

---

**Decision Session - Cabinet Member for  
Transport, Planning and Sustainability**

**19 November 2012**

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

**UPDATE ON THE BENCH PREVIOUSLY LOCATED AT STOCKTON  
LANE / HEMPLAND LANE**

**Summary**

1. Following on from the Decision Session on 2 August 2012, this report provides an update on the consultation to find a new location for the bench formerly positioned at the Stockton Lane / Hempland Lane junction, which was removed to address concerns over road safety and anti-social behaviour.

**Recommendations**

2. That the Cabinet Member:
  - approve the installation of the bench at the junction of Hempland Lane and Hempland Drive.

Reason: To provide a facility to benefit older residents in the community.

- requests that officers monitor the situation and liaise with local Police, and if issues arise, reconsider the position of the bench.

Reason: To safeguard the interests of local residents.

**Background**

3. Last year, it was proposed to slightly reposition a bench to accommodate a widened footway adjacent to a new zebra crossing. However, in response to concerns about road safety where drivers

may misread pedestrians intentions and reports of anti-social behaviour, it was removed pending further investigation.

4. Subsequent to this, a petition from residents was presented to a meeting of the Full Council on 29 March 2012 by Councillor Boyce. The petition was signed by 40 people (13 of which reside in the Field Court sheltered accommodation complex) and asked the Council to replace the bench that was removed during the road works for the new zebra crossing.
5. The petition was discussed at the Decision Session on 2 August 2012, concluding with the Cabinet Member requesting that officers relocate the bench to another location, subject to further feasibility and local consultation, in particular with the residents of Field Court.

### **Outline Proposals**

6. A shortlist of five potential sites with sufficient land to install a bench was identified as shown in **Annex A**. This includes:
  - A. Outside house no.1 Hempland Lane – The adjacent verge to the original location at the Stockton Lane junction which would address the road safety issues by moving the bench further away from the zebra crossing, but not residents concerns about anti-social behaviour.
  - B. Outside house no. 41 Hempland Lane – Near the Hempland Drive junction, which is the closest site to the original location with a suitably sized verge. There is also a bus stop here.
  - C. & D. Monk Stray – There are 2 potential sites on the Stray near Stockton Lane
  - E. Heworth Holmes - around the midpoint between Hempland Lane and Stray Road.

### **Consultation**

7. Local Councillors and the residents of Field Court were provided with the shortlist of the sites to establish a preference. Their responses are summarised below:

## **Ward Member Views**

8. Councillor N Ayre – dealt with each location in turn as follows:
  - A. Outside house no.1 Hempland Lane – would be worth exploring further as that was the only resident who appeared to have no strong feelings about the bench in its original location.
  - B. Outside house no. 41 Hempland Lane – He is strongly opposed to this location as he had already been contacted by the closest residents who have concerns about anti-social behaviour.
  - C. & D. Monk Stray – Any issues are more likely to affect Heworth residents so would defer to Ward Councillors knowledge.
  - E. Heworth Holme - No strong feelings.

### *Officer comments*

Although no response was received from the resident of no.1 Hempland Lane in the previous consultation, many of their neighbours expressed strong opposition to the bench being sited here. The views of residents near the Hempland Drive junction are detailed in paragraphs 15 to 21.

9. Councillor R Potter – suggested we seek the views of residents who previously used the bench, including their origin and destination to assess which location would be the most beneficial.

### *Officer comments*

Thirteen of those who signed the petition reside at Field Court and their views are summarised in paragraph 12.

10. Councillor B Boyce – agreed with Councillor Potter, and is not aware of any anti-social behaviour near the Hempland Drive junction. The logic in putting it near a bus stop was also supported, and Councillor Boyce considered that putting the bench in a park did little for those seeking a place to rest on the majority of journeys.
11. Councillor C Funnell – had no further comments, but is disappointed it could not be returned to its original location.

## **Field Court Residents Views**

12. Residents were provided with a plan showing the potential sites and a short survey to complete asking how frequently they used the bench and their preference from the shortlist of locations. 30 surveys were provided (one for each flat) and 12 were returned with an additional two completed by others from outside the complex. Four said they often used the bench, nine sometimes used it and one rarely. The overall preference was almost unanimous for a site near the Hempland Lane / Hempland Drive junction.

## **Detailed Proposals**

13. As a result of the consultation, a proposal was developed for a site near Hempland Lane and Hempland Drive as shown on a plan with photo in **Annex B**. This position is away from both the Hempland Drive junction and a nearby vehicle access to maintain visibility for drivers pulling out. It is also close to a bus stop providing some amenity for bus passengers, and there is some screening to the nearest property provided by a tree and hedge.

## **Police Views**

14. North Yorkshire Police's Architectural Liaison Officer has checked the last seven year's records and there are no reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the immediate vicinity of the Hempland Lane / Hempland Drive junction. It is recognised that public seating whilst providing the opportunity for social interaction as well as a resting point for pedestrians, particularly the elderly, can attract anti-social behaviour to the detriment of local residents. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidance suggests that seating should be carefully located where there are good levels of lighting and good natural surveillance. It should not be located at pinch points or where gathered groups may intimidate movement.

### *Officer comments*

The Hempland Lane / Hempland Drive location is considered to meet this guidance.

## **Resident Views**

15. The five residents who live closest to the preferred site for the bench received correspondence asking for their views on its installation. Four responses were received, one from the most directly affected household, and three from properties on the opposite side of Hempland Lane, all opposed to the installation of the bench. Their comments are detailed below.
16. Three residents have already experienced some form of anti-social behaviour including vandalism, theft from their garden, litter, groups congregating on the grass verge and associated noise. In addition, some of the residents are elderly and in poor health, and as a result are anxious about their safety and security. They fear that the problems originally associated with the bench would transfer to here. One of the properties had been burgled in the past, and the residents are concerned that the bench would give a potential criminal the chance to observe their movements without suspicion.

