

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 OCTOBER 2009

CHATHAM DYNAMIC BUS STATION – REVISED SCHEME

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Summary

This report sets out the revised proposals for the Chatham bus station scheme for the consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, before a report is taken to Cabinet to seek authorisation to submit a planning application for the revised scheme.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The provision of a new bus station for Chatham is an important regeneration and transport priority for the Council. This priority is reflected in the Council Plan, Local Transport Plan, and Regeneration Framework, as well as in the Chatham Centre and Waterfront Development Brief adopted in 2008.
- 1.2 The project is funded by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and it is intended to deliver the proposed revised scheme within the existing budget and before the end of the funding period in March 2011.
- 1.3 **Reasons for Urgency:** An early decision is required by Cabinet to progress with the planning application and to ensure an application can be submitted in December in accordance with the agreed programme. This is necessary to achieve the overall delivery of the project before the end of March 2011. The views of Overview and Scrutiny are sought prior seeking approval from Cabinet in November. Although the item was on the agenda, it was not possible to produce the report in time to go out with the agenda as work on the revised scheme is in an early stage and revised scheme drawings have only just become available.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2008 Cabinet authorised the submission of a planning application for the bus station in a location centred on Globe Lane, but incorporating land on the Paddock. This is the same location that is shown in the adopted Chatham Centre and Waterfront Development Brief (2008).
- 2.2 A detailed scheme was then prepared and consultation with key stakeholders, including the bus operators, English Heritage and the Environment Agency took place, together with a presentation of the scheme to Members.
- 2.3 The planning application was submitted in March 2009. A site visit for Members of Development Control (DC) committee took place on 4 August, and the application was considered at DC committee on 12 August, when a decision on the application was deferred for further consideration of the proposed project. Concerns primarily related to the size of the station, the loss of green space on the Paddock, and the loss of trees on the Paddock.
- 2.4 Following deferral of the application, officers have considered the views of the DC Committee and meetings have taken place with senior officers and relevant Portfolio Holders in order to produce a scheme which might address the concerns of DC committee. This is the scheme that is now at an early stage of development and is being presented to this Committee.
- 2.5 Drawings are appended to this report to show the revised layout, and emerging design.

3. Summary of Proposed Revisions

- 3.1 The changes requested to the brief were to retain the Paddock in its existing form, with the minimum of alteration, and to retain as many trees as possible on the Paddock, to remove the central pedestrian crossing through the centre of the station, and to reduce the number of stands.
- 3.2 The new proposal is therefore significantly different to the original scheme. In particular the removal of the central pedestrian crossing has required pedestrian routes through the bus station to change and this has necessitated a different approach to the design of the structures on the central island. Whilst the original scheme proposed larger, fully enclosed, glazed structures, the emerging scheme is for a separate canopy structure, with much smaller weather protected waiting areas below, allowing for movement of pedestrians along the central island instead of across it. The sketches appended to this report show how this could look.
- 3.3 The information centre, incorporating public toilets, is now also proposed to be located on the central island. A small alteration to the Paddock and potential loss of one tree is required to accommodate a footpath to link to the pedestrian crossing point to the central island. This is considered important to maintain pedestrian movement and

high level of usage of the Paddock. The only other alteration to the Paddock now proposed is in relation to the phase 2 road scheme works, for which a small area on the edge of the Paddock as it adjoins the Brook is required, resulting in the loss of 3 trees in that location. A further very small tree is lost due to the new pedestrian crossing on the Brook.

- 3.4 In total therefore 4 trees on the Paddock, and 1 adjacent to the Paddock would be affected by the revised proposals with 12 on the opposite side of Globe Lane in Riverside Gardens. This compares to a total of 31 (17 of which are on the Paddock) affected in the original scheme. The scheme will provide for additional tree planting to compensate for those lost.
- 3.5 Driver facilities and station management offices will be accommodated in the White House, which will be refurbished for that purpose.
- 3.6 The revised scheme is smaller than previously with 3 fewer bus stops. The reduction in the number of stands reduces the capacity of the bus station, and therefore the number of bus services it can accommodate. Further work on assessing the capacity of the station and the implications and mitigation of its reduced size in terms of both current and predicted future usage are ongoing.
- 3.7 The retention of the Paddock in its existing form means that landscaping works around the station will be much reduced compared to the previous scheme. Public realm improvements to Military Road are being considered but will not be of the same scale as those previously proposed.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 There is clearly a delay to the project due to the existing planning application not progressing through DC Committee, and the subsequent need to redesign the scheme to address the concerns expressed by the DC Committee. Delivery of the project within the funding period and within the existing budget requires intensive project management, and constant monitoring of risks (see section 5 below).
- 4.2 The location in Globe Lane is the only possible site, and the proposed layout is the only layout achievable within the constraints. The revised proposal reflects Members revised priorities for the scheme with reduced capacity for bus services as a trade off for retaining the Paddock, but which seeks to deliver as many of the benefits of the original proposal as possible, within a very constrained site.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 In common with all development and construction projects there are always a wide range of different risks. As part of the management of the project risks are continually being identified and monitored. The table below identifies the main areas of risk associated with the project.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Approvals	Risk of significant further delay and additional costs if the required approvals e.g. Cabinet or DC Committee decisions are deferred or if the scheme is not approved	Revised scheme is designed to address the concerns of DC committee and has been discussed with relevant portfolio holders.
Property/ Agreements	Achieving timely vacant possession of buildings on the site, and obtaining operator agreement to use the new facility	Ongoing discussion with relevant parties. Early planning approval to give certainty
Design	Tightly constrained site presents a challenge to meeting the brief	Close monitoring of design risks and identification of measures to eliminate or reduce risks as design progresses
Construction	There are a range of construction risks e.g. ground conditions and archaeology which could result in additional cost or delay to programme.	Early contractor involvement and early identification of risks and continual risk management

5.2 The key risks identified are those that could delay the project as delivery within the funding period is challenging. Risks associated with this project will continue to be recorded, monitored, and appropriate action taken as the project progresses.

6. Consultation

6.1 Some early discussion has taken place with Arriva, and their response has been positive to date, however further discussion with Arriva and other bus operators is essential as the scheme develops. Early discussions are also planned with Kent Police, English Heritage, and other key stakeholders.

7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 The project is fully funded by HCA it is intended that the revised scheme will be delivered within the existing budget and within the funding period.
- 7.2 The scheme will require planning permission. It will also be necessary to appropriate the land to use as a bus facility. As some of the land (particularly to the northwest of Globe Lane) is public open space, such appropriation would need to be advertised in the local press in accordance with s123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and any objections considered in determining whether to appropriate.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the committee recommend to Cabinet that
- (a) a planning application be submitted for a revised scheme (as described in this report, and as shown in the sketches appended to it)
 - (b) the loss of existing public open space in the proposed site be advertised in the local press in accordance with s123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Director of Regeneration Community and Culture be delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services, to consider any objections and determine whether or not to appropriate the land.

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Background Papers:

Chatham Road Scheme Report to Cabinet 24 June 2008

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