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## **Cabinet Report**

**3 April 2012**

Report of the Cabinet Member for City Strategy

### **Water End/Clifton Green Junction: Options for Reinstating a Separate Left Turn Traffic Lane on the Water End Approach**

#### **Summary**

1. At the September 2011 Decision Session, the Cabinet Member for City Strategy considered seven options for reinstating two traffic lanes on the Water End approach to the Clifton Green junction. These options included retaining the existing layout. For each option, a general description was provided. Advantages, disadvantages and estimated costs were also set out. Road Safety Audit findings were also summarised for the alternative layout options.
2. Following consideration of the seven options, the Cabinet Member resolved that consultation take place with local residents and interest groups on two of the reinstatement options. This report presents the findings of the consultation exercise.

#### **Background**

3. Encouraging more people to cycle has been a key priority of the Council, and this was given significant impetus in 2008 when York became a 'Cycling City'. A key infrastructure project within York's Cycling City programme has been to complete an Orbital Cycle Route that connects many existing paths together. The Water End improvements form an important part of the Orbital Cycle Route.
4. The plan in Annex A shows the current layout, which was implemented during the early part of 2009. The removal of the left turn traffic lane has enabled a 1.5m cycle lane to be provided all the way up to the Advanced Stop Line (ASL) at the signals, alongside a single traffic lane that varies in width between 3.0m to 3.9m. This generally works well for cyclists, although it has been observed that a small number of motorists choose to go into the

cycle lane and use it as a left turn traffic lane. Overall the scheme has been well received by cyclists, and numbers cycling along this route have increased significantly, effectively doubling in number from about 80 per hour in the AM peak before the improvements were implemented and around 160 per hour at the present time. For motorists, it was always acknowledged that there would be some increased delays and queue lengths due to the removal of the left turn lane, and it was expected that this would result in some wider traffic re-distribution, plus some choosing to cycle instead.

5. Since implementation, there have been complaints about increased traffic congestion on Water End as a result of losing the dedicated left turn traffic lane. Adverse reaction to the scheme has also come from residents of the Westminster Road/ The Avenue area, which is now experiencing more through traffic than it did before (around 750 vehicles per day before, compared to about 1500 now).
6. To address these concerns, options to reinstate a dedicated left turn traffic lane were considered by the Cabinet Member for City Strategy at the Decision Session on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Of the numerous possible layouts that were investigated at that time, two were approved for public consultation. For the purposes of this report, they will be referred to as **Option 1** and **Option 2**. Layout plans for the two options are provided as **Annexes B** and **C** respectively.
7. The relevant parts of the September 2011 Decision Session meeting relating to the two options chosen to take forward for public consultation are provided in **Annexes D** and **E**. **Annex D** provides a description of the proposals for **Option 1**, along with summaries of the key advantages and disadvantages. **Annex E** provides the same information for **Option 2**.

### **Public Consultation**

8. A consultation leaflet outlining the two proposed options (the leaflet text which accompanied the layout plans is shown in **Annex F**) was distributed on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2011 within the local area to approximately 465 properties. The distribution plan is shown in **Annex G**. In addition to the leaflet distribution, the same information was also made available to view on the council's website and at the council reception at 9 St. Leonard's Place. Brief details were also published in the council's 'Your Voice' magazine,

which was delivered to households across the city together with the quarterly Ward Newsletters in early January 2012. Information was also posted on the Clifton Ward's 'Facebook' page. The deadline for receiving comments on the proposed options was Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012, although all comments received up to the point of publishing the report have been included for consideration.

## Consultation Feedback

9. In total, 178 responses were received from members of the public via e-mails, telephone calls and letters. A breakdown summarising the numbers favouring each option are as follows:
  - Support for **Option 1** – 56 (approx. 31% of responses);
  - Support for **Option 2** – 6 (approx. 3% of responses);
  - Alternative suggestions not included as options within the consultation
    - 1) Support to retain existing layout – 106 (approx. 60% of responses);
    - 2) 10 (approx. 6% of responses) – return the junction to its original layout (see **Annex H**).
10. Below, the responses are broken down into the following categories:
  - **Those living in Westminster Road and The Avenue** – of the 29 received, only two have a preference to retain the existing junction layout, and most (25) favour **Option 1**.
  - **Local residents living within approximately half a kilometre away from the junction** – of the 48 received, 14 respondents preferred **Option 1**; 3 preferred **Option 2**; and 26 preferred no change to the current junction layout.
  - **Other users of the junction living outside the Clifton area** (being a mixture of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians) – of the 87 received, 17 respondents preferred **Option 1** (of which 15 are motorists and 2 who are both motorists and cyclists); 2 preferred **Option 2**; and 78 preferred no change to the current junction layout (of which there are 50 cyclists, 12 motorists, and 16 who are both motorists and cyclists).

