



Northampton Bus Interchange – Engagement Strategy
Northamptonshire Highways
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MGWSP



Delivering highways and transport services together

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1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report sets out the engagement strategy for delivery of the Northampton Bus Interchange (NBI) through to planning submission, currently set for 12th December 2011. It outlines significant previous consultation and a future programme of engagement events.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Northampton Borough Council (NBC) has entered into a development agreement with Legal and General (L&G), to regenerate the town centre through the re-development and expansion of the Grosvenor Centre. This regeneration requires the demolition of the existing bus interchange, which whilst still providing a valuable function is now very tired, is operating at a loss, and has a significant (£5million) obligation in general maintenance and repairs. The benefits of relocating the interchange are:

- Allows major private sector investment in the town;
- Allows the regeneration of the Grosvenor Centre;
- Provides a new quality facility for those travelling to and from Northampton by bus, interchanging between bus services and for bus operators; and
- Relieves NBC of financial obligation for repairs.

1.2.2 Under the Agreement, NBC is obliged to provide L&G with vacant possession of the existing bus interchange, and to do so, a new facility needs to be provided.

1.2.3 L&G are ready to commence the development of a planning application for the Grosvenor Centre development. L&G have committed to commence with this application, now that NBC have demonstrated that there is a viable and deliverable solution, agreed by all relevant parties, including Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC), to the relocation of the bus interchange.

1.2.4 The location for the NBI has the buy in from key stakeholders, is deliverable within required timescales for funding, agreed by all relevant parties, and has finance available for delivery. This was agreed by all parties through the MGWSP Appraisal Report in June 2011. The purpose of the June 2011 report was to outline the technical work undertaken to assess the impacts associated with a number of alternative locations for a new bus interchange culminating in a recommendation on a suitable location that satisfies these criteria through a transparent and robust appraisal process.

1.2.5 This recommendation was based on an agreed multi-criteria appraisal process that all parties, as set out below, have inputted into as part of a joint assessment for the

new interchange location. The appraisal provides an audit trail of how the technical work and consultation has fed into the shortlisting and final selection of the most suitable location for the new bus interchange. Parties involved in the appraisal decision making process:

- NCC;
- MGWSP on behalf of NCC;
- NBC; and
- L&G and its advisors.

1.2.6 WNDP have also been party to earlier meetings on the development of a preferred bus interchange location and agreed to an appraisal process for determining a recommended location for the new bus interchange.

1.2.7 From the process outlined above that has taken place over the past 2-years the recommended site for the new bus interchange is the Fish Market Site.

2 Background

2.1.1 When proposals emerged from L&G and NBC from the development agreement to regenerate the town centre through the re-development and expansion of the Grosvenor Centre and the need to relocate the existing bus station, NCC appointed MGWSP to undertake a range of technical work to inform the location and form of any replacement bus facility.

2.2 SUMMARY OF WORK TO DATE

2.2.1 There has been a significant amount of work already done (by both MGWSP and L&G) to inform the location and scale of a new bus interchange within Northampton Town Centre and the findings have been summarised and disseminated to inform the current process and in particular to provide a robust challenge, and undertake an appraisal culminating in a workshop for all parties.

2.2.2 Much of this earlier work summarised to inform this appraisal is set out in a separate report by MGWSP for NCC, produced in March 2010. Key elements of this have been:

- Location assessment (based on a number of factors);
- Likely form and requirements of a new bus interchange (number of bays, waiting facilities etc);
- Operational assessment; and
- Outcomes from surveys, consultation and workshops.

2.2.3 MGWSP produced a first report in March 2010, which has been followed up by further technical work and stakeholder consultation. Working closely with the other partners the following consultation exercises have been undertaken to inform the decision making process for the new interchange:

- A major survey of users of the current bus station;
- Several consultation workshop sessions with bus operators;
- A consultation workshop with mobility and OAP groups;
- A consultation workshop with university and town centre business groups;
- Operational analysis of current and potential future bus services patterns and levels (presented to bus operators);
- Stand allocation/utilisation reviewed (presented to bus operators);
- Meetings with other key stakeholders including English Heritage.

