



**CITY OF DURHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

Learning from the past.
Building for the future.

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6 February 2020

Dear Mr Wafer,

Parish Council response to consultation on proposed new Durham bus station on North Road.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this important consultation and for your thorough presentation to the Parish Council on the proposed new bus station at its meeting on 23rd January 2020.

The Parish Council very much welcomes the proposed plans of the County Council to replace the existing bus station with a more modern and welcoming building that is both fit for purpose and suitable for all users. The Parish Council also thanks the County Council for the work it has done in previous consultations in order to ensure that the new bus station meets as many of the previous consultation feedback considerations and priorities as possible. The County Council consulted on the wider regeneration of North Road in 2015 and the Parish Council very much hopes that the plans for the bus station will form a crucial first step in the efforts to regenerate this area.

For many tourists and visitors of the city travelling in by bus, the bus station is their first impression of the city and it is right that the bus station is improved.

Design of the building

The proposed design of the building offers a much more attractive and welcoming alternative than the existing building.

The proposed green wall and green roof of the building is very welcome and will go some way in greening a highly urbanised area. The ongoing maintenance of both the green wall and roof will be vital and the Parish Council hopes that the County Council's Clean and Green team will be doing everything they can to ensure that these remain a permanent part of the building. In addition, the green roof not only adds a net gain to biodiversity and to the attractiveness of the view from above North Road but will also offer an energy efficient method of insulating the building.

Councillors also felt that the proposed design of the building was sympathetic to some of the late 19th Century buildings within close proximity to the building.

The use of glass to the frontage of the building is also welcome in giving the building a more modern look but also it is hoped that the increased visibility in to the building from North Road will act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour. The large areas of window glazing over the concourse will also increase the levels of natural light into the seating and walking area.

Councillors particularly welcomed the proposals for the stained glass window design and felt that this could also be extended to include the large expanse of glass to the front of the building from North Road. The Parish Council would very much welcome the proposal of the stained glass design having a local connection, i.e. a design of the Castle or of the Cathedral. Alternatively a design which included all of the County Durham Parish and Town Councils' logos would also be welcome; such a scheme would show excellent partnership working between County and Parish Councils and would also send the message that the bus station is not just one for the City of Durham Parish area, but one which services the whole of the County. The photovoltaic element of the windows is also very welcome.

The Parish Council also welcomed the proposed footpath expansion on the bus station side of North Road. Additionally, the improved visibility around the corner from North Road; allowing pedestrians to see when a bus is leaving the station is welcome and can only add to public safety in that area. The Parish Council wonders if some form of noise alert for pedestrians; signalling a bus leaving the station could also be considered as a means of further improving pedestrian safety when crossing.

Parish Councillors also felt that the frontage massing of the building would be improved if one section is stepped back slightly, as was recently the case with the Student Castle development on Claypath.

The Parish Council also hopes that the County Council will consider the same deep clean and treatment of the pavements as the Parish Council had carried out in 2019 from Framwellgate Bridge to Neville's street on both sides of the Road in order to tackle engrained stains and chewing gum which are blight North Road.

Within the interior of the building, the Parish Council would like to request that a scheme be in place for the proposed stairs to the entrance of the building to be made more accessible to the visually impaired.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is prevalent in North Road and the existing bus station is seen as the epicentre of this behaviour. The latest crime stats provided by Durham Constabulary confirm this to be the case. This anti-social behaviour ranges from criminal damage to drug and alcohol misuse. It is imperative that the new bus station be part of the solution to address these issues.

The Parish Council welcomes the fact that the proposals for the new bus station also include security staff and CCTV which could offer 100% coverage of the station. The proposed mezzanine area above the pedestrian circulation area is also welcome as this will supplement natural surveillance of the area.

It is disappointing that the Police have not yet confirmed whether they will be able to have a physical dedicated space within the bus station however as this would further increase the sense of security for users of the station. The Parish Council very much hopes that this will be a top priority for the County Council and Durham Constabulary.

