

## **University Road Pedestrian Crossing Improvement Scheme Proposals**

### **Summary**

1. This report outlines proposals to create crossing improvements and bus stop relocation on University Road in the vicinity of Market Square, which incorporates a 20mph Zone with speed cushions and speed table crossing points. This work is to be co-ordinated with work to be carried out by the University of York to provide alternative and additional pedestrian facilities to access Morrell Library. However, the University work is dependent on the Council providing a commitment to undertake the crossing improvements and bus stop relocation works.
2. The report will seek in-principle approval to implement the proposals, authorisation to consult on a preferred option layout, and to advertise a 20mph Speed Limit Order for the proposed 20mph Zone.
3. The report will also outline a longer term plan to create an off-road shared use pedestrian/cycle route alongside University Road between Green Dykes Lane and Innovation Way, and how this is affected by the proposed pedestrian crossing improvement scheme.

### **Background**

4. The main purpose of the current scheme is to improve the safety of pedestrians, in particular University students. At the moment, many students cross University Road in the vicinity of the footbridge and in recent years (36 months from July 2010 to June 2013) there were four injury collisions involving pedestrians at this location.
5. Around the latter part of 2010, the University made the Council aware of their concerns about a number of accidents involving students crossing University Road. The existing crossing movements are mainly between the Market Square area of the campus and the Morrell Library steps, but a high proportion is also made to and from the eastbound bus stop (on the library side of the road). Having surveyed bus patronage, these two bus stops (which are positioned almost directly opposite each other), are the most frequently used in the whole of York. The bus frequency runs at one every 3 to 4 minutes.
6. The presence of the steps to the library on the north eastern embankment has almost certainly contributed to the incidence of collisions as they have

introduced a desire line for pedestrians between Market Square, the bus stops and the library, thereby encouraging many pedestrians to cross at a location where visibility is poor to the south east, in particular caused by the footbridge piers and a lack of natural light under the bridge.

7. Initially, the University commissioned Aecom to design a Zebra crossing to replace the current uncontrolled crossing (via a refuge island) between Market Square and the library steps. However, Council Officers had some serious reservations about this proposal, given the many other crossing movements likely to take place away from the Zebra, and crucially, that the current crossing point is in a poor position due to sight lines being obstructed. This is mainly as a result of the pedestrian overbridge piers, but also the Market Square side bus shelter and in particular, when buses actually stop for passengers to board and alight.
8. It has been a long-standing aspiration for the Council to establish a cycle route along the northern verge on University Road to expand the cycle network in this area. However, this would potentially introduce conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists at this busy location, particularly near the bottom of the existing steps and the eastbound bus stop.
9. Hence, it was agreed in principle with the University that the best way of improving pedestrian safety, whilst also facilitating the future provision of a cycle route, would be to remove the exiting steps up the embankment. To compensate for the loss of these steps, it was agreed in principle that the University would provide additional measures to encourage use of the existing footbridge to the library, and the Council would concentrate its efforts on improving safety on the highway by slowing traffic speeds and looking at the positioning of the bus stops to encourage crossing in safe locations.
10. The University has already agreed to contribute approximately £150k towards the project for implementing the off-highway works, i.e. the removal of the existing library steps; providing new steps; and the construction of a retaining structure which may be required to extend the width of the highway. However, their funding must be spent before their financial year end, which is 31 July 2014.
11. The Council currently has an allocation for the cycle route of £175k, although a recent estimate predicts that the scheme is more likely to cost in the region of £230k. In addition, there are currently problems in determining the pedestrian/cycle link to the Field Lane scheme leading to the University's East Campus, which still needs to be resolved. This puts some doubt upon the justification to provide a pedestrian/cycle route along University Road, because without firm plans to provide a link, the University Road route would cease at the junction with Innovation Way. Hence, it is thought sensible to use part of the cycle route budget now to facilitate the proposed crossing improvements (estimated to cost in the region of £60k to £70k) and to enter into further negotiations with the University about the future provision and funding of a comprehensive cycle route scheme for the area.

12. On this basis, the Council's Legal Services team have drafted a 'Heads of Terms' document, which will serve to identify the scope of the work needing to be undertaken by both parties, and is intended to identify the respective commitments between the Council and the University. This agreement needs to be signed by both parties, so an early confirmation of the Council's commitment to undertake the highway works is required to expedite signing of the agreement.
13. Both schemes (i.e. the Council's crossing improvement scheme and the University's off-highway measures) should ideally be constructed simultaneously, and need to be programmed for construction before the end of July 2014.

## Proposals

14. The current scheme proposals to improve pedestrian safety near the library on University Road are shown in **Annex A**, with the associated signing details given in **Annex B**. These have been developed through discussions with the University and the Police. The proposals for the Crossing Improvement scheme include:
  - relocation of the eastbound bus stop to a position closer to the Morrell Way junction,
  - retention of the westbound bus stop in its current position,
  - the introduction of a 20mph speed limit with associated traffic calming (speed tables and speed cushions),
  - provision of new traffic islands, and
  - works to be undertaken by the University to remove the existing steps to the library and provide new stepped accesses.
15. The key features are discussed below:
16. The 20mph Zone is to extend from a point west of Vanburgh Way to a point east of Harewood Way, and is required to keep vehicular speeds through the immediate area to an acceptable, safer limit. The start of the zone is to be indicated by gateway features and signs, and traffic calming within the zone will comprise 3 pairs of cushions and two raised table crossings. The speed tables will be strategically positioned to encourage easier and safer access for pedestrians and cyclists to the bus stops, facilities at Market Square and the library. Signing will be provided to direct cyclists and pedestrians to the target locations. New islands will be provided at the cushion locations.
17. Consideration was given to relocating the bus stops further east away from the footbridge location. A safety appraisal concluded that these options created unacceptably unsafe layouts for reasons such as they would introduce the potential for unsafe vehicle manoeuvres overtaking stationary buses at traffic calming measures or near junctions, or encouraged unsafe crossing of the road at the locations of the speed cushion measures.
18. The preferred proposal retains the westbound bus stop in its current position but relocates the eastbound stop to a position just west of Morrell Way. This enables a speed table to be strategically positioned between the bus stops

