



**CITY OF DURHAM
PARISH COUNCIL**

Learning from the past.
Building for the future.

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Dear Ms Teasdale

DM/20/00912/FPA: Demolition of bus station and erection of a replacement including office space, Bus Station, North Road, Durham City DH1 4SG

The City of Durham Parish Council Planning Committee considered this application on 17 April 2020; it welcomed the planning application in principle and agreed to re-affirm the comments and suggestions previously made by the Parish Council following Mr Wafer's very helpful presentation to its meeting on 23rd January 2020. It also agreed to underline some particular points, as follows.

Overall comments

The Parish Council in January thanked the County Council for the work it has done in the preceding consultation exercises in order to ensure that the new bus station meets as many of the 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 hoped that the plans for the bus station will form a crucial step in the efforts to regenerate this area.

The Planning Committee re-iterates those comments and in particular emphasises that:

- the regeneration of North Road is strongly supported as a vital part of Durham City's retail, heritage and tourism offer;
- the bus station is an integral part of regenerating North Road;
- improving the existing bus station is strongly supported in principle;
- we approve the prospect of bringing local services, eg police and neighbourhood services, into the building, making it safer and more used "round the clock".
- we are very pleased that this scheme no longer threatens the roundabout at the top of North Road which is such an attractive green space, with mature trees. It is well provided with flower displays in the summer and decorations at Christmas and is therefore a well-loved site for residents and an impressive introduction to the city for visitors.

The supporting documents

The application has a number of supporting statements, and the Committee welcomes the comprehensive and detailed analysis within both the Design & Access Statement and the Heritage Statement. These documents contain professional assessments that support many of the representations made by the Parish Council and others in the preceding consultations. The Planning Statement, however, does not do justice to the position here. For example, it says that *“the proposal will deliver a new bus station to serve the city of Durham.”* In fact, the new bus station is quite rightly celebrated as serving the many towns and villages beyond Durham city. The Statement’s understanding of progress with the County Durham Plan is woefully out of date; it says: *“The document is in the early stages of production; the Cabinet have agreed on the preferred options and the document is now in the first stages of public consultation.”* These are just two of the many examples of careless and contradictory contents of the Planning Statement, in sharp contrast to the other two Statements mentioned above.

Design of the building

The Committee repeats the Parish Council’s earlier comment that 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. 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. The ongoing maintenance of both the green wall and roof will be vital. The Committee underlines that it is hoped that the County Council’s Clean and Green team will be doing everything they can to ensure that the green wall and roof remain a permanent part of the building.

The use of glass to the frontage of the building is welcome in giving the building a modern look and will display its purpose as a transport hub. It is hoped that the increased visibility in to the building from North Road will also 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.

The Committee welcomes the proposals for the stained glass window design and underlines the suggestion previously made by the Parish Council that this could be extended to include the large expanse of glass to the front of the building from North Road.

The Committee also re-iterates support for 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 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 Committee repeats that some form of noise alert for pedestrians signalling that a bus leaving the station could also be considered as a means of further improving pedestrian safety when crossing.

The Committee emphasises the major concern previously expressed by the Parish Council that the frontage mass of the building is monolithic and would be improved if one section is stepped back, as is very successfully the case with the Student Castle development on Claypath.

Within the interior of the building, the Committee repeats that a scheme for the proposed stairs to the entrance of the building to be made more accessible to the visually impaired would be desirable.

Anti-social behaviour

Whilst these matters are largely outside the planning system, there is an increasing awareness of 'designing out crime' and the Parish Council welcomed 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.

However, it continues to be a concern that the Police, as far as we know, have not yet confirmed whether they will be able to have a physical dedicated space within the bus station, as this would further increase the sense of security for users of the station.

Again, though not within the scope of a planning application, the Parish Council welcomed 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. It would be appreciated if the County Council could 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. Further, 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 suggested 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.

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.

The Parish Council urged Durham County Council to take a lead in ensuring that all bus operators switch to electric buses and to set a specific timeframe for this to be done, as has happened in other main cities in the UK. The Committee is pleased that the plans provide for electric buses to be re-charged within the new bus station, and would be very willing to play a part in facilitating commitments with the bus companies to deliver electric-only services.

The Parish Council welcomed the fact that the proposed stained glass windows are also solar panels which are able to use solar power as part of the building, but the new bus station does not take advantage of the possibilities of geothermal energy. The Committee feels that a ground heat pump and/or ground loop system under the bus parking area 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. The hoped-for increase in bus services in future should be considered beyond the current planning application, notably the possibility of sideways expansion of the bus station if the opportunity arises.

Another matter to be addressed in the future is the relationship with the railway station. The goal should be to make interchange between bus and rail as easy as possible but of course the topography is problematic. We note that the Transport Statement says that the railway station is 200 metres from the bus station; this only true 'as the crow flies' whereas a walkable step-free route is double that, and even using the shallow steps on the footbridge (the route shown in Figure 9 of the Transport Statement) the distance is actually 350 metres. It is also a steep climb - the railway station is at a height of 27 metres or 89 feet above the bus station. These problems are correctly recognised in the Statements and lie outside the scope of the current planning application but are important matters to tackle through further work.

Facilities within the station

The Committee repeats the Parish Council's welcome of 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 precedent.

More toilet facilities should be made available for female users than the proposed two female toilet units at present.

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 are all very welcome, and it is felt that the enquiry desk needs to be staffed.

Construction phase

The Parish Council expressed very great concern 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 proposed 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. It is understood that this issue is being considered, and the Committee thanks the County Council for pursuing the matter.

Conclusions

The Parish Planning Committee trusts that the above comments are helpful and looks forward to the suggestions being taken forward in the same constructive spirit that the County Council has shown since first coming forward with the proposal to redevelop the bus station in its present location.

Yours sincerely,

ADAM SHANLEY

Clerk to the City of Durham Parish Council