

COACH PASSENGER WAITING FACILITIES AT PARKSIDE, CAMBRIDGE

To: Cambridge Joint Area Transport Committee

Date: 23rd September 2014

From: Joseph Whelan, Head of Passenger Transport Services

Electoral division(s): Market

Forward Plan ref: N/a *Key decision:* No

Purpose: To advise Members on opportunities to improve facilities for coach passengers at Parkside Cambridge

Recommendation: To consider and comment on the opportunities to improve facilities for coach passengers at Parkside, Cambridge

<i>Officer contact:</i>	
Name:	Joseph Whelan
Post:	Head of Passenger Transport Services
Email:	Joseph.whelan@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 715585

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The role of public transport to and within the City of Cambridge is becoming increasingly important as significant new development takes place in the city and around its fringes.
- 1.2 The new development brings with it the pressures of increased demand to travel into and around Cambridge City by all modes including private car. The County Council, working with a wide range of partners, recognised that unchecked growth of private car traffic into the historic City Centre was not feasible or desirable. Ensuring that there is the maximum range of alternative transport choices other than the private car is key to allowing Cambridge to continue to grow.
- 1.3 Over the past 15 years two key initiatives have helped manage the traffic congestion and associated environmental and economic impacts. These are the Park and Ride system (currently carrying over 3.8 million journeys per year), augmented three years ago by the Busway (carrying 3.5 million journeys per year), and the Cambridge Core Traffic scheme.
- 1.4 Stage 4 of the Cambridge Core Traffic Scheme (developed around 2007) had specific objectives relating to reducing congestion in the St Andrew's Street, Emmanuel Street, Drummer Street area. Two of the principal objectives were improving public transport reliability and air quality. To maximize the bus stop capacity bus services were reorganised. Local bus services were given priority on the stops in the Drummer Street area, which resulted in relocating long distance services to additional stops placed in Parkside. It was recognised that long distance coach services were an important part of the sustainable travel network within the city and that to fulfil travel demand these services required stops at accessible locations within the city centre.
- 1.5 Consideration was given to allowing long distance buses to operate from the bus station with local services moving to Parkside but it was considered this would have a greater impact on local residents, commuters and shoppers using local bus services.
- 1.6 Consultation and discussions prior to the implementation of the Core Traffic Scheme identified that a significant proportion of passengers using the city centre long distance services walked to or from the existing city centre stops. Maintaining such accessibility necessitated the provision of stops within reasonably close proximity to the city centre. Work undertaken at the time showed there to be limited alternatives to Drummer Street bus station that fulfilled this requirement, other than Parkside.
- 1.7 The others sites examined are noted below. The reasons they were not considered suitable continue to be valid today. Locations considered included Victoria Avenue, Cambridge rail station and Chesterton Lane.
- 1.8 For Victoria Avenue there are a number of issues. Firstly there would be the need to relocate the existing bus stops now located there. These stops have already been relocated from Short Street. There is no obvious alternative convenient location for these bus stops to be moved onto. To remove them altogether would remove the stops that are the nearest to Christ's Pieces and closest to the Grafton centre for the services currently using them. This would

result in reduced attractiveness for public transport users as the walking time to this major location would be increased if Drummer Street or Emmanuel Street were the only stops available.

- 1.9 A further issue for Victoria Avenue is its proximity to a number of mature trees and whether it is possible to undertake significant civil engineering work required to extend the current bus bays to allow layover and stopping space for long distance coaches
- 1.10 At one point there was an aspiration that the redevelopment of land around Cambridge Station might provide accommodation for coaches and be used as main terminal point for coach services accessing Cambridge. However that aspiration was not taken forward in the Cambridge Station Area Development Framework. The CB1 Development that is currently underway provides significant improved interchange opportunities for buses but none is provided for coaches. The main reason for this is that National Express remain of the view that a location as close as possible to the city centre is needed to ensure passengers are able to board and alight and not interchange to carry on into the city centre. The City and County Council are not in a position to enforce this move against the express preference of the coach service operator.
- 1.11 Chesterton Road has also been considered in the past. To achieve this as a location for long term coaches would mean that the current tourist coach parking spaces would need to be relocated. Further it may lead to a loss of on street car parking spaces and is also more remote from the City centre than Parkside. Therefore it is not considered to be a viable location
- 1.12 The current arrangement for coaches at Parkside commenced in March 2007 with the small temporary kiosk being provided in July 2007. Based on records of complaints received by the County Council, in its role as highway authority, there were some initial problems. These were mainly concerns about buses and coaches being parked with their engines running and the resulting noise. This was tackled quickly and the level of complaints received in recent years has been virtually nil. Complaints have however been received from customers and visitors that the coach pick-up and drop-off facilities in this location lack basic facilities including easily accessible and available
- 1.13 It is important to note that the need for passengers to access the city centre by long distance coach remains important. As the growth noted above continues to take place the need to access the City Centre as directly as possible is not expected to diminish. It is also important to note that though the kiosk currently situated at Parkside has temporary planning permission, the changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders that facilitate the current arrangement are permanent.

