

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Teesside University Development - Southfield Road

Elected Mayor: Ray Mallon

Executive Director for Neighbourhood and Communities: Kevin Parkes

Date: 18 January 2013

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present options for potential improvements to the Southfield Road area, as part of the future development aspirations for Teesside University.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Mayor:
 - a) considers the options presented for the vehicular access arrangements / improvements for Southfield Road; and,
 - b) agrees a process for the public consultation of these options.

IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£150,000)
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards
Non Key

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent
Urgent report

If urgent please give full reasons

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The Executive approved a report in July 2011 - Teesside University Future Vision and Development, which highlighted the potential treatment of Southfield Road and closure to traffic subject to community consultation.
6. Since the Executive report, talks have been held with University and community representatives, to: determine the aspirations of the University; understand resident concerns; and, outline a number of options for future improvement.

University Contribution

7. Teesside University brings significant economic benefits to both Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley. The University is a cornerstone of the Middlesbrough economy and critical to many private businesses in Teesside. Its promotion and championing of the town has achieved much in raising the profile of Middlesbrough and has improved the external perception of the area.
8. It is clear that, in order to achieve economic growth, the higher education sector is going to have to play an integral role. If businesses are to compete in global markets it is essential to have suitably skilled workforce and opportunities for research and development. A successful university is therefore critical to economic success and the welfare of the area.
9. The University has a turnover of over £145m per annum (2010/11) and is a major employer within Middlesbrough. In 2012, it employed 1367 full time staff and 957 part-time staff.
10. In 2012, the University hosted 28,100 students. 12,000 full-time and 16,100 part-time. Students have a significant influence within the local economy. In particular, in shaping the town centre economy; residential demand in inner Middlesbrough; and, stimulating the night-time economy. For example, the student population has justified private investment in new student accommodation on Linthorpe Road.
11. In 2007, PriceWaterhouse Cooper (PWC) assessed the University's impact on the local economy. The report concludes that the total gross domestic impact of the University was approximately £815m per annum, comprising:
 - a. £78m direct expenditure on goods, services and salaries;
 - b. £54m indirect economic impact on the UK economy resulting from expenditure by the University and its staff;
 - c. £49m added value through student placements, knowledge transfer activity, consultancy income and formation of companies (91% of which, are within the North East); and,
 - d. overall lifetime additional economic value associated with the enhanced skills of a single year of University students (of £634m per annum) of whom 75% are from the North East.
12. PWC noted that their analysis did not take into account the wider economic and social role of the University to its community, such as its 'catalytic role' in relation to economic regeneration.

13. The University actively promotes entrepreneurialism, with its business start-up programme having launched over 300 new businesses in the last decade. It is a major partner in the DigitalCity programme, which is an influential, and growing, part of the economy in Middlesbrough. These initiatives retain highly-skilled graduates to be the future wealth generators.
14. However, higher education is facing a challenging period. UCAS figures show that applications from English students to English universities are down around 10%, meaning that Universities are competing within a pool of fewer students. There may also be restrictions on the number of foreign students.
15. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) has warned that falls in student recruitment are a key risk to university finances. The sector continues to operate on very fine margins, which means that even small changes can have a material impact on its financial performance. As such, Universities across England are faced with delivering in an increasingly competitive environment and with significant reductions in public capital funding.

Evidence of Need

16. Few institutions have as much of a vested interest in the appeal, growth and success of Middlesbrough than Teesside University. Successful universities are synonymous with successful cities. They educate our workforce, employ our residents, supply our industries and boost our economies.
17. The University's estate strategy identifies the benefits of a more cohesive and integrated campus. Currently, traffic flows on Southfield Road create a barrier, which carves through the spatial and administrative centre of the University campus. The long term vision for the University is one of creating a focal point at the heart of the University campus, completing an important pedestrian route, incorporating high quality public realm and improved amenity for pedestrians, residents and students alike.
18. In the wake of the emerging national funding arrangements for universities, Teesside University is having to adapt its business model to attract students in an increasingly competitive higher education market. Essentially, the University is shifting from a model reliant on a large percentage of local, and part-time students, to one which attracts more full-time students from farther afield, both domestically and internationally.
19. Teesside University's academic offer is strong and this will go some way to attracting more full-time students. However, as competition becomes increasingly fierce, the University needs to capitalise on student interest by complementing its academic offer with an improved environment and lifestyle experiences.
20. Empirical evidence clearly demonstrates that, when choosing their University, the environmental and living conditions are equally important with the academic offer. Data from the International Student Barometer 2011 (IBO) has indicated that Teesside University is well regarded in terms of learning and support services, regularly cited in the top 10%. In contrast, Teesside ranks very low for living and environmental indices. This means that the University is losing prospective students to other institutions, based largely on the campus and its surroundings.