11. The main comments made by members of the public are summarised below, and a more detailed list of their specific comments can be seen in **Annex I**.

12. **Support for *Option 1* –**

- The change in layout would keep the flow of traffic moving.
- This option should be sufficient to reduce the traffic using Westminster Road and The Avenue as a short cut.
- This option is the most appropriate option from the point of view of safety to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.
- The loss of the last few yards from the pinch-point up to the traffic signals would not be a big disadvantage, given that the inconvenience to a very small number of cyclists would be minute compared with the benefit to a much greater number of motorists.
- Cyclists would not be discouraged as this is the exact scenario in many areas of the city.
- Removal of the cobbles and a hedge trim would provide enhancements to this option.
- No cobbles should be removed anywhere in the city.

13. **Support for *Option 2* –**

- Experience has shown that cyclists are in particular danger just before traffic lights, when many car drivers are impatient to get through the lights and encroach on cyclists' space. Therefore, the introduction of a dedicated cycle lane right up to the traffic lights is required, even though it is the more expensive option.
- This option allows better access for cyclists to the junction, whilst improving traffic flow.

14. **Support for *No Change* –**

- There are safety concerns for all users, including pedestrians, but mainly for cyclists. Potential conflict with motor vehicles (but particularly with larger vehicles) have been identified amongst respondents to be a significant factor against the implementation for either of the proposed options.
- Both options would be a waste of money – In the current economic conditions when vast budget savings are being

identified by the council, implementing the proposed changes against previous Officer advice, and against the feedback received appears difficult to justify, particularly when the proposals are also inconsistent with longstanding council policies.

- Both options would have limited benefit for traffic flow – Motorists are likely to respond to an increase in capacity by filling that capacity, and any perceived gains will disappear over a relatively short time. The only way to improve journey times and reduce congestion is by trying to reduce the amount of motor traffic through current council policies that are aimed at achieving this.
- Both options are against policies to promote cycling – The proposed change to the existing layout can only encourage car use and discourage cycling. Therefore, the proposals are inconsistent with the council's stated objectives in: reducing air pollution by reducing traffic emissions; Sustainable Travel to Schools Strategy; City of York Local Transport Plan; York's "Just 30" physical activity campaign. In addition, the proposals are inconsistent with York's current user hierarchy, which places pedestrians/disabled people and cyclists at the top, and commuting motorists at the bottom.

15. Comments from Ward Members, Other Members and organisations can be seen **Annex J**. In summary, other members, the Cyclists' Touring Club, York Cycle Campaign, North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Rescue Service and the Ambulance service do not generally support either of the reinstatement options.

### **Road Safety Audit**

16. As reported in September 2011, Road Safety Audits have been undertaken on both options, and the key safety concerns are summarised below:

#### **Option 1**

- The removal of the existing on-road advisory cycle lane would increase conflict between cyclists and motor vehicles.

- As this option retains the build-out, there would be conflict between cyclists leaving the cycle track ramp and motor vehicles moving into the left turn traffic lane.
- As this option retains the splitter island at the junction, the traffic lanes would be very narrow, which would lead to conflict between vehicles, and between cyclists and vehicles. In addition, the very narrow traffic lanes could lead to increased cyclist usage of the footway, thereby leading to conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians.

## **Option 2**

- There would be conflicts between cyclists and left turning traffic cutting across the central cycle lane.
- Traffic would regularly be queuing across the central cycle lane, resulting in obstruction and potential hazards for cyclists trying to move forward.
- Cyclists in the central lane would be moving between two closely spaced lines of traffic within sub-standard width traffic lanes, which is likely to lead to potential conflicts, especially if larger vehicles are present, given the likelihood of vehicles encroaching into the cycle lane (potentially from both sides). The retention of the splitter island makes the two traffic lanes particularly narrow, thereby exacerbating this problem.
- There will be increased risks to pedestrians from passing traffic due to the limited footway width and close proximity of the left turning traffic without the existing safety buffer provided by the existing strip of cobbles. Again, the retention of the splitter island would make the two traffic lanes particularly narrow, thereby exacerbating this problem.
- Some cyclists, especially those turning left, may choose to ride on the footway in preference to rejoining the carriageway, which would result in potential conflict with pedestrians and a risk from passing traffic due to the limited footway width and close proximity of the left turning traffic (exacerbated by the removal of the existing strip of cobbles).