2.2.4 The key outputs from this work included the prioritisation of facilities / components (such as covered waiting areas, real time information etc) within any new interchange that has helped shape concept designs and has fed into the appraisal criteria for the MGWSP June 2011 Appraisal Report. This came out of stakeholder workshops and surveys with around 1,500 passengers at the existing bus station and is shown below.

Rank	Facilities/Component Ranking (highest to lowest)
1	Shelter and Waiting Areas
2	Ease of Boarding/Level Access
3	Interchange Opportunities
4	Future Proof (number of stands and design quality)
5	Accessibility/Access to Bus Station
6	Toilets and welfare
7	Departure Boards
8	Conflict Minimisation
9	Information provision
10	Staff presence
11	Quality of Lighting
12	CCTV
13	Space at Stands
14	Ticketing Facilities
15	Facilities (inc Refreshments and Shops)
16	Comfortable Seating

2.2.5 This is not intended to be a definitive list but should assist in guiding future detailed design for planning.

2.2.6 A summary of consultation and stakeholder engagement is included below and further details of the outcomes are included at Appendix A.

Local Authorities

2.2.7 All local authorities have been engaged by MGWSP throughout the process, but activities include:

- Input into a long list of possible locations;
- Appraisal process with NBC and NCC on the short list of options; and
- Joint agreement on the technical work required for the multi-criteria appraisal process to agree a preferred location.

Bus Operators

2.2.8 Bus operators have been engaged throughout the process to determine a preferred location and establish an agreed amount of bus stands and likely facilities within a new interchange. This has been through the following:

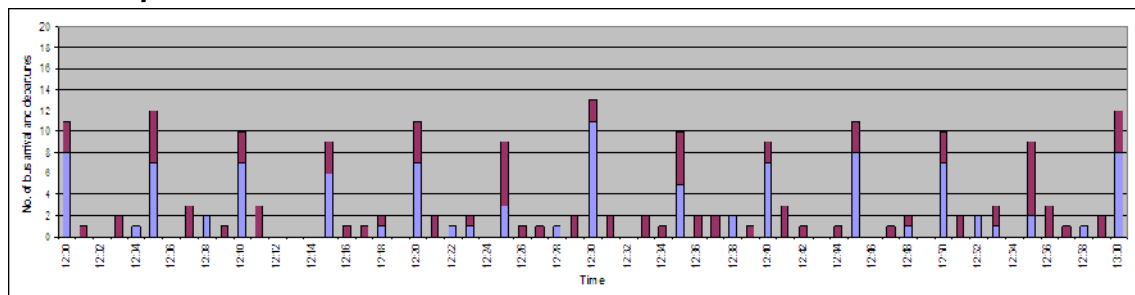
- Attendance at specific NBI workshops open to all bus operators at 3 distinct project stages of initial location appraisal, operational assessment and determining a preferred location;
- Attendance at Bus Partnership meetings;
- Inviting comments in writing;
- Meeting with University Bus Operators; and
- Consultation with Bus (and rail) User Groups.

2.2.9 The future bus operations for Northampton have been assessed in detail and discussed with bus operators in a series of workshops. The key findings are:

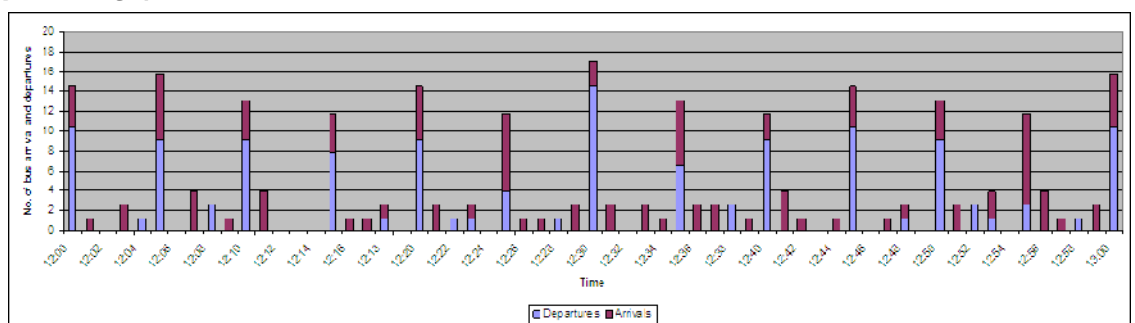
- Scope for improved efficiency of existing bus station operations
- Stand requirements are influenced, in particular, by boarding and alighting times, layover requirements and the layout of the interchange.
- To accommodate forecast growth in bus travel a future bus interchange should accommodate approx. 150 bus arrival and departures during the peak hour – plus National Express
- Based on 150 departures per hour. Assuming 8 departures per stand per hour i.e. a bus requires on average 7½ minutes to set down / layover / pick up passengers = 19 operational stands required; and
- Therefore an initial assessment demonstrates that a new bus interchange with approximately 20 operational stands (19 plus National Express) will cater for existing operations and also facilitate potential growth in bus patronage for at least the next 20 years; and
- The bus operators have agreed with this and are content with a mix of core bus station and on-street stands.

