NAPPER

RIBA Chartered Practice

Prepared on behalf of:

The Borough of Darlington (Darlington Station Gateway) Compulsory Purchase Order 2021

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Acquisition of Land Act 1981
Compulsory Purchase Inquiries Procedure Rules 2007

Proof of Evidence of

Graeme Dodd

Darlington Station Gateway MSCP Architectural Layout

FINAL – 15th December 2021

Introduction

1.1 My name is Graeme Dodd, I am a Director and practising Architect at Napper Architects. I have been employed by Napper Architects for 30 years. I am professionally registered by the Architect Registration Board (ARB) and a member of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). I am a national council member at the RIBA and also a specialist conservation architect mentor. I have been a professional practice examiner at Newcastle University for a number of years and I am currently delivering as part of the professional practice lecture series.

My professional qualifications include:

- RIBA SCA: Specialist Conservation Architect
- PGDip Architectural Practice and Management (part iii) 1993
- Newcastle University: BArch (Hons) 1991 Architectural Studies (part ii)
- Newcastle University: BA (Hons) Architectural Studies (part i).
- Mandatory Continuing professional development

1.2 I joined Napper in 1991 as an Architectural Assistant and completed my registration with the ARB in 1993. I became a Partner in 1999 and Managing Director in 2002. During my time at Napper, I have been involved in projects across a variety of sectors including commercial, residential, education, infrastructure, MSCP's, heritage, landscape and industrial. I have worked on schemes from feasibility through to completion with budgets up to £50 million.

1.3 As several of these projects had been part of wider redevelopment proposals for key city and town centre sites, it was logical that I should lead the team at Napper. These schemes also used the MSCP's to support wider re-development by providing the necessary infrastructure to ensure there viability.

1.4 On the Darlington Station Gateway East scheme, I have been the project Director looking after the delivery of the MSCP and concourse building. I have also been the landscape Director designing the new public realm around the new concourse building. At Napper Architects we design using a form of "charette" which is led by the Director. We have two Directors per project which allows for holiday cover and sickness and Alan Rees is the other named Director for the project. I have led the internal charette's, primarily to utilise my skill set in designing in historic settings and also in delivering MSCP's on tight urban sites. This form of design development removes the risk of any design decision being left unchallenged and the design is "tested" within the wider office expertise.

1.5 I have been involved in serval other infrastructure projects including delivering the GraingerTown MSCP (which combines retail and commercial space), the Bangor Bus and Rail Interchange and a new Transport Hub for North Shields integrating a new bus station with the existing Metro railway line. The Transport Hub is also being delivered with Alan Rees as the other principal Director.

Scope of Evidence

2.1 In this evidence I will cover the architectural decisions relating to the positioning, massing and design the Station Gateway East project. The statement covers why the scheme is situated in its proposed location and how these decisions affect the parcels of land as part of the CPO process.

2.2 I will summarise the planning and physical restrictions across the proposed site which resulted in the proposed building locations. This will also cover the contextual decisions for the design of the proposed scheme.

2.3 I will also highlight how the proposed concourse building has been designed to enhance the setting of the Grade II listed Bank Top Station and St. Johns Church.

2.4 The evidence will then show how the design of the public realm and vehicle drop off was driven by the form of the proposed building, as well as the physical restrictions of the wider site boundary. The evidence will also cover the aspirations for the public realm to create a new destination around the Station for the people of Darlington, which respects the sensitivity of the adjacent listed assets..

2.5 The statement will then cover the specific objections to the CPO process relating to Plots 12, 14, and 27, how the sites are affected by the design and location of the proposed building and public realm works. The statement will address the feasibility of the scheme if the sites are retained and any mediating factors.

2.6 I will set out in the conclusion an overview of the evidence provided and the recommendations to the Inquiry.

2.7 This evidence should be read in conjunction with the other evidence provided in relation to the Darlington Station Gateway CPO Scheme.

Project Background

3.1 The Darlington Station Improvements scheme will make enhancements to the existing Bank Top Station, improvements to the railway lines and the creation of a modern Transport Hub and Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP). The development has been split into three sections:

1. Darlington Station Gateway:

    a. A new station building, with multi-modal connections, to the east of the existing station building;
    b. A new transport interchange and MSCP adjacent to the new station building, serving rail users and potentially, adjacent developments;
    c. Improved transport interchange facilities on the western side of the station.