21. The University is still hoping to develop a new teaching and conference building in the campus centre. This building forms part of a wider plan to develop a new pedestrian square at the heart of the campus. This central area will help enhance the overall student experience and University environment. With this, the University has an outstanding track record of producing high-quality, award-winning buildings.

Community Considerations

22. Southfield Road is an important east-west link route in central Middlesbrough. Its closure for through traffic at its western end would generate a need for traffic to find alternative routes. This is projected to notably increase the burden on the Borough Road / Linthorpe Road Junction. However, it is likely that some traffic will distribute onto alternative local routes.
23. Consultation with local representatives has revealed resident concerns with regards to the potential of traffic decanting into residential areas and the implications on resident safety. Similarly, there is concern that a road closure would sever community ties in the University and Gresham areas.
24. The local taxi trade is likely to be concerned about any closure proposals as the area has a lively night-time economy and is a common through route for taxis. Although any closure would include alternative provision for taxis (potentially a taxi rank at either end of the closure), this would involve a diversion for taxis if the occupant wanted to travel in the opposite direction. Consultation will investigate further workable solutions.
25. On the other hand, pedestrianisation of part of Southfield Road would facilitate the aspiration of a continuous pedestrian boulevard from Albert Park to Albert Road, developing an amenity for the town.

OPTIONS

26. Teesside University's aspiration is to create a focal point at the heart of the campus, the council is working in partnership to explore these ideas that create a high quality streetscene and public realm which bridges the two halves of the campus and is friendlier to needs of businesses, residents and pedestrians. However, it is also recognised that there are concerns about potential road closure.
27. A number of options have therefore been identified to develop this area and meet the varied needs of many local stakeholders.
28. A reference plan of Southfield Road is attached at appendix A.

Option 1 – No Closure

Proposal

1. This option retains full vehicle access with a shared surface treatment / improvements.

Likely Treatment

2. This scheme would be determined by accommodating the necessary access arrangements. Likely to be based on a single-level shared surface design, repaved in high quality materials (to vehicle loads).
3. The area would be repaved in high quality materials furnished with modern street lighting and street furniture; integrated with the existing Library forecourt. Existing railings and redundant access points would be removed.

Advantages

- a. No immediate impact to access arrangements and traffic flows.
- b. Careful design could reduce traffic speed and reduce overall traffic use, over time.
- c. Examples of similar successful schemes exist.
- d. More acceptable to local residents and taxi operators.
- e. Less long term disruption for local businesses.
- f. Allows ongoing access for statutory undertaker services.

Disadvantages

- a. Is unlikely to deliver the desired feel of a campus core.
- b. This option is the least advantageous for pedestrian safety as there would be subtle highway demarcation and a period of adjustment for users.
- c. Construction would remain at highway specifications (loads) and is significantly more expensive than a solely pedestrianised standard.
- d. This is relatively costly and may not deliver core University objectives. The University feels that the cost will not justify the benefits.
- e. The surface treatments would need to be designed with respect to highway standards, i.e. tactile paving etc; this would reduce the flexibility of design.
- f. Vehicles likely to stain and damage the road surface, as well as street furniture.
- g. Highways and footpaths will remain adopted, implicating maintenance budgets (due to higher surface treatment specifications).

Option 2 – Daytime Closure of Southfield Road (8.30am – 5.30pm)

Proposal

1. This option is based on a daytime closure of a length of Southfield Road, with a shared surface treatment and vehicle carriageway maintained.

Likely Treatment

2. This scheme would be determined by accommodating the necessary access arrangements. Likely to be based on a shared surface design, repaved to vehicle load specifications, with a barrier entrance for closure periods.
3. The area would be repaved in high quality materials furnished with modern street lighting and street furniture.