2. MAIN ISSUES

National Express in Cambridge

- 2.1 National Express are keen for improvement to current facilities. As a company they are satisfied with the current location at Parkside but wish to see some improved facilities for their current and future passengers. During informal discussions it is clear that National Express understand the planning related sensitivities of Parkside and any changes would need to fit in with the current

environment and setting.

- 2.2 The current kiosk is subject to a time limited temporary permission which needs to be determined in the near future. This means that there is an excellent opportunity to review the nature and quality of the passenger facilities at Parkside. The attached plans present one option to improve the passenger facilities at Parkside and contribute to maintaining and improving the attractiveness of long distance coach travel to and from Cambridge.
- 2.3 The company wishes to consolidate its Cambridge presence at Parkside and believes that improvements of the type and form as shown in Appendix 1 will help them do this. As can be seen from the plans, the facilities could be improved to include a public toilet, cycle parking, improved office space and be of high design quality. It is important to note that there are already bus shelters at Parkside and the attached plans give an indication of a design to more creatively incorporate these stops into a new facility. Clearly any proposals would need to be subject to full consultation before they are submitted for planning approval.
- 2.4 During 2013 National Express saw a 9% growth in passenger numbers nationally. Similar growth is taking place this year.
- 2.5 This report has reviewed the history that led to Parkside being selected as the location for long distance coaches. It notes that a significant relocation or removal of current city centre bus stops would be needed to accommodate coaches elsewhere (and close to the city centre). Therefore it is the view of Officers that Parkside should remain the location for long distance coaches. Given this, an appropriate scheme for improved facilities should be developed and public consultation undertaken before planning permission is requested.

3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The improvements will be funded jointly by Cambridgeshire County Council and National Express. The estimated construction cost of the plans attached to this report is in the region of £400 000. Discussions are continuing about the sharing of these costs between the County Council and National Express.
- The source of the County Council's share is being examined. The improvements if progressed will be an early and visible improvement to public transport facilities within Cambridge.
- The scheme will be high quality and full consultation with local residents, City and County ward members, arboriculture, conservation and urban design advice will be sought in developing the proposals.

3.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Any proposals to come forward in this location would require planning permission. The provisions and requirements of the related Planning Acts would need to be met including public consultation on any proposals.

3.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The sketch plans attached to this report includes the provision of a public toilet. If a public toilet is to be provided at this location then it will be designed to be wheelchair accessible.

3.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Informal discussion has been held with Officer colleagues at the Planning Department at Cambridge City Council. The key points raised are that the continuing use of Parkside for coaches is an issue that needs to be carefully explained following an options review. The second point is that any proposals coming forward through a planning application will be assessed against the backdrop of the setting of Parker's Piece.
- Informal discussions have been held with National Express whose future aspirations for coach travel to and from Cambridge are described in Paras 2.1-2.5 above.
- Any proposals submitted as a Planning Application would be subject to public consultation. Residents of Parkside would be able to participate in that consultation and any concerns they may have regarding the proposal will be considered. A programme of pre-application engagement and consultation will also be drawn up, this should enable the submitted scheme to address any concerns as far as possible.

3.5 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The availability of convenient public transport to enable people to move between Cambridge and other urban centres will assist people in leading independent lives. Some good examples where coach travel could be used is for visiting family or leisure activities away from Cambridge. Coach travel is competitively priced and particularly helps those without access to a car.

Source Documents	Location
Sketch Plans showing possible option for improved facilities	3 rd Floor A wing Castle Court