2. Operational Rail Improvements:

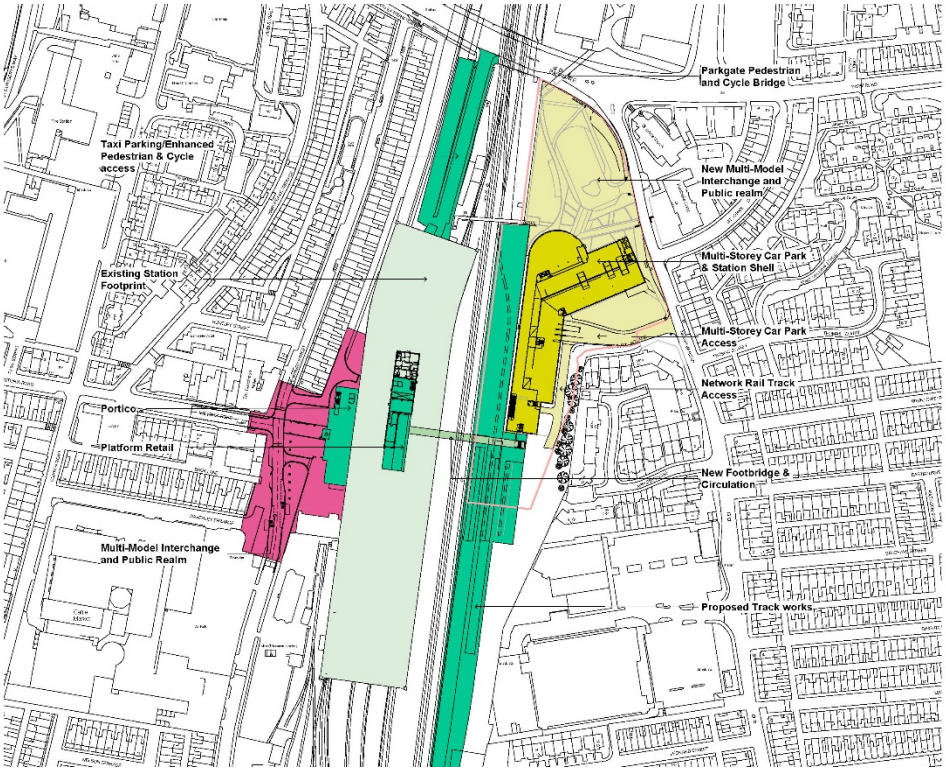
    a. Two new bay platforms on the east side to accommodate existing and future Tees Valley local services;
    b. The track between these platforms and Darlington South Junction designed to ensure the local services can operate independently from the ECML, removing current capacity and reliability issues at Darlington South Junction;
    c. Another new platform adjacent to the Up Goods Line, to be used by southbound long distance high speed services calling at Darlington, giving a much faster, unconflicted approach and departure in both directions, saving valuable time on the ECML;
    d. Bishop Auckland services to use the current platform 4, operating independently (conflict free) in the future, if desired;

3. Station Enhancements:

    a. A new accessible footbridge linking the new platforms and station building with the remainder of the existing station;
    b. Enhancement to the existing Station Portico.

- The items comprised in 1 are then referred to as the CPO Scheme.

3.2 This report is wholly concerned with the works to the items 1(a) and (b) in the above list for which I am the Project Director on the project. The location of the redline boundary was fixed prior to my involvement.



3.3 The council have identified the site to the east of Bank Top Station as the location for a Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) with associated Public Realm and Transport Interchange. The scheme will also create a new enhanced station entrance and concourse as part of an overall station redevelopment masterplan. The redevelopment of the station is to meet the future demands for national and regional passenger rail travel as well as freight services.

3.4 The proposed works to the Eastern side of the railway lines will be connected by a new pedestrian bridge which will link the new station entrance to the existing platforms.

3.5 Prior to the initial Willmott Dixon commission there was a previous scheme on the site developed by a different design team. The planning officers had some concerns over the previous scheme, as outlined below, (please refer to appendix GDA for further detail on the planners comments and original scheme design).

- Impact of the proposed building on the residential development (Appleby Close) which comprises four storey flat development and two storey dwellings
- Impact on outlook from the properties
- Proximity distance between properties and the car park (overbearingness)
- Overlooking concerns
- Noise, nuisance and disturbance from activities associated with the car park
- Security/antisocial behaviour
- Understanding the need for proposed car parking provision

- Are there ways to reduce parking provision and encourage other means of transport (buses/taxis/cycle etc)
- To understand rationale for locating the car park in close proximity to the residential properties. Can the building be located elsewhere within the site?
- Impact on heritage assets
- Scale and footprint of the proposed building
- Design of the building and impact on visual appearance of a main road

3.6 Following the initial feedback from the planners we had a three further meetings and Pre-Application advice from the planners to create a scheme which satisfied the local Planning Department.

3.7 From the outset the proposal used the above comments to form the basis for the design of the MSCP and Station, ensuring that the scheme reduced its impact on the neighbouring properties, and reviewed issues on numbers, noise, and scale.

3.8 The design of the building is rooted in Darlington's Railway Heritage, the design of the concourse holds a contemporary mirror to the design of the existing station. The architectural design celebrates the heritage of the site and enhances the setting of the grade II* listed station building, revealing a side of the station which is currently obscured.

Site and Heritage

4.1 The site of the proposed MSCP is situated to the east of Darlington railway station. It lies predominantly on the existing surface car park accessed off Garbutt Square extending eastwards towards Neasham Road.

4.2 To the northern end of the site between St Johns Place, Albert Street and Garbutt Square are a mixture of residential, commercial and light industrial properties.

4.3 Access is restricted from the west by the railway line, and from the north by the existing highway retaining wall. Although there is an existing footbridge to the west of the site which connects pedestrians to the North Ramp of Darlington Station.

4.4 A Statement of Significance was produced by the North of England Civic Trust for the existing Bank Top Station in March 2017. The Statement of Significance evaluated the stations heritage assets alongside the surrounding areas. This was updated in 2021 by Sarah Dyer IHBC MRTPI to assess the impact of Napper Architects proposal.

4.5 Grade II* listed Darlington Bank Top Station was built in 1887 and was the second railway station in Darlington after North Road. Bank Top was designed by William Bell, the then Chief Architect for the North Eastern Railway.

4.6 The west entrance of the completed station building became the main entrance and marked with a portico entrance and 80 ft high clock tower. The entrance was designed to have pedestrian access into the station and a covered drop off point within the portico for carriages, and now cars, similar to the arrangement at Newcastle Central Station and York Station.

Top Bank Station

4.7 The east side of the station was not originally designed for passenger access and was the Bank Top Goods yard and freight train rail routes. The amount of track has been vastly reduced since the station was built and some of this area is now occupied by a car park

4.8 Perhaps the most other most significant building in the area, that predates the station, was St John the Evangelist Church at the intersection of Neasham Road with the B6280/Yarm Road which is Grade II listed.

