillor he had not received any requests for a bus shelter in Medomsley. He had made representations to Go North East some two years ago to see if the service would change the end destination of the route to the Metrocentre which may have increased usage of the bus service, however, they were not favourable towards the request.

Councillor Stelling commented that locations for a suitable alternative site for a bus stop and shelter had been considered, however, the only potential area was deemed unsuitable following safety concerns expressed by the Police.

In summing up, Councillor Stelling felt that the consultation had spiralled out of control, and would happily have paid for a shelter, providing it was cost effective. Given that footfall was very low and would not increase, unless the bus operator would change the end destination. Councillor Stelling felt that the proposal should be refused.

The Committee's attention was drawn to a written submission by the other local Member for the area, Councillor A Shield who could not be present at the meeting (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee then heard further representations from an objector. As a resident and parent, the objector had provided a detailed report with a number of photos depicting congestion of the area (for copy see file of Minutes). In the representations made to the Committee the objector highlighted the following issues of major concern, not only for the properties directly affected, as well as the local school:

- the school crossing patrol was not always on site and there were many out of hours activities at the school;
- there was a need to consider the location of the bus stop in terms of safety, given that the school was continuing to grow;
- felt there was an accident waiting to happen;
- the bus shelter would obscure vision for people crossing the road;
- those people who had lobbied for a bus shelter lived 250 metres away;
- the proximity of the bus stop to the local primary school caused difficulties with sight lines;
- there was no analysis of alternative site options to support the claim that no safe, suitable alternative sites were available;
- level of support gained from residents outside the consultation area was outweighed by the number of submitted objections.

The Committee then heard from a supporter of the proposal. He had used the bus service for 17 years and was accompanied by a lady who used the bus stop to commute to Newcastle. The bus rarely followed the timetable which was inconsistent due to the fact that the service was continually delayed in city centre traffic. The supporter summarised his main points as follows:

- the bus stop was in an exposed position and people were exposed to the elements during adverse weather;

- there was no evidence of any anti-social behaviour in the specific area as confirmed by a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) at a recent Police and Communities Together (PACT) meeting.
- the design of the bus shelter was not an issue and there were three other shelters in the area of similar design;
- the supporters were representing the views of 69 people, who had signed a petition;
- irrespective of whether people lived immediately outside the proposed shelter, all residents deserved the facility when they were using the bus service and there was no reason why people should be penalised;
- the bus shelter would be located on the opposite side of the road to residential properties and there was no evidence of a devaluation of property;
- Issues of privacy were not of concern given that the bus stop had been in the location for decades;
- was of the understanding that the school had withdrawn their objection.

The Strategic Traffic Manager clarified to the Committee that the school's objection to the consultation centred on vandalism. Contact had been made with the school last week, who had confirmed that they wished to maintain their objection.

Councillor Morrison expressed concern that the properties directly affected were the only residents consulted and felt that the consultation area should have been extended in any case, given that residents living in the wider area would use the same bus stop.

In response to a question from Councillor Stradling regarding alternatives and given the points raised by objectors regarding alternative sites, the Committee were advised that other areas had been examined and there was no alternative site.

Councillor Ormerod informed the Committee that he was in favour of promoting public transport and that its use should be encouraged wherever possible. Provision of a bus shelter, at the already established bus stop was a positive step and would encourage usage.

Councillor Kay felt that a need had been identified which had not been considered previously. Provision of a bus shelter would potentially increase use of public transport.

Councillor Gunn sought clarification that the objection by the school concerned appearance and the potential for vandalism/anti-social behaviour and there had been no issues raised regarding road safety issues. The Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that this had been the case.

Councillor Todd felt that on balance, there had been no compelling reason as to why a bus shelter should not be sited at the location concerned and moved the recommendation which Councillor Bennett seconded.

Councillor Turnbull accepted the essence of the scheme but expressed concern over the low usage of the bus stop. Councillor Turnbull explained that in his Electoral Division, a scheme to pay for six new bus shelters, together with dropped kerbs had been undertaken. Over time, the bus operator then withdrew services due to lack of footfall. The bus shelters had to be demolished which ultimately resulted in a waste of public money.

Resolved

That the Committee endorse the proposal having considered the objections and recommended that the proposal to install a bus shelter opposite 50 Manor Road, Medomsley.