and encourages pedestrian crossing at the desired location, as well as removing the potential for unsafe vehicular manoeuvres.

19. A second speed table is provided to the west of the existing loading layby and will encourage cyclists and pedestrians travelling eastbound to safely access the footbridge to access the library or Market Square. The tables also provide safe crossing facilities for users of the bus stops. Additional measures such as guard railing and fencing will be provided to guide pedestrians and cyclists to the desired routes to the facilities.
20. The University have agreed to fund crucial elements of work off-highway to support the implementation of the proposed highway works. These measures comprise:
  - the removal of the existing library steps to remove the current pedestrian desire route to the library,
  - introduction of new steps to the south side of the existing spiral ramp, encouraging use of the footbridge to access the library,
  - introduction of new steps on Morrell Way to provide alternative access to the library from the eastbound bus stop and from University Road,
  - provision of deterrent planting to discourage use of the embankment as a desire route to the library, and to encourage use of the proposed access routes, and
  - the provision of additional cycle parking near the Market Square access.

## **Consultation**

21. Approval is immediately sought to consult on the proposals for the crossing improvement scheme (as shown in **Annexes A and B**). The consultees will include the University's Student Union and Heslington Parish Council.

## **Option Choices**

22. The following options are available for the Cabinet Member to consider:

**Option 1** – give in-principle approval to implement the scheme proposals as shown in **Annexes A and B**, and give authorisation to conduct an external consultation exercise on the proposals in conjunction with the advertisement of the 20mph Speed Limit Order.

**Option 2** – approve the scheme proposals as outlined in Option1 above, subject to any further changes that the Cabinet Member considers necessary.

**Option 3** – reject the scheme proposals as outlined above.

## Analysis

23. **Option 1** is considered to address the current concerns regarding pedestrian safety and is compatible with the future provision of a cycle route through the area. In relation to **Option 2**, no changes are considered necessary by Officers, prior to public consultation.
24. **Option 3** would fail to address the current concerns, or facilitate the future provision of a cycle route through the area. Therefore, Officers recommend that Option 1 should be approved.

## Council Plan

25. The proposed measures will facilitate a useful addition to the City's cycle network and provide much needed safety improvements at a busy location within the University.
26. Progressing the scheme would meet the following Council Corporate Priorities:
  - 1) Getting York Moving, by developing York's cycling and pedestrian network, and
  - 2) Protecting the Environment, by improving the quality and safety of York's streets and public spaces
27. The report has the following implications:
28. **Human Resources** – None.
29. **Legal** – The City of York Council, as Highway Authority for the area, has powers under the Highways Act 1980 and associated Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 to implement the measures proposed. A 'Heads of Terms' agreement (see **Annex D**) is to be finalised and signed by both the Council and the University, to demonstrate a commitment to the delivery of their respective elements of the scheme proposals and to define the scope of the works to be undertaken by both parties. This is intended to ensure that these separate elements are not implemented in isolation, thereby potentially rendering them ineffective. In addition, a legal agreement between the council and the current landowner (University of York) may be required to dedicate some small areas of land required for highway purposes under a Deed of Dedication.
30. **Financial** – It is proposed to fund the Crossing Improvement Scheme from the road safety block in the Capital Programme. The scheme will be funded from the £40k slippage of LTP funds from the 13/14 speed management allocation and a proposed £30k 14/15 speed management allocation. This commitment will enable the implementation of the Crossing Improvement Scheme in association with the work by the University to provide additional access via steps to the Morrell Library. Availability of a further allocation for the University Road Cycle Route scheme will be considered as part of the overall 14/15 Capital Programme to be presented to the Cabinet Member in April.
31. **Crime and Disorder** – None.

32. **Information Technology** – None.
33. **Property** – As mentioned above in the Legal section, a legal agreement between the council and the current landowner (University of York) may be required to dedicate some small areas of land required for highway purposes under a Deed of Dedication.

### **Recommendations**

34. The Cabinet Member is recommended to:
- (i) give in-principle approval for the scheme proposals as shown in **Annexes A and B**;
  - (ii) give approval to enter into a ‘Heads of Terms’ agreement between the City of York and the University of York, as shown in **Annex D**;
  - (iii) give authorisation to conduct an external consultation exercise on the scheme proposals as shown in **Annex A and B**, including the advertisement of the 20mph Speed Limit Order.

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**Report Approved**  **Date**

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

There are no specialist officer implications.

**Wards Affected: Heslington**

All

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

#### **Background Papers:**

None.

#### **Annexes:**

- Annex A - Plan showing “Crossing Improvement Proposals”.
- Annex B - Plan showing “Signing Schedule”.
- Annex C - Plan showing “Proposed Pedestrian/Cycle Route”.
- Annex D - Document showing draft “Heads of Terms” agreement.