4.9 The church has a particular and close association with the railways having been designed at the instruction of railway financier and politician George Hudson, 'the Railway King', who had been adamant that the new church should be both

conspicuous and attractive.

4.10 To the north of the proposed site is Adelaide, Albert and St Johns Streets, the layout of these streets to the north end of the application site are evident on the first edition OS map for the area. However, the historic value of these streets has been eroded due to the demolition of the former terrace houses on Adelaide Street. Many of the former terrace houses have been replaced with modern commercial buildings.

4.11 East Terrace and The Grey Horse Public House are part of the surviving historic buildings. These buildings are much altered as the images above show and in poor condition. They are also in dispersed with modern buildings which has further diluted the character of the area. Please refer to the heritage statement for further information on the existing site.

View of Existing Retaining Wall

View of Garbutt Square car park entrance

View of commercial properties on St Johns Place

View of commercial properties on Garbutt Square junction

4.12 Currently the existing heritage assets such as the existing station and St Johns church are obscured by the existing structures around the site. The quality of these structures detracts from the overall setting of the historic structures. The design of the proposed concourse and public realm works will connect the two heritage assets and create a better setting for the public to appreciate the structures.

Location and Constraints

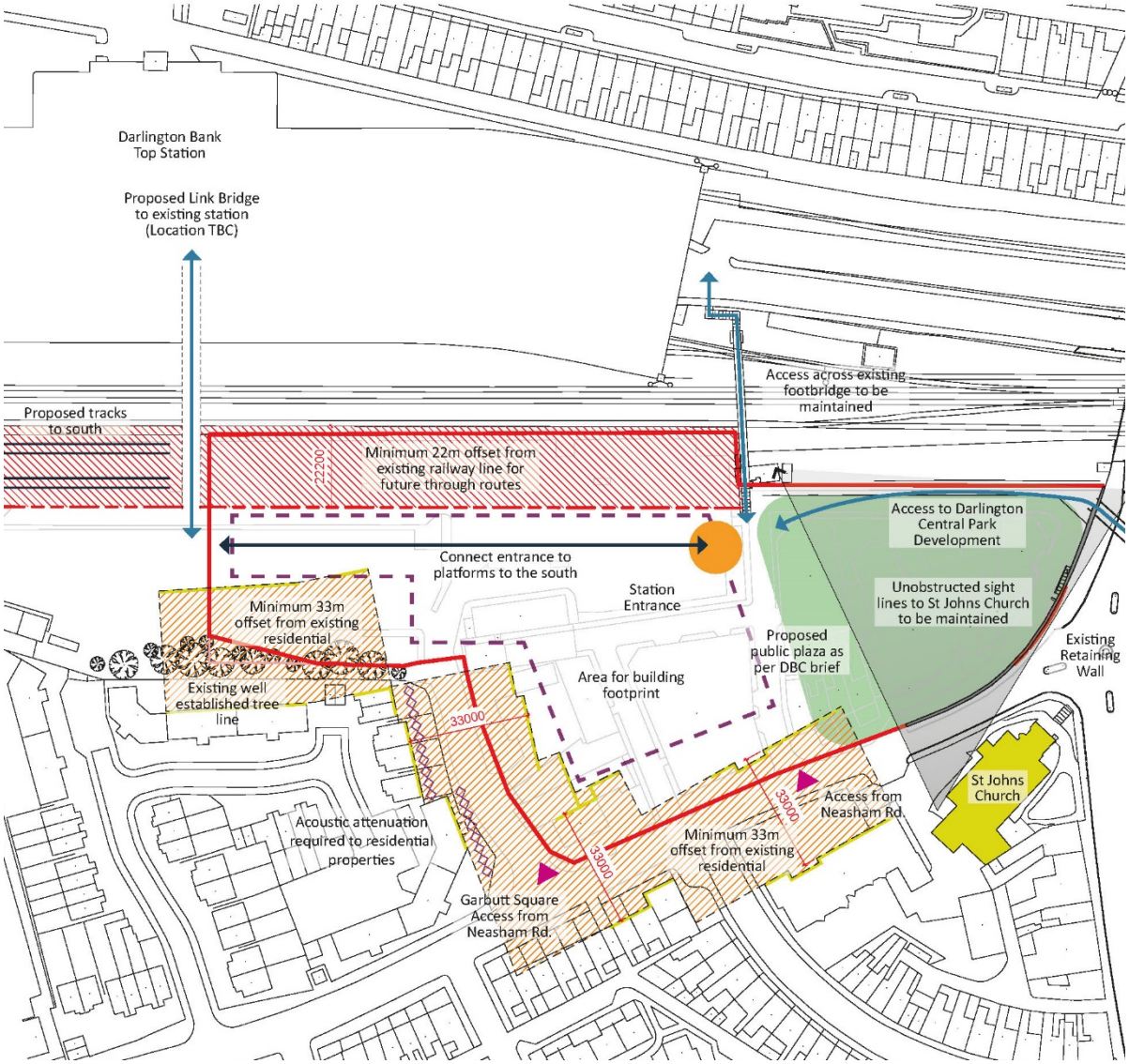
5.1 The MSCP is designed to respond to the local context of the site, and to the aspirations of the wider redevelopment of the railway station and to celebrate Darlington's Railway History.

5.2 The location of the building within the site is determined by several physical and planning constraints, as listed below:

- To link to the new station platforms and bridge (by others) to the new MSCP.
- To maintain a 33m space separation from the adjacent residential properties, as required by the local planning authority.
- A 22m offset from the existing tracks is required to allow for any future through tracks, no structure allowed in this zone, as required by Network Rail.
- Provide an acoustic buffer between the properties on Garbutt Square and any access road.
- Unobstructed sight lines to St Johns Church to be maintained (no structures to be built in this zone).
- Access to existing footbridge to be maintained.
- To provide access to / egress from Neasham Road, no access possible to north due to existing retaining wall.
- To provide an efficient parking layout which minimises mass and height.
- Building footprint to address the irregular shape of the site and constraints caused by neighbouring properties, St Johns Church and railway tracks.
- Link entrance to platforms to the south

5.3 Although the overall size of the site is generous, once the constraints are applied there was a small potential area for the building to be located, (as per the below diagram).