Advantages

- a. Allows for continued service access for businesses.
- b. Private vehicles and taxis can access in the evenings and early mornings.
- c. A balanced compromise between access and function.
- d. There will be a marginally lesser impact on local traffic networks.
- e. Enhanced pedestrian safety for the majority of the day.
- f. Provides a focal point for University events and other local events.
- g. May encourage the University bringing forward additional investment in the area.
- h. Allows for partial completion of an important north-south campus pedestrian route.

Disadvantages

- a. This option does not fully address the residents' concerns over traffic displacement throughout residential areas, nor the University's requirements.
- b. As a shared surface, there are inherent safety risks for pedestrians.
- c. Limits flexibility of design features and street furniture across carriageway areas.
- d. Vehicle access, albeit part-time, dilutes the feel of a dedicated campus core.
- e. Construction would remain at highway specifications (loads) and more expensive.
- f. The closure mechanism / barrier would have to be operated and maintained at considerable cost.
- g. Vehicle access can stain / damage the surface treatments.
- h. Will generate some local confusion to traffic.
- i. It is likely not to be seen as a 'final' solution and may prolong the debate on full closure / remaining open, post implementation.

Option 3 – Daytime Closure (8.30am – 5.30pm) and One Way Traffic

Proposal

1. This option is based on a daytime closure of a length of Southfield Road, with single-carriageway, one-way traffic in the evenings.

Likely Treatment

2. Likely to include a narrow carriageway with a shared surface design, repaved to vehicle load specifications, with a barrier entrance for closure periods.
3. The area would be repaved in high quality materials furnished with modern street lighting and street furniture.

Advantages

- a. Allows for continued service access for businesses, outside core hours.
- b. Private vehicles and taxis can access in the evenings and early mornings.
- c. A balanced compromise between access and function.
- d. There will be a marginally lesser impact on local traffic networks.
- e. Enhanced pedestrian safety for the majority of the day.
- f. Allows for a focal point for University events and other local events.
- g. Allows for an attractive gateway to the University.

Disadvantages

- a. This option does not fully address the residents' concerns over traffic displacement throughout residential areas, nor the University's requirements.
- b. Limits flexibility of design features and street furniture across carriageway areas.
- c. Vehicle access, albeit part-time, dilutes the feel of a dedicated campus core.
- d. Vehicle / taxi users may be frustrated with one-way system.
- e. Construction would remain at highway specifications (loads) and more expensive.
- f. The closure mechanism / barrier would have to be operated and maintained at considerable cost.
- g. Vehicle access can stain / damage the surface treatments.
- h. As a shared surface, there are inherent safety risks for pedestrians.
- i. It is likely not to be seen as a 'final' solution and may prolong the debate on full closure / remaining open, post implementation.

Option 4 – Full Traffic Closure of Southfield Road (University Frontage)

Proposal

1. This option is based on the full traffic closure and associated pedestrianisation of a length of Southfield Road.

Likely Treatment

2. This would involve the complete re-landscaping of campus core and highway. This configuration would allow for iconic features or buildings.
3. It is anticipated that the area would be repaved in high quality materials furnished with modern street lighting and street furniture.
4. Access arrangements would be reviewed for statutory services, the University and local businesses. Similarly, some remodelling may be required of the local highway network.

Advantages

- a. Will allow the University to create a campus core with a high quality public realm.
- b. Complements University plans to develop additional buildings / facilities.
- c. Greater pedestrian safety and a safer campus environment.
- d. Local businesses may benefit from a Plaza feel.
- e. Will become a focal point for University events and other local events.
- f. Creates a discreet and attractive campus, which is a factor in attracting students.
- g. Encourages the University to bring forward investment in the campus core.
- h. Allows for the completion of an important north-south pedestrian route.
- i. Reduces costs as highway load treatments are not required.

Disadvantages

- a. Local residents have already expressed traffic concerns in nearby residential areas.
- b. Loss of an East – West vehicle thoroughfare within the town.
- c. As with daytime closure options, additional traffic capacity on nearby junctions may cause journey delays and is likely to require network upgrades and investment.
- d. Businesses rely on access to Southfield Road for deliveries and services. New arrangements would need to be provided.
- e. Could interfere with the evening peak of vehicles / taxis, local bars and restaurants.
- f. This proposal is likely to be unpopular with the local taxi trade.

Option 5 – Weekday Traffic Closure of Southfield Road (University Frontage) and weekend vehicle access.