In summary, the safety auditors conclude that both proposed options would be less safe than the current layout for all users, but especially for cyclists. Although, it should be stressed that the original layout had no accident record in the last three years.

## Choices

17. The choices for the Cabinet Member to consider in relation to the reinstatement of a left turn traffic lane, taking into consideration all the feedback from public consultation are summarised below:

**Choice 1** – reinstatement of a left turn traffic lane without a continuous cycle feeder lane, as shown in **Annex B (Option 1)**, which could be with or without the sub-option of removing the cobble strip to slightly increase the traffic lane widths;

**Choice 2** – reinstatement of a left turn traffic lane with the inclusion of a central cycle feeder lane, as shown in **Annex C (Option 2)**;

**Choice 3** – make no change and retain the existing junction layout, as shown in **Annex A**.

## Analysis

18. The current layout on the Water End approach to the Clifton Green junction works well for cyclists, and since the scheme was introduced, the number of people cycling along this route has increased significantly. The original brief for the cycling measures identified that cyclists were experiencing difficulties in making their way towards the traffic signals, but particularly in negotiating their way past the pinch-point. The original brief also stipulated that the cycling facilities should be made continuous, without any breaks in provision, given that route continuity is an important factor in encouraging modal shift towards cycling. Therefore, from a sustainable transport viewpoint, the current layout has been successful and is viewed by many cyclists as a much safer means of riding through the junction than before the measures were introduced. In addition, the current cycling facilities now form part of the Orbital Cycle Route around the city, which is designed to provide further opportunities in promoting further cycling activity, and developed as part of the Cycling City initiative.
19. In comparing the two options presented above for reinstating a left turn traffic lane, together with the no change option, several key issues need to be considered and balanced against each other:

- Benefits to traffic flow – Options 1 and 2 are predicted to improve traffic flow to different degrees, and any gains may be short-lived. Therefore, any predicted gains in traffic capacity need to be carefully weighed against the safety concerns identified with either of the proposed layouts.
- Effects on traffic rat-running traffic – The current volume of traffic is likely to remain at similar levels on Westminster Road and The Avenue, given that any spare capacity is likely to be filled by those coming back to use Water End, having previously relocated to other routes following the introduction of cycling measures.
- Negatives for cycling – Both options to reinstate a left turn traffic lane will make it much more difficult for cyclists to make progress through the Clifton Green junction in busy or light traffic conditions, and will make the whole cycle route less attractive to use. The longer term affect on congestion levels is also less certain.
- Road Safety – The Safety Audits identified that both options are less safe than the current layout.
- Costs – The two reinstatement options vary in cost, but both should be affordable within the available budget allocation.
- Responses on the two reinstatement options – This indicates a stronger preference for **Option 1**.
- Overall responses – The majority of those responding to the public consultation favour retaining the existing layout.
- Lack of Emergency Services support – Apart from the likelihood of affecting their response times, both options are considered to be more dangerous for cyclists.

20. In terms of road safety, the layout on the Water End approach is also considered to be working satisfactorily, since there has only been one relevant injury accident since the scheme was completed in April 2009. This involved a collision between a cyclist and a car just beyond the ASL on the Water Lane approach, and resulted in a slight injury to the cyclist. The safety audit process



has highlighted many potential problems and reaches the conclusion that both options would be less safe overall than the existing layout. However, it should be noted that in the three years prior to the scheme being implemented there were no recorded injury accidents on this arm of the junction, and the doubling of cycling numbers inevitably increases the chances of an accident involving a cyclist occurring.

21. Should the Cabinet Member be minded to pursue the reinstatement of a left turn traffic lane, Officers consider that **Option 1** would present the better compromise solution. This option would still provide cyclists with protection from traffic at the pinch point, whilst providing some benefit to traffic flow through the junction from Water End.
22. The sub-option of possibly removing of the cobbles could not be recommended because of the safety concern over the increased proximity of passing traffic to pedestrians on the narrow footway, which is considered to outweigh any small advantage road users would gain from a 0.25m increase in the traffic lane widths.
23. **Option 2** has the big advantage of maintaining continuity of the cycle route by having an on-road central cycle feeder lane. However, this would come at the expense of some additional safety concerns, plus a slightly smaller traffic capacity gain. In addition, only a very small number of respondents chose this option as their preference.