5.4 The design, massing and location of the scheme has been dictated by the site constraints. The building cannot be in any other position or in a different orientation on the site without a serious reduction in the number of parking spaces or reducing the scope of facilities on provided.



Constraints Diagram

Building Design

Proposed Site Plan

5.5 The proposed Gateway East will consist of a new MSCP, entrance to the north of the site and concourse connecting the entrance with proposed platforms to the south.

5.6 The north-south siting of the building has been set in response to constraints posed by both the grade II*-listed assets to the north and residential properties to the south, allowing for the creation of a new public square to the north with direct links via the existing pedestrian bridge to the wider Central Park development.

5.7 The ‘chevron’ plan provides greater distance between the building and the residential properties to the south and addresses on Neasham Road in a more suitable manner.

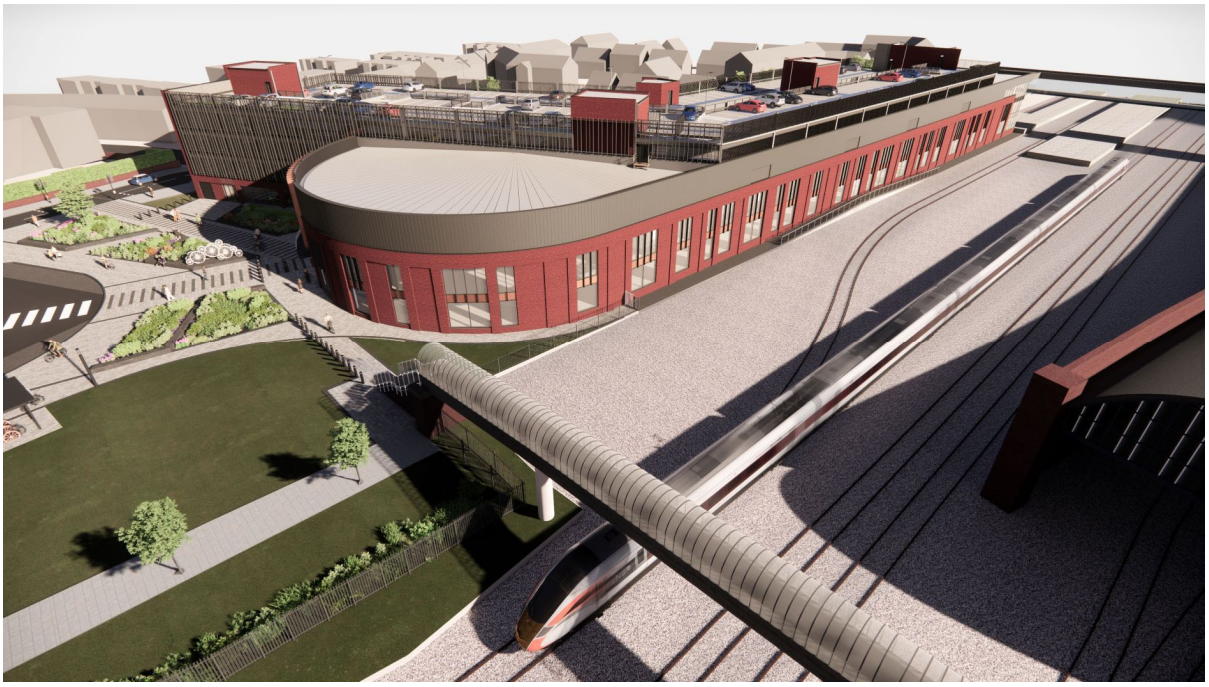
5.8 The proposed MSCP provides a total of 672 spaces accommodated over ten split levels. Darlington Borough Council (DBC) commissioned SYSTRA to carry out a demand study to examine the number of parking spaces which are likely to be required at a new MSCP. The MSCP will be replacing the majority of existing surface level car parks around the station.

5.9 The Systra report used a demand calculation based upon the standard demand forecasting approach set out in the Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook (PDFH) and covered the period from 2020 to 2050. It is expected that the MSCP along with the retained surface level parking will meet demand capacity until 2047.

5.10 The design of the concourse elevation holds up a contemporary mirror to the eastern elevation of the existing station. The existing masonry engine shed wall has projecting masonry piers along its length. At the top of the wall is a projecting brick runner course, with brick infill panels below. Above the wall is the vaulted roof structure clad in slate tiles and glazed panels.

5.11 The concourse cladding replicates the projecting piers and runner course of the existing station, however varies the spacing of the piers to create a more dynamic elevation. The cladding is punctuated with recessed brick panels and double height curtain walling to bring light into the concourse and to create a connection to the existing station. The red brick has been chosen to match the brick of the existing station.

5.12 The new station entrance is inspired by the roundhouse typology unique to railway architecture. The semi-circular rotunda entrance is a modern reinterpretation of the roundhouse vernacular, such as the now demolished roundhouse north of Parkgate.



Proposed Concourse

5.13 The curved rotunda form also picks up on the curved northern end of the adjacent station building. The sweeping rotunda also reveals more of the existing station creating a better connection between the public and the heritage asset.