Proposal

5. This option is based on the weekday traffic closure of Southfield Road with weekend access for vehicles.

Likely Treatment

4. This scheme would be determined by accommodating the necessary access arrangements. Likely to be based on a shared surface design, repaved to vehicle load specifications, with a barrier entrance for closure periods.
5. The area would be repaved in high quality materials furnished with modern street lighting and street furniture.

Advantages

- a. Allows for continued service access for businesses, at weekends.
- b. Private vehicles and taxis can access the area at peak periods (weekend).
- c. There will be a lesser impact on local traffic networks for busy shopping periods.
- d. Enhanced pedestrian safety for the majority of the week.
- e. Allows for a focal point for University events and other local events.
- f. Allows for continued service access for businesses.
- g. Allows for an improvement to the gateway of the University.
- h. May encourage the University bringing forward additional investment in the area.
- i. Allows for partial completion of an important north-south campus pedestrian route.

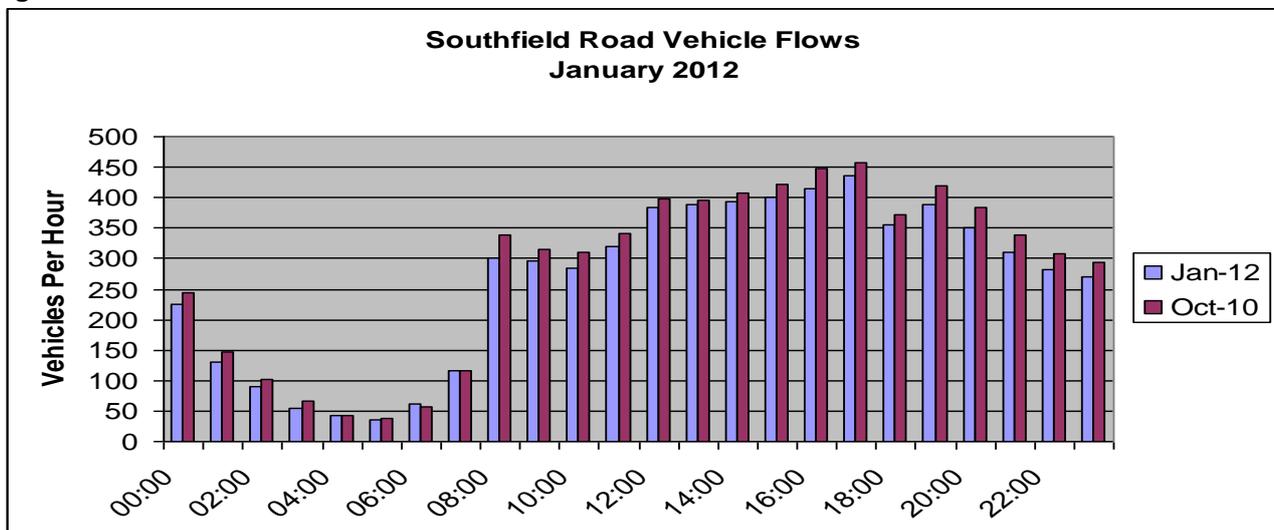
Disadvantages

- a. This option does not fully address the resident's concerns over traffic displacement throughout residential areas, nor the University's requirements.
- b. Limits flexibility of design features and street furniture across carriageway areas.
- c. Vehicle access, albeit part-time, dilutes the feel of a dedicated campus core.
- d. Vehicle / taxi users may be frustrated with one-way system.
- e. Construction would remain at highway specifications (loads) and more expensive.
- f. The closure mechanism / barrier would have to be operated and maintained at considerable cost.
- g. Vehicle access can stain / damage the surface treatments.
- h. As a shared surface, there are inherent safety risks for pedestrians.
- i. May generate some local confusion to traffic.
- j. It is likely not to be seen as a 'final' solution and may prolong the debate on full closure / remaining open, past implementation.