2.2.10 Allowing for growth is a key consideration and this is summarised in the graph below. This shows a peak demand growth of around 14 arrivals and departures to around 18 arrivals and departures.

Current Operations



Future Operations (allowing for growth in residents and patronage)



2.2.11 It is also essential that the future bus interchange option that is taken forward for more detailed evaluation and the design meets the following key criteria to a high quality interchange facility:

- Promotes transport integration / interchange – between different modes of travel;
- Bus services accessing or egressing the interchange can do so efficiently – there is minimal delay to buses due to general traffic or pedestrian movements;
- Future proofed – the interchange option cater for likely future requirements;

-
- Internal conflict minimisation – the interchange will operate safely and efficiently minimising conflicts between buses and buses and pedestrians; and
 - Layover / driver facilities – can be provided in the vicinity of the interchange.

2.2.12 In summary, a detailed operational assessment undertaken by MGWSP, based on current and future bus services within the Northampton area, has concluded that around 19 stands (plus 1 for National Express) are required to cover current operations and provide for future growth over the next 20 years and that this could be provided in a combination of a core bus station with some on-street provision close by, examples could include enhanced stops at The Drapery and drop off at the new shopping centre on Lady's Lane. The bus operators have agreed in principle to this.

2.2.13 Recent discussions with the Rail and Bus User Group on Saturday 1st October has resulted in the following comments.

2.2.14 The Rail User Group is chaired by Brian Binley MP. This group resolved to support the Bus User Group in developing designs for the new Bus Interchange.

2.2.15 Operators including Stagecoach and First were in attendance. It was noted the existing bus station is congested with buses not being able to dock at their designated stops so need to use space effectively at the Fish Market site. Also want to see efficient and effective Drive In Reverse Out (DIRO) operation. Noted need for effective public information and consultation throughout (existing Real Time Passenger Information not seen as entirely effective). The next meeting is 5th November at 11:30am (following Rail User Group).

Town Centre Partners

2.2.16 MGWSP with NBC and NCC met the Town Centre Partners group in March 2010 and the outcomes were as follows:

- Step change in quality if interchange facilities required;
- New facility could be provided on-street;
- Pedestrianised streets should be maintained;
- Location close to shops and facilities is essential;
- All hours should be good safe pedestrian access;
- Drop off facilities important; and
- Mix of views on location(s) and design options.

Mobility Impaired and OAP Groups

2.2.17 The main outcomes from the discussions with Mobility Impaired Groups in March 2010 were:

- Clear concerns over current bus station
- Any new facility must be accessible to all
- Want to see all current facilities in any new interchange but with significant improvement
- Staff and well designed to integrate with surroundings are key
- Clear access routes on foot and level (without escalators and long routes)

-
- Further involvement

Heritage

2.2.18 A meeting was held with Clive Fletcher of English Heritage on Tuesday 14th June 2011 to present the bus interchange options and understand the heritage issues associated with each. Further to that meeting Clive consulted with colleagues and has visited each of the bus interchange option sites to provide the following outline response.

“English Heritage acknowledges the potential that relocation of the bus station has for allowing this part of the town to be reconfigured and regenerated, by reinstating the legibility and quality of the townscape, something also recognised by the Urban Panel. What is important is that this objective remains uppermost and is constantly referenced during the masterplanning process, as a myriad of other immediate practicalities seek to be accommodated. Bus stations are by their nature one of the most difficult buildings to accommodate successfully in an urban environment”.