Proposed and exiting station buildings

Access and Public Realm

6.1 The ambition for the new station extension and entrance is to create a new landmark building for the people of Darlington and to revive a part of the town which needs regeneration. To replace the existing commercial and light industrial buildings with a high-quality public realm. The ambition is also to connect the dual heritage assets of the Station and the St Johns church to create a better setting for both.

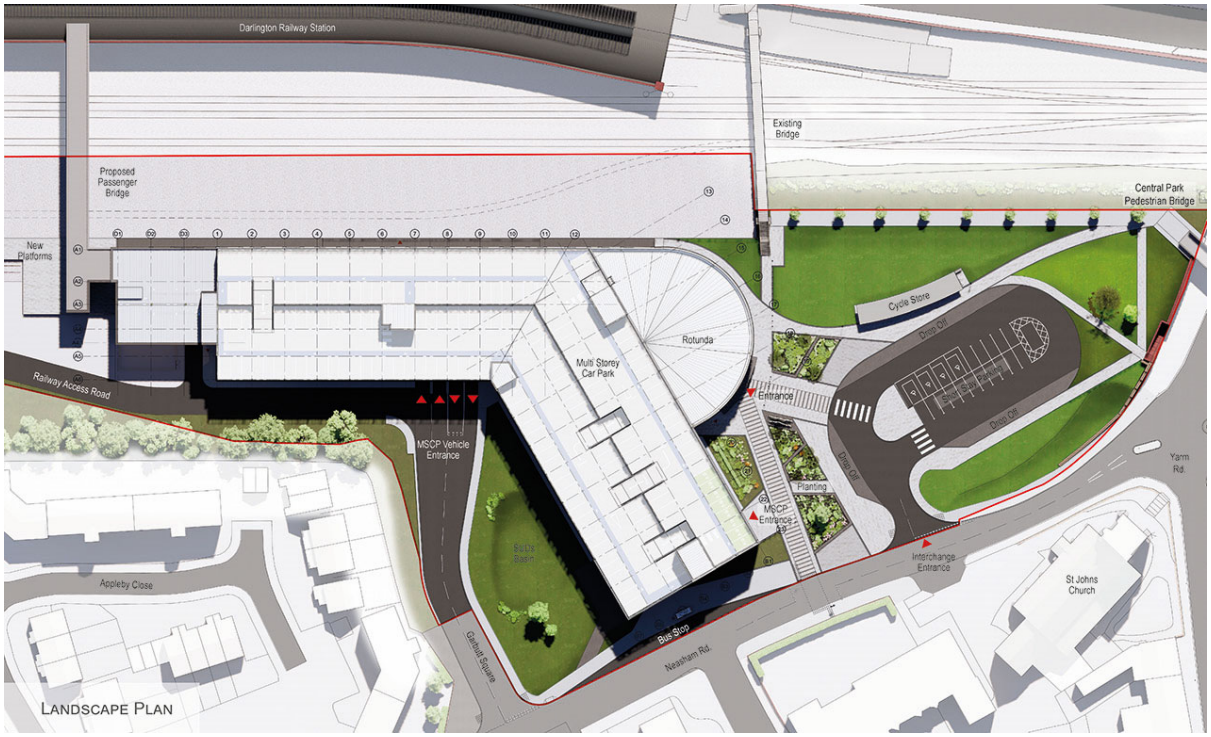
View of St Johns Church from concourse entrance, Proposed Vs Existing

6.2 Part of the development is a new public square and drop off in front of the station entrance. The ambition for the square is to create a new high quality public realm and a destination for rail passengers.

6.3 The proposal includes seating areas, raised planters and a plinth for some public art relating to the railway industry, creating a new location for people to congregate in Darlington.

6.4 To the north of the station entrance will be a new drop off area for passengers and a short stay car park which is a significant improvement on the existing offering on the western side of the station. The scheme also involves the creation of a new bus stop on Neasham Road and additional cycle storage.

6.5 Vehicular access into the site is only possible via Neasham Road to the East. Due to the existing road layout and the retaining wall to the north of the site there are limited places for access into the site in addition to the required bus stop. There are two main vehicle access points into the site:



6.6 The MSCP vehicle access is via a realigned Garbutt Square to the south of Neasham Road. The road has been realigned to move it away from the existing residential properties as a way of mitigating any noise issues.

6.7 A new entrance into the site is being introduced for the short stay car park and drop off. The location of the junction has been designed such that there is space between the two access points for a bus stop and a toucan crossing without affecting the visibility from the junction.

6.8 As a result of the location of the access point, part of the existing retaining wall is to be demolished and the land graded back behind it to create suitable visibility from the junction.

6.9 The drop off area has also been designed such that rail replacement buses can turn within the turning circle. The turning circle will be able to accommodate 4 rail replacement buses.

6.10 Pedestrian and cycle access is an essential part of the scheme, the public realm and drop off have been designed to link in with the existing pavements and cycle routes around the station. 3-4 meter wide shared pedestrian and cycle routes are being provided across the site to create an excellent environment for non-motorised vehicles.