Traffic Management / Considerations

29. Of course, any proposed closure would have an impact on through traffic. Traffic data from January 2012 shows that approx. 6,300 vehicles / day using the route. This represents an average reduction of 6% from traffic flows sampled in October 2010 (6,800 vehicles). The traffic flows along Southfield Road are unusual, as there is a 'third peak' on Friday and Saturday evenings. Fig:1 (below) compares traffic data from 2010 and 2012, respectively.
30. Survey data from January 2012 showing that around 40% of the total through traffic (c.2,400 vehicles) occurred between 7pm and 7am. This suggests that, although a daytime closure would distort traffic flows, although it is estimated that a significant proportion of these journeys involve vehicles serving a University function.
31. Initial modelling has highlighted increased traffic flows at the Linthorpe Rd / Borough Rd junction. It is anticipated that the signals will be near capacity in the am peak and over capacity during the pm peak, leading to traffic queues. To accommodate any proposed changes, work would be required to model nearby junctions and amend timings as appropriate. In terms of service access, a closure is likely to affect local businesses. Suitable alternative access arrangements would need to be confirmed by checking and remodelling vehicle turning paths and / or installing turning areas.
32. The accident history of Southfield Rd is not excessive considering the road type and night-time environment. Over the last five years, there have been seven injury accidents, of which two involved pedestrians. However, it is evident from observations that there is pedestrian / vehicle conflict at the heart of the campus.
33. There is a fairly steady flow of traffic in the busiest hours between 8am and 8pm varying from approx. 300 per hour to approx. 440 per hour. This averages out at 182 vehicles using the road, each-way, in these hours. This means that there are approximately 3 vehicles using the road, in each direction, per minute. It is likely that a number of these vehicles are directly attributable to the University.
34. Overall, it is likely that there would be increased journey times for general traffic, emergency vehicles, taxis, etc. There will also be implications for taxi rank provision on Southfield Rd.

fig:1



CONSULTATION PROCESS

35. The following consultation process is proposed on a preferred option(s):
- a. the consultation coverage will include a press release, information boards, consultation forms in community facilities and information on the internet. In addition, council officers will regularly attend a local facility (to be determined) to answer questions, during the consultation period;
 - b. four week public consultation, on the four options tabled in this report, including any preferred options if that is agreed;
 - c. report findings (with summary of details) back for Mayoral direction on identifying preferred option(s);
 - d. consult on the preferred option(s) for a period of three weeks; and,
 - e. report findings back for Mayoral decision.

Conclusion

36. Over recent decades Teesside University has consolidated its campus and has added to this area with a series of award winning buildings. This has created a quality environment for education. The Council and University have worked collaboratively to help achieve this success.
37. In an increasingly challenging environment, Teesside University has demonstrated that it still has the aspiration to remain competitive and proactive in the higher education market place through further investment. This is a very important catalyst for the town in the current macro economic circumstances.
38. The opportunity of creating a new square at the heart of Teesside University's campus would be a major enhancement of the campus environment. However, any proposal must deliver a balance between the need to support local growth, the requirement to respond to the needs of local stakeholders and maintaining serviceable vehicular access in this area of the town.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)

39. At this stage, no Impact Assessment is required. However, a future Impact Assessment may be required, subject to the Executives preferred option.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

40. A major risk to the Council in not working with the University is that it could put in jeopardy the future long term wellbeing of the area's economy. The University is a pivotal driver of the local economy and generates wealth, activity and opportunity. Failure to work with the University to help it meet its long term ambitions could impact on its ability to invest and therefore its ability to be competitive in the new world of higher education funding.

41. Local communities and stakeholders have expressed concern over the road closure and its potential impacts upon safety, community cohesion and mobility across the area. Given these factors, it is important to determine a solution which balances the prospect of growth, with the needs of the local population.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

42. A comprehensive consultation exercise will be conducted prior to, and throughout, implementation. The findings of this exercise will be reported back to Executive.
43. The previous Executive report (Teesside University Future Vision and Development – July 2011) made provision of £30k, to contribute toward legal costs (highway orders), traffic management costs associated with the highway order and some temporary accommodation works to enable continued servicing of properties.
44. Dependent on the preferred option(s), closure, or partial closure, options are likely to generate additional implementation costs in terms of signing, road markings modifications to traffic calming schemes and signalling. In terms of a permanent closure costs would be significant to provide long term turning and servicing arrangements. Additional cost estimates would be refined through consultation.
45. With any of the closure options, a legal closure order would be required.
46. Teesside University will be responsible for designing and funding any approved improvements as part of their development strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that the Mayor:
 - a. considers the options presented for the vehicular access arrangements / improvements for Southfield Road; and,
 - b. agrees a process for the public consultation of these options.

REASONS

47. The recommendations are made on the basis that the Council is seeking to look at ways to work with the University for the benefit of the town overall.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

48. Teesside University Future Vision and Development – July 2011

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