### **Council Plan Priorities**

24. One of the five themes of the Council Plan is 'To get York Moving' in light of the traffic congestion challenges facing the city. The reinstatement of two traffic lanes would improve the flow of vehicular traffic through the junction. In line with York's Local Transport Plan and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) funded Intelligent Travel York initiative the Council Plan aims to achieve an increase in people travelling by more sustainable modes of transport (i.e. on foot, by bike, bus and rail). Therefore improving pedestrian and cycling networks forms one of the priority actions. The possible reinstatement of the left turn lane offered under both Options 1 and 2 would be a localised amendment to the overall Water End Cycle Scheme. There is a risk that cyclists would find the new layout more intimidating, and some may choose to switch to other forms of travel. The earlier sections of

the report highlight the views of cycling groups and the emergency services, and the safety audit findings. The reinstatement options do have the potential to impact negatively on Council Plan priorities and also raise reputational risks, for example in light of the current national campaign by 'The Times' on cycle safety and cities fit for cycling.

### Implications

25. **Financial/Programme** – The Transport Capital Programme for 2011/12 currently includes a provisional budget of £40K for the possible reinstatement of the left-turn lane. Therefore, both Options 1 and 2 should be affordable.
26. **Human Resources** – None.
27. **Equalities** – Pedestrian safety may be affected on that part of the footway on Water End, directly opposite The Green, if the existing layout were to be amended.
28. **Legal** – The council would need to go through legal proceedings if any alterations to Clifton Green (a registered Village Green) were proposed, or if any compulsory purchase of land adjacent to Clifton Green were pursued.
29. **Crime and Disorder** – Any cyclists that resort to riding on the footway as a result of the existing layout being amended would be committing an offence.
30. **Information Technology** – None.
31. **Property** – None.

### Risk Management

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Organisation/Reputation	Medium (3)	Probable (4)	3x4=12
Physical	High (4)	Possible (3)	4X3=12

32. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the main risks in reinstating the left-hand lane that have been identified in this report are:

- The potential damage to the Council's image and reputation if scheme proposals are not brought forward, especially in view of previous press coverage concerning traffic congestion on Water End and rat-running traffic using Westminster Road / The Avenue. Conversely, many people may also be unhappy if the current scheme is altered.
  - The physical risk of increased casualties linked to the proposed road layout changes.
33. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk scores have been assessed at less than 16, which means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored, as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

### **Recommendation**

34. Of the two reinstatement options consulted on, the public consultation shows a clear preference for option 1 and the cabinet member is recommended to consider whether this option should be followed when balanced against other consultation responses and the safety audit findings detailed in this report.

Reason: To address the issue around traffic congestion caused by the external layout at the Water End facility.

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#### **Cabinet Member Responsible for the report**

Cllr Dave Merrett  
Cabinet Member for City Strategy

**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 3/4/12

### **Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

There are no specialist officer implications.

**Wards Affected: Clifton**

All

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

**Background Papers:**

- “Called-In Item: Water End/Clifton Green Review – Reinstatement of Left-turn Traffic Lane and Chicane Trial”, a report to the meeting of the council’s Executive (Calling-In) on 21 December 2010.
- “Water End/Clifton Green Review – Reinstatement of Left-turn Traffic Lane and Chicane Trial”, a report to the Decision Session – Executive Member for City Strategy on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2010.
- “Cover Report – Water End Councillor Call for Action”, a report to the meeting of the council’s Executive on 6 July 2010.
- “Cover Report – Water End Final Report”, a report to the Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 May 2010.
- “Water End – Proposed Improvements for Cyclists”, a report to the Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel on 20 October 2008.

**Annexes:**

Annex A Plan showing “Clifton Green Junction, Water End – Current Layout (Post Implementation of Cycle Scheme in 2009)”.

Annex B Option 1 Plan showing “Clifton Green Junction, Water End – Reinstatement of Left Turn Lane Without a Cycle Lane.

Annex C Option 2 Plan showing “Clifton Green Junction, Water End – Reinstatement of Left Turn Lane With a Central Cycle Feeder Lane.

Annex D Option 1 – Description.

Annex E Option 2 – Description.

Annex F Consultation Leaflet Text.

- Annex G Consultation Distribution Area Plan.
- Annex H Original Junction Layout (Prior to the Introduction of Cycling infrastructure in 2009).
- Annex I Summary of Public Comments.
- Annex J Summary of Comments from Members and Organisations.