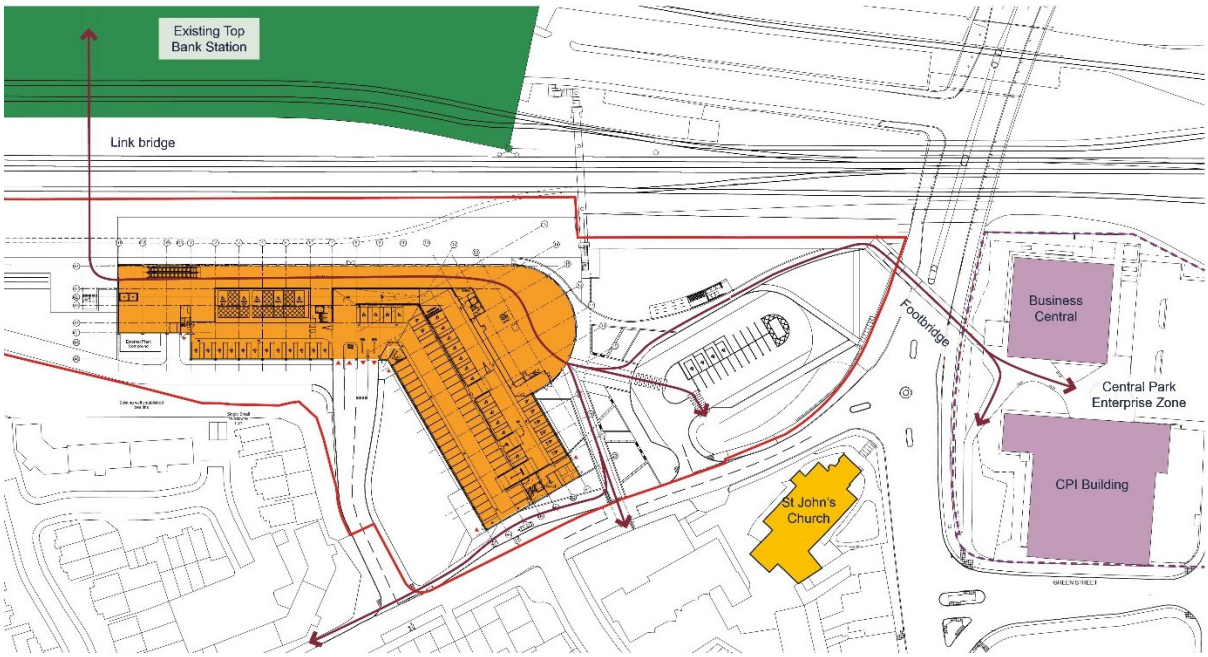
6.11 To improve both visibility and accessibility part of the existing retaining wall to the north is to be demolished to increase the width of the pavement for pedestrians and cyclists. This improves the visibility of the station entrance for pedestrians and vehicles approaching the site, as well as views of the existing listed Bank Top station.

View of retaining wall before and after

6.12 In discussion with the planners and the heritage officers the siting of the proposed building and the public realm have been designed to reveal the history and heritage of the site. Connecting the station with St Johns church creates a better understanding of the site and the important heritage assets.

6.13 The new station entrance has also been located to increase the connectivity between the Station and the Central Park Enterprise Zone. Central Park is a strategically important development within Darlington, regenerating the site of disused railway sidings.

6.14 The public square provides an important townscape link between the new station entrance and Central Park Enterprise Zone. This link improves the connectivity and will drive economic growth in the Enterprise Zone.



Station Connectivity

Objections

7.1 Of the objections received in respect of the CPO process there are three plots within the redline boundary that have not withdrawn their objects and have not accepted the offers to purchase. These are listed below. At the time of completing my statement none of these three objections have been formally withdrawn.

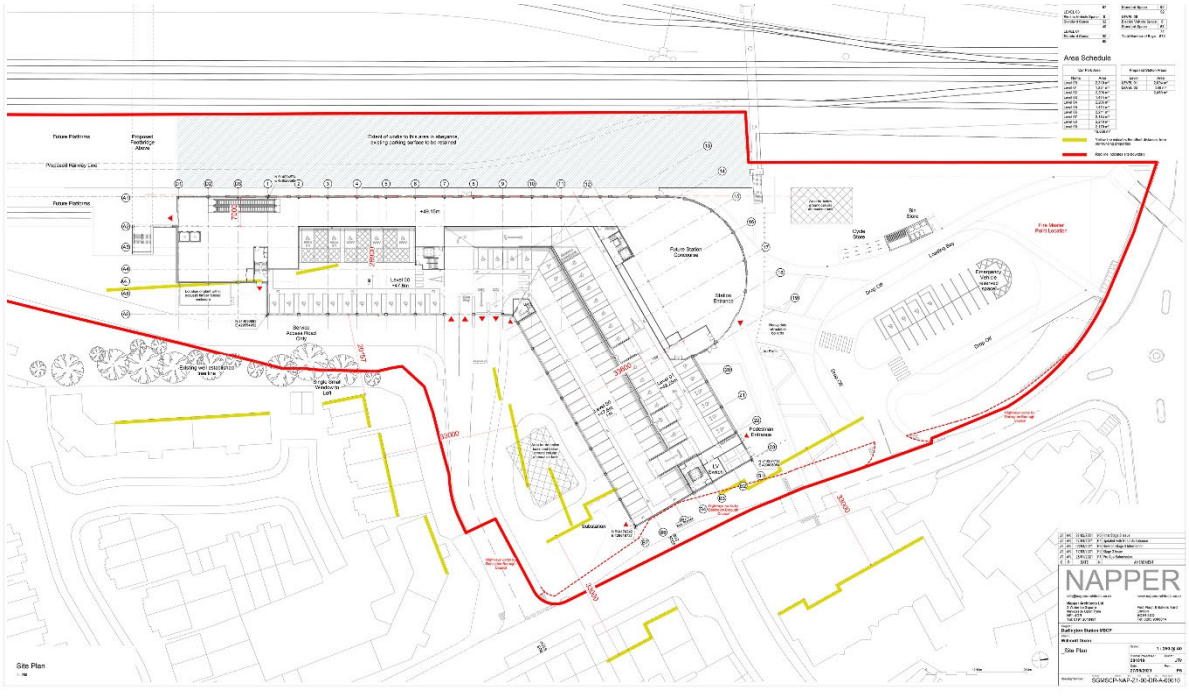
7.2 Plot No. 27: Part of LNER operated Car Park in third party ownership, this objection notes that:

1. The economic, environmental and social benefits of the CPO Scheme have not been identified; and

2. The causal link between such benefits and CPO Scheme are not identified.

7.3 As outlined in the above evidence, the location of the new MSCP and concourse has been fixed by the surrounding site conditions. The location of the proposed platforms is to the south of the site opposite the existing station. Therefore, the new concourse connects rail passengers from the north to the platforms to the south.