Whilst the Parish Council welcomes the fact that the new station will be closed at night following the last service, it should be noted that the last service at present is after 10pm and thus after the usual contracted hours of the Neighbourhood Wardens. Please could the County Council provide assurances that the security will be in post until the building is closed. As the bus station services the whole of County Durham, the County Council may wish to invite all neighbouring Parish and Town Councils to contribute towards security at the station after 10pm.

The toilets should also be checked regularly to deter from drug and alcohol use.

In a further effort to mitigate anti-social behaviour, the Parish Council wishes to suggest that calming music be played. The same scheme has been trialled in the Eldon Square bus station in Newcastle as well as in other areas such as Hull station and Cleethorpes station; the latter resulting in a 75% reduction in reported incidents of anti-social behaviour.

In addition, the County Council may wish to consider parishes jointly funding additional security measures, such as inbuilt refined design features like colour and acoustic materials in order to deter anti-social behaviour.

Ultimately, no member of the public should be deterred from using the bus services in Durham and from visiting Durham as a result of the unacceptable behaviour of a small minority.

Carbon emissions and energy efficiency

Monitoring and detailed assessment of air quality carried out by Durham County Council in Durham City has determined that levels of pollution concentration (nitrogen dioxide) in some parts of the city exceed the annual mean National Air Quality Objective and EU Limit for nitrogen dioxide. The proposed new bus station also sits within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for Durham City. It is therefore important that the new bus station – the central hub of public transport in the city – and the buses are as energy efficient as possible and that carbon emissions are reduced as much as possible.

Durham County Council must take a lead in ensuring that all bus operators switch to electric buses and set a specific timeframe for this to be done, as has happened in other main cities in the UK. This must be a top priority for the Council as part of these plans.

The Parish Council welcomes the fact that the proposed stained glass windows are also solar panels which are able to use solar power as part of the building. This is an example of great innovative thinking and design.

The new bus station does not take advantage of the possibilities of geothermal energy however. Parish Councillors felt that a ground heat pump and/or ground loop system under the bus parking area with a black, heat absorbing surface should also be part of the plans.

Bus use should always be encouraged as a cleaner and greener method of transportation and it is hoped that usage of bus services will also be increased as part of these plans. How then will the hoped-for increase in bus services in future be dealt with? Will the possibility of sideways expansion of the station be considered if the opportunity arises?

Facilities within the station

The Parish Council welcomes the fact that the new station will include a defibrillator.

The Parish Council also welcomes the dedicated parent and child room, a changing place unit and the new toilet facilities. It is important that these facilities are chargeable in line with other UK chargeable toilet facilities (20p on average being charged) and from the moment the building becomes open to the public in order to set the precedence.

Furthermore, the Parish Council feels that more toilet facilities should be made available for female users than the proposed two female toilet units at present.

The Parish Council welcomes the proposed information hub at the southern entrance of the building and the proposed combination of touch screens, static information and leaflets for visitors of the city. The Parish Council also feels that the enquiry desk needs to be staffed.

The Parish Council welcomes the Public Address System including an induction loop system for the hard of hearing.

Construction phase

The Parish Council is very concerned at the proposed use of outside the Santander bank as a taxi rank during the construction phase of the development. The noise caused by this is well known to be a source of a lot of complaints already from Crossgate residents and the Parish Council believes this would further exacerbate this issue. The Parish Council wishes to propose that the use of the proposed taxi rank outside Santander should cease at midnight and the taxi rank relocated to some suitable bus stops, as bus services will have ceased by this time. The Parish Council cannot overstate this problem and would be happy to work with the County Council as well as members of the Crossgate Community Partnership (Resident Group) on this to find an agreeable alternative to that which is proposed at present.

The Parish Council would also like to suggest that the County Council considers using programme and progress information as well as archaeology finds panels during the construction phase. This was done during the construction phase of the Student Castle development and was welcomed by local residents.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Shanley
Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council