
Place Scrutiny Committee

23rd September 2025

Report of the Director for Environmental and Regulatory Services

Household waste recycling centre (HWRC) operations

Summary

1. In recent years traffic around the Hazel Court Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) has built up and congestion has significantly increased causing disruption to local businesses and organisations around James Street and Hazel Court with a knock-on effect to the rest of the network.
2. There are pressing safety concerns for all road users, including pedestrians, with drivers becoming frustrated in long queues. In addition, congestion is causing disruption to CYC operations entering and leaving the Eco Depot.
3. Although the HWRC at Hazel Court has the capacity to take the number of visits, in the short to medium term a mitigation is required to spread the visits more evenly across operating hours. The longer term view is to explore options around an alternative location for the Hazel Court HWRC.
4. The Place scrutiny committee is asked to review and comment on the short to medium term future options for the operating of the city's the Hazel Court HWRC.

Background

5. City of York Council has aims through the “Let’s talk less rubbish” regional strategy to minimise material going into waste streams and to offer opportunities to reuse and recycle materials. The Council has worked hard to drive these aims forward and the HWRC network has been a critical component in realising these outcomes.
6. The Council have two HWRC sites. Hazel Court; located close to the city centre (opened 2006) and Towthorpe; located on the outskirts of the city towards the west (opened 1993 license transferred to Yorwaste 2000).
7. Both sites are closed on a Wednesday in line with North Yorkshire. Towthorpe has been closed on a Wednesday since 2013 and Hazel Court has been closed on a Wednesday since May 2024 with an associated cost saving of £70k.
8. Hazel Court site is the busier of the two sites, with most residents opting to visit this site to dispose of their refuse and recyclable items. Annex A shows the catchment area for Hazel Court is larger than Towthorpe
9. Hazel Court also accepts commercial operators who are charged to use the facility. According to ANPR data commercial operators contribute to 5% of the visits to Hazel Court, which generates income. Towthorpe does not have a weighbridge and cannot therefore charge for commercial waste. As a result, it cannot currently accept commercial operators.
10. Both sites operate on a time free to attend basis i.e. no booking appointment required.
11. There are several commercial businesses on James Street and Hazel Court. In the years following the opening of Hazel Court HWRC in 2006 several large businesses have opened premises, namely Screwfix, Jewsons, Cemex and Lidl. These businesses are bringing welcome trade to the city, however this contributes to the traffic on the junction of James Street and Hazel Court.
12. The congestion, as well as affecting local businesses, is also impacting on CYC services delivered from Hazel Court.

13. Residents to the south-west of the city visit the HWRC at Tadcaster which is a North Yorkshire Council (NYC) operated HWRC. The number of York residents visiting NYC HWRC's is unknown.
14. In the longer term, options for the provision of the HWRC network in York are being explored. This would likely be the identification of a site that would better serve York's growing population and facilitate new changes in national waste policy and legislation. This will be the subject of a future