7.4 Any new structures within the site must be a minimum 22m away from the existing railway tracks. To the East of the site any proposed structures are required to be a minimum of 33m away from any existing residential properties. The MSCP and concourse building must be positioned between the railway offset and the residential offset. See the site plan which indicates the building within the site restrictions.



7.5 No other location for the concourse within the wider site would work as the new concourse has to connect with the new link bridge and platforms to the south. With the site restrictions as outlined previously the only location for the concourse to be situated is within Plot 27.

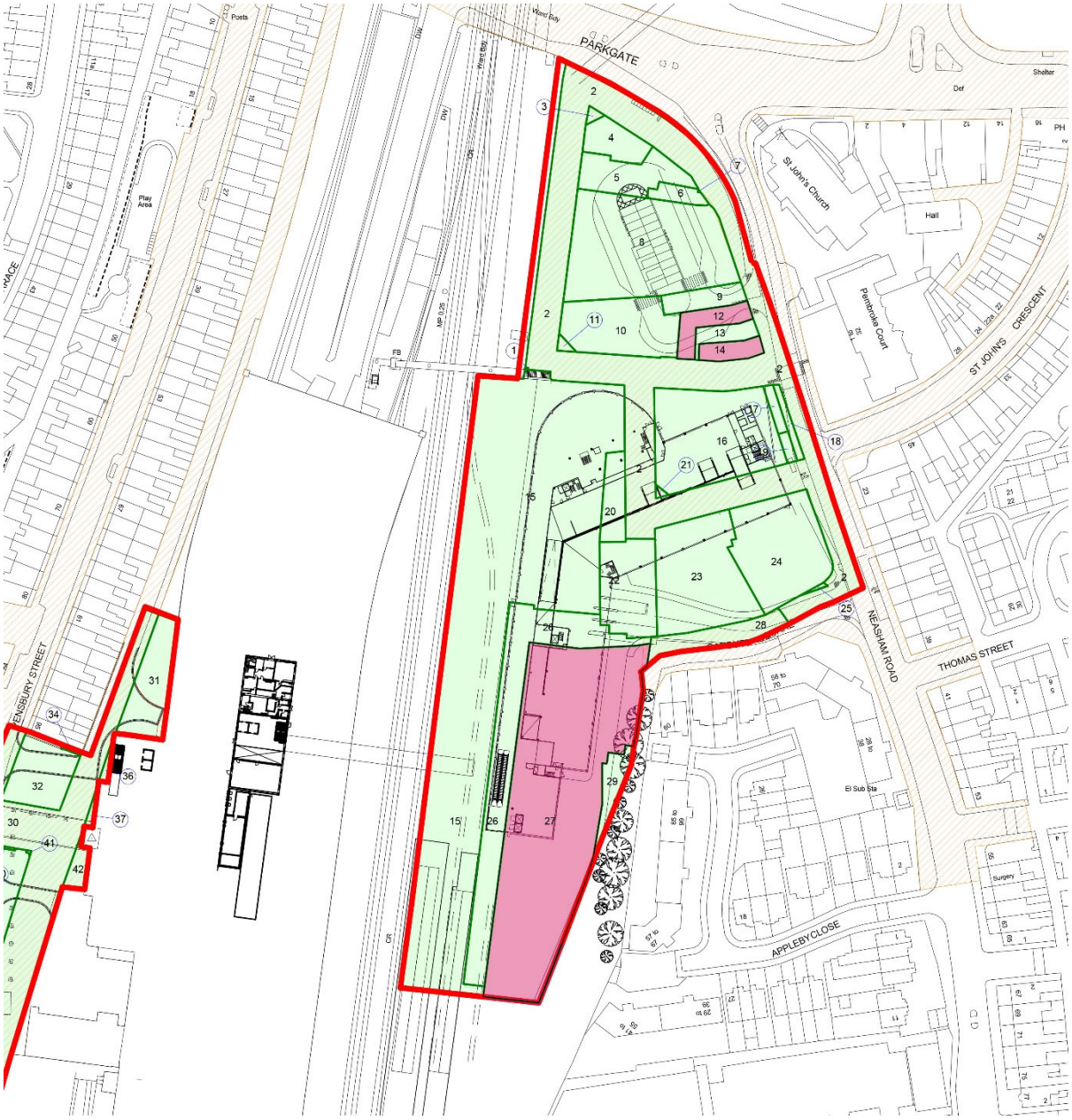
7.6 The proposed MSCP and concourse is located within a large part of Plot 27 due to the constraints detailed above. The purchase of plot 27 is essential. The expansion of the station and proposed scheme is not feasible without the inclusion of Plot 27, even if the size of the concourse was significantly reduced.

7.7 Without the concourse building or the MSCP the development of Darlington Station cannot be realised. As such the town would be missing out on the social and economic benefits of the station development as well as the regeneration of a key part of Darlington.