2.2.19 English Heritage have expressed concerns that the plans that are evolving may be somewhat piecemeal, in that design decisions for the bus station will have sequential (and possibly unforeseen) knock on effects for other sites, as opposed to an overview of the townscape where projects are considered simultaneously and weighed in the context of the town centre as a whole. They have indicated that they have advised NBC, that this would provide the greatest chance for a successful outcome in reconfiguring the town centre to meet the challenges presented by growth and the need for regeneration. The full English Heritage response is included at Appendix B. Overall, English Heritage did not provide any policy objection to any of the locations for a new bus interchange.

2.2.20 English Heritage has some concerns with the Fish Market site. It would need consideration of townscape and maintaining a Sheep Street frontage and how existing buildings may be refurbished.

2.2.21 It should be noted that the consultation with English Heritage was based on outline concepts for different locations, and in the case of the Fish Market site these concepts have now been developed through feasibility, seeking to take account of the English Heritage comments wherever possible whilst noting the physical site constraints. These issues have also fed into the selection of architects for the scheme for which a competitive design workshop exercise was used.

2.2.22 In terms of a response from NBC as part of the June 2011 Appraisal Process and Report, the following are key **Heritage** related issues:

- Whole site falls within All Saints Conservation Area and therefore consent may be required for the demolition of buildings;
- The character and appearance of the Conservation Area along with the setting of adjacent listed buildings will be an important consideration in the design of any proposals;
- None of buildings are on the Statutory Heritage Listings;

- The Bear Public House is a locally listed heritage site; this is mainly because it is believed that in its cellars there is part of the wall of a medieval synagogue;
- Although the Fish Market itself is not listed as having heritage value it certainly could be of enough community interest to suggest that its wider social, cultural, economic and environmental context enables it to be heritage designated as a material planning consideration under the new PPS5 - Planning for the Historic Environment legislation;
- Across Sheep Street there are 5 Statutory Heritage Listed Sites and 7 Locally Listed Buildings and across Bradshaw Street there is 1 Locally Listed Building; and
- English Heritage are keen to preserve the frontages and street structure of Sheep Street.

2.2.23 The following are key **Archaeological** related issues:

- The Fish Market site has not been archaeologically investigated as it is mainly built up and has very little open space for exploratory test pitting;
- If site is taken forward additional intrusive evaluation, i.e. test pits may need to be undertaken to establish the archaeology;
- According to the Historic Environmental Register Northampton's Saxon defences run underneath the Fish Market site;
- Cellars of Bear Inn Public House include apparent former Jewish Synagogue walls and foundations of the adjacent properties could include Nationally significant structures/artefacts related to this area of Northampton's Medieval Jewish settlement; and
- Area requires further investigation as it contains medieval remnants.

2.2.24 The following are key **Local Context** related issues:

- WNDC and NBC have invested finance and resource into the Art Collective that is based in the Fish Market. The existing Fish Market is providing a facility for the Northampton Arts Collective, which has political support. It is a not-for-profit company which generates £1.5 million pounds annually, supporting 24 jobs with 95,000 visitors per annum;
- Local Heritage Groups are very likely to want to protect the Fish Market from development;
- Former Heritage Champion (Councillor) for the Council may resist attempts to demolish the Fish Market; and
- Need to explore a viable alternative location for the Arts Collective.

2.2.25 Further work is being undertaken to clarify these issues in consultation with the NBC Heritage and NCC Archaeology specialists and to deal with them as part of the design of the NBI on the Fish Market site.

