

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 6th January 2016

1. Planning and Development

Planning and Development Committee took place on 4th December 2015 and approved the following major planning applications:

- Residential development of 172 dwellings set on the land west of Strait Lane, Stainton. The scheme includes a new access point off Strait Lane, with the incorporation of the public right of way across the site (leading to Low Lane) in a landscaped setting, together with a play area and sustainable drainage area (next to Low Lane).

Committee had undertaken a visit to the site before the meeting, to examine the progress by Taylor Wimpey on phases 1 and 2 of their development and were impressed by the range and quality of the housing on the site, which at one point had been the fastest selling housing site in North England. Now that earlier phases are substantially complete, it will enable Taylor Wimpey to begin work in the New Year.

- The demolition of the former Laurel Hotel on Borough Road (Laurel Street corner) to enable a new development containing a seven storey building. This would have a ground floor commercial unit (possibly a shop) with student accommodation above.

Major development progress elsewhere is notable on:

- the sheltered accommodation for military personnel on Grange Road (site of Endeavour Social Club opposite Captain Cook's car park), with the steel frame now in place;
- the Welding Institute facility on Riverside Park, visible from the A66, which is now nearing completion and is moving onto the external works phase;
- the Olympia sports building at the University is progressing well with the completion of the cladding and fitting out is to begin; and
- the building of the Clinkards development on Cannon Park is now complete and the installation of services is now underway.

2. Enterprise Zone

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), a further tranche of Enterprise Zones were announced by the Chancellor. Middlesbrough's existing St Hilda's Enterprise Zone was extended to include Queens Square, Exchange Square and parts of Wilson Street, Albert Road and Zetland Road. Details of the support to businesses has yet to be clarified.

3. BDUK Broadband Voucher Scheme

The 2015 budget extended the existing Government-funded broadband voucher scheme to more localities, including Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley.

The scheme was ceased in November 2015 after its funds had been fully committed. The scheme provided grants of between £100 to £3,000 to businesses in order to connect to superfast broadband.

Tees Valley estimated that it would provide 150 vouchers, but actually ended up issuing 250 vouchers. Of the Tees Valley vouchers issued, 77 were Middlesbrough companies, providing a total investment of c.£120,000 to help them gain access to superfast broadband and improve business performance.

Middlesbrough Council and its sub-regional partners are looking at options to provide a similar facility in the future, given the success of this scheme.

4. Rail Franchise Update

Rail journeys across the North of England and Scotland will undergo the biggest transformation in decades, thanks to an unprecedented package of improvements being delivered in new franchise deals. The government has announced it intends to award the Northern franchise to Arriva Rail North Limited, and the TransPennine Express franchise to First Trans Pennine Express Limited.

Together they will oversee a massive £1.2 billion boost to rail services with brand-new modern trains, more seats, more services and a host of improvements to deliver a modern, 21st century passenger experience ; as well as playing a vital role in bringing the Northern Powerhouse to life, rebalancing the economy, creating jobs, opportunity and growth, and providing significantly better journeys across the region.

Middlesbrough will see direct benefits such as;

- there will be more seats on refurbished trains, with the removal of the outdated and unpopular Pacer trains;
- up to 70 extra capacity across both Arriva Northern and TransPennine services for passengers travelling into the 5 major commuter cities (Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle) of the north during the morning rush-hour;
- improved service frequency on local services, alongside improved ticketing, including mobile and print-at-home tickets, and discounted fares for jobseekers;
- a half-hourly service between Middlesbrough, Stockton and Newcastle, providing 30 trains per day in each direction. The current service is generally hourly
- at least 10 services per day will be high quality Northern Connect services, operated by fully-refurbished, air conditioned Class 158 trains;
- today's service levels will be preserved at intermediate stations, but with earlier first trains and later last trains along the route;
- improved service frequency between Middlesbrough and Darlington;
- Sunday services will operate all year round to Whitby, with effect from winter 2017 to 2018;
- 2 additional services per day to Leeds, Manchester and Manchester Airport;
- major uplift in Sunday services 9am to 7pm for the TransPennine services;
- new cycling facilities, passenger information screens, delivery lockers and 'Click and Collect' services at Middlesbrough Station,
- entertainment and real-time journey information to smartphones and tablets.

5. Acklam Hall Update

Work progresses with the restoration and renovation of Acklam Hall. The facility has taken a significant number of wedding bookings and the restaurant is scheduled to be

open to the public in February 2016. A planning application is due shortly to provide additional details on the medical facilities proposed for the rear of the Acklam Hall site. This process will be subject to a comprehensive public consultation exercise and will include statutory stakeholders such as Historic England (formerly English Heritage) and Sport England.

6. Tower Green

The Council has recently purchased the last remaining privately owned property in Tower Green. All properties were eventually purchased by agreement, without the need for a Compulsory Purchase. The Council has awarded the contract to demolish the remaining seven properties in Tower Green to A Buckler (Haulage) Ltd. This now brings to an end the site assembly within St Hilda's and will facilitate the further delivery of the flagship Middlehaven project.

7. Marton West Neighbourhood Plan – Submission

Marton West Neighbourhood Forum submitted its Neighbourhood Plan and supporting evidence to the Council on Monday 7th December 2015. This is the first Neighbourhood Plan to be submitted to the Council since the Localism Act 2011 was introduced providing new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans. The Council will be consulting on the submitted documentation in the New Year, prior to an examination by an independent examiner in the spring (2016). The submitted documentation and further information will be placed on the Council's website under the Neighbourhood Planning web-pages.