- Improved capacity – The proposals will deliver faster and more frequent train journeys supporting Darlington's role as a gateway to the wider city region, as well as to the north.
- Improved regional connections - The proposals will act as a connectivity gateway for those living and working in the wider Tees Valley City Region enabling improved connections from the Tees Valley to London and other key economic centres.
- Improved local connections – The proposals will improve connections to Central Park via the new public realm and enhance Central Park as a focus for employment opportunities in the town. The proposals will improve connections to the town, particularly to the east where there is a higher proportion of deprived wards.
- Improved accessibility – The proposals will open the station up to those who have previously experienced issues accessing the site particularly from the east. Station rationalisation and signage improvements will ensure that the site is easier to navigate.
- Improved safety - The public realm improvements will increase the inclusivity and perceived safety of the station. Segregating car parking and pedestrian areas improve passenger movement safety throughout the station.
- Improved passenger facilities – the proposals provide enhanced facilities which will encourage use of public transport.
- Improved working environment – The proposals provide an improved working environment and new facilities which will help to instil pride of place into workers at the station and also those travelling to the wider town.
- Improved visual amenity – The proposals provide visual amenity and public realm improvements providing associated improved amenity for neighbouring occupiers.
- Improved townscape and landscape - The proposals improve the townscape and landscape, providing high design quality additions to Darlington and act as a catalyst for improving the surrounding areas.

- Improved the heritage setting - The public realm improvements respect and enhance the heritage setting of the grade II* listed Darlington Station and the grade II St. John's Church.
- Support to cultural opportunities – The proposals will act as a focus for celebrating the significant 200 year anniversary for the Darlington to Stockton railway in 2025, coinciding with a wider programme of events.

7.8 As shown in the image below the proposed building and railway maintenance access road is situated in the centre of Plot 27.



CPO Plot boundaries overlapped on to the building footprint.

7.9 Plot No.12: D'Ton chip shop & Plot No.14: 16 Neasham Rd. The separate objections have been joined as the same arguments apply to both sites.

This objection to Plot 12 notes that:

1. There is no need to acquire the property for the CPO Scheme.

7.10 The brief for the project is to create a new high quality public realm which improves access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists into the site and station. The aspiration is to celebrate Darlington's railway history and reveal the heritage assets around the site.

7.11 The works will also create an interchange for passenger drop off and for 4 bus replacement coaches. The location of the MSCP and the Concourse has been fixed by the offsets to the surrounding buildings and the railway tracks.

7.12 The new public realm and interchange is therefore located to the north of the site with access from Neasham road. Due to the site conditions, access to the site is restricted to the East only from Neasham Road between the junction for St John's Place and Garbutt Square.

7.13 Plots 12 and 14 within the CPO application are situated at a prominent position within the proposed interchange area. The plots are located on the junction of Albert Street and Neasham Road where most of the motorised and non-motorised traffic will approach the building. Image below shows the location of the terrace which forms Plots 12 and 14.

Red outline indicates location of existing terrace

7.14 Whilst it would in theory be possible to retain the buildings it would be severely detrimental to the feasibility of the proposed public realm and interchange. If the buildings were retained access into the site would be confined to Albert Street funnelling motorised, non-motorised and pedestrians down one small access route without proper separation and with restricted visibility for motorised users.

7.15 If the scheme was redesigned to accommodate the retention of the existing terrace it would not be possible to accommodate the proposed bus stop, the rail replacement services, or the improvements to the cycle paths, whilst the number of short stay parking spaces within the drop off area would be reduced. This would severely impact on the operational requirements for the station.

7.16 Please also refer to the evidence of David Colley which outlines the negative effect of retaining the two plots on the access and highways. He explains that without creating a new junction suitable for the proposed interchange on the location of the existing buildings the safety of both pedestrians and drivers will be reduced.

7.17 In addition to the reduced accessibility, the quality of the proposed public realm would be severely impacted by the retention of the two structures. The intention to regenerate this part of the town will be negatively impacted as both plots are situated in a prominent position in relation to the overall scheme.

7.18 The aspiration for the public realm is to celebrate the heritage assents of the existing station and St Johns church. The design of the proposed concourse building is a modern reinterpretation of the existing station, framing and revealing the grade II* listed structure. The open public realm connects the passengers to the station in a way previously not possible, with views from Neasham Road.

7.19 The retained buildings would block views of the views of St Johns Church from the station entrance, as well as blocking views of the station from Neasham Road. Retaining the structures closes off the open aspect of the proposed public realm and connection of the heritage assets.

View of station from Neasham Road if terrace is retained

Improved connectivity from entrance to concourse.

Conclusions

8.1 In this statement I have covered how the site constraints and planning restrictions have informed the design and layout of the MSCP, concourse and public realm. The consequence of these constraints is that the plots which form part of this application are essential for the successful delivery of this scheme.

8.2 The acquisition of Plot 27 is essential as the proposed MSCP and concourse is situated within a large part of Plot 27. Without the inclusion of Plot 27 the scheme is not feasible and there will be no access to the new platforms.

8.3 Plots 12 and 14 are in a prominent location within the overall development, if they were retained, they will severely impede both motorised and non-motorised access to the new station creating an unsafe environment. As outlined in the Evidence provided by David Colley. The retained buildings would mean that the new bus stop and rail replacement services would not be accommodated as well as reduced operational facilities for the station.

8.4 The retention of both plots 12 and 14 will also have a negative impact on the proposed public realm works, closing off the development from celebrating the wider heritage assets and connections to the listed structures. The ambition to regenerate this part of Darlington will be severely compromised, reducing the overall quality of the townscape.

Declaration

9.1 I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this proof of evidence are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer and I confirm that I have understood my overriding duty to the inquiry in this regard.

9.2 I confirm that my evidence includes all facts which I regard as being relevant to the opinions I have expressed and that attention has been drawn to any matter known to me that would affect the validity of those opinions.

List of Appendices

GDA

Email from Planners and original scheme layout.

GDB

Presentation with text.

GDC

Presentation without text.

GDD

CPO presentation with text.

GDE

CPO presentation without text.