### *Officer comments*

The Police have confirmed that there have been no reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in the immediate vicinity of the Hempland Lane / Hempland Drive junction in the last seven years. The concerns of local residents are understandable, but it is not certain that the same issues will transfer to this location. The Stockton Lane / Hempland Lane junction was more centrally located at a crossroads so was potentially a more attractive place to gather. Importantly, this alternative location does not share the road safety issues associated with the bench being near a zebra crossing. The proposed siting of the bench has been undertaken carefully with regards to screening from the nearest household. However, if the bench is to be sited in a residential area, it is practically unavoidable to locate it away from people's property.

17. All four residents commented that they would support the bench being installed in a nearby park and feel there is more merit in it being sited in a quiet, aesthetically pleasing location away from traffic. Some also considered that towards Heworth centre where there are shops and the nearest postbox, would be beneficial to Field Court residents. One resident felt that the previous site for the bench was mainly used by parents of children at Hempland Primary School, so this new location would be of no use to them.

*Officer comments*

Both Monk Stray and Heworth Holme were on the shortlist of sites provided to Field Court residents, but neither seemed popular. There are some wide verges on Heworth Village which are again outside residential properties, but these are quite close to existing benches at the Heworth Road / Melrosegate junction. Although less well used, Hempland Lane is also on the route to the rear entrance of the Primary School.

18. One resident commented that Hempland Lane was difficult to cross at this location, and there were road safety implications of siting a bench on a busy cut through and bus route.

*Officer comments*

The road does curve at this point reducing visibility for anyone crossing, but there are straighter sections to cross either side of this immediate area. This location experiences less traffic than the original Stockton Lane location, and the same number of buses.

19. One household disagreed that the bench would be useful to bus passengers as the curve of the road would create a reduced time to indicate to the bus driver that you wish to board. Similarly, it is not clear to a bus driver if the person using the bench is a passenger.

*Officer comments*

The bench was deliberately proposed about 5m away from the bus stop, as not everyone using the bench would be a bus passenger. It was also the point which was considered the most sympathetic to the nearest household because of the screening by vegetation. However, a bus driver has around 60m advance visibility of the bus stop, which is considered to represent enough time for both driver and potential passenger.

**Options**

20. The Cabinet Member has three options to consider:

Option One – request that Officers install the bench at the Hempland Drive junction as shown in **Annex B**, and monitor the situation, with regards to anti-social behaviour ;

Option Two - request that Officers relocate the bench to one of the other suggested locations, subject to further feasibility work and local consultation;

Option Three – note the contents of the report, but take no further action on reinstating the bench.

### **Analysis of Options**

21. It has been some time since the bench was removed but it still appears to be missed by former users. A shortlist of potential sites was provided to the residents of Field Court, who showed a clear preference for a bench to be installed at the Hempland Drive junction. The subsequent consultation with local residents resulted in four households opposed to this proposal, primarily due to fears that the presence of the bench will lead to anti-social behaviour. The Police do not have any records of this problem in the area, and it is not certain that this would occur if the bench is located here. However, if installed this situation would be monitored, and if problems arise, appropriate action would be taken. Option one to install the bench at the Hempland Drive junction is therefore recommended. Option two would go against the clear preference of potential users, and incur further staff fees, so is not the preferred course of action at the current time, although this may be re-visited if problems arise. Option three to take no further action would not meet the needs of the local community and is not recommended.

### **Council Plan**

The potential implications for the priorities in the Council Plan are:

22. Build strong communities – There could be benefits for the community of having a central point to meet, but likewise there could also be a negative impact on residents if the bench is installed and anti-social behaviour is experienced as a result.
23. Protect vulnerable people – A bench in the local area would provide a facility for older people to rest.

## Implications

24. This report has the following implications:
- **Financial** – Installing the bench would carry a minimal cost which could be met from the School Safety block of the Transport Capital Programme (given that it is associated with the zebra crossing scheme for Hempland Primary School). Further feasibility work would incur staff fees.
  - **Human Resources** – None.
  - **Equalities** – As it is likely that those who would most benefit from a place to rest in a public area have reduced mobility, the reinstatement of the bench could be viewed positively.
  - **Legal** – None.
  - **Crime and Disorder** – There is the possibility of complaints of anti-social behaviour being made if the bench is reinstated.
  - **Information Technology** - None.
  - **Land** – None.
  - **Other** – None.

## Risk Management

25. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the only risk associated with the recommendations in this report is considered to be to organisation / reputation as there is a risk of criticism from nearby residents if the bench is installed, counterbalanced by the risk of criticism from the wider community if it is not.
26. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at less than 6 (see table below). This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a significant threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Organisation/Reputation	significant	unlikely	



## Contact Details

**Author:**

Louise Robinson  
Engineer  
Transport Projects  
Sustainable Transport Service  
Tel: (01904) 553463

**Chief Officer:**

Richard Wood  
Assistant Director  
(Strategic Planning and Transport)

Report  
Approved

**Date**

19 November  
2012

## Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist implications.

**Wards Affected:** Heworth and Heworth Without

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report.**

## Background Papers

Minutes of Full Council meeting 29 March 2012

Minutes of Cabinet Member Decision Session for Transport, Planning & Sustainability 2 August 2012

## Annexes

Annex A Plan showing shortlist of potential locations

Annex B Hempland Lane – Proposed location of bench