3 Engagement Strategy

3.1.1 This engagement strategy is intended to complement any existing joint NCC and NBC processes.

3.1.2 To build on the engagement already undertaken the following is proposed prior to planning application submission:

- Further consultation with Bus Operators on design feasibility involving MGWSP and NCC bus operations specialists and the appointed architects D5;
- Presentation to Bus User Groups over 2 dates;
- Stakeholder consultation with Town Centre Partners, OAP and Mobility Impaired Groups;
- Media Briefing;
- Public Exhibitions for the scheme and posters/displays in key locations;
- Further consultation session/s with English Heritage;
- Discussion with Town Centre Management Team at NBC;
- Consultation with WNDC Planning Officers during the development of a design for full planning submission;
- Engagement with NBC Conservation / Heritage, Environmental Health, Arboriculture Officers;
- Consultation with Taxi and Private Hire Companies;
- Discussions with NCC Archaeology;
- Attend Town Centre Conservation Area Action Committee;
- Liaison with the Environment Agency;
- Engaging with young people and educational establishments (including Northampton University);
- Engage residents associations close to Fish Market;
- Flyer local area to Fish Market;
- Discussions with market traders and emergency services;
- Involving the Police in design relating to crime prevention;
- Agreeing a scope for the Transport Assessment with NCC;
- Briefings to members and Council committee meetings; and
- Pre-application presentation to the Northampton Area Planning Committee (NAPC).

4 Programme of Engagement

4.1.1 The table below sets out the key activities and timescales for engagement.

Activity	Timescale/Date	Comments
Bus User Group	1 st Oct 2011	
Liaise with all NBC and NCC Specialists (Heritage, Archaeology, Transport, Env Health)	w/c 31 st Oct	Meeting held on 3 rd Nov that covered Heritage, Conservation, Archaeology Crime Prevention and Urban Design
Liaise with Town Centre Management (Shopmobility),	w/c 17 th Oct	
Member Briefing	21 st Oct 2011	
Meet WNDC Planning Team with Architect to discuss Feasibility Design	w/c 17 th Oct	Date agreed for 18 th Oct
Meet with Northampton University	8 th Nov	
Bus Operator Workshop	8 th Nov	
Stakeholder Workshops with OAP, Mobility Impaired Groups, Taxi / PHV companies and Town (BID) Centre Partners	w/c 24 th Oct or w/c 31 st Oct	4 th Nov agreed for Business Improvement District (BID) town centre partners and Disabled, mobility impaired and disabled groups Taxi meeting on 31 st Oct
Member Briefing and Press release regarding exhibitions NCC website goes live	9 th Nov	Pre-public exhibition
Youth Engagement	w/c 7 th Nov	Via Youth Forum groups and <i>Survey Monkey</i> online survey
Flyers to Fish Market Area (inc Spring Burroughs Residents Association)	w/c 7 th Nov	
Attend Town Centre Conservation Area Action Committee	7 th Nov	
Discuss Public Exhibition details with WNDC Planning Team and present designs	8 th Nov	
NBC Member Briefing	w/c 7 th or 14 th Nov	
Public Exhibitions	Dates 10 th and 12 th Nov	2 days of exhibitions covering Weekday (until 10am until 7.30pm) and Saturday 10am to 4pm
Public Exhibitions - Wider displays	During consultation period to end of Nov	Various locations such as Grosvenor Centre
Local Secondary School	w/c 21 st Nov	
Bus User Group	5 th Nov 11.30am	
Attend Town Centre Conservation Area Action Committee	7 th Nov	
Pre-application presentation to the Corporation's Northampton Area Planning	6 th Dec	

Committee (NAPC)		
Discuss post NPAC response details with WNDP Planning Team	Immediately post NPAC	
Planning Submission	12 th Dec to WNDP	Full Application
Newsletter/Website update post- application	Mid-Dec	
Newsletter/Website update post-determination	March/April	

5 Planning Submission Programme

5.1.1 In order to assist WNDC Planning Team the key tasks and timescales are outlined below.

Task	Timescale
EIA Screening Request	MGWSP request to WNDC by end of w/c 17 th Oct Phase 1 Habitat Survey by mid-Oct
Plans/ Elevations/ Sections	Drafts by end Oct 2011/Early Nov
Design and Access Statement	Draft by Mid-Nov
Planning Statement	Draft by Mid-Nov
Heritage Statement	Draft by Mid-Nov
Tree Survey	To be undertaken by end of Oct
Transport Assessment / Travel Plan	Draft by Mid-Nov
Archaeological Study	DBA Draft by End-Nov
Noise Assessment	Noise Surveys in Oct and Draft by End-Nov
Air Quality Assessment	Draft by End-Nov
Contamination Report	Draft by End-Nov
Draft Application - Corporation's Northampton Area Planning Committee (NAPC)	6 th Dec
Planning Application Submission to WNDC	12 th December 2011

Appendix A – Consultation and Stakeholder Responses

Appendix B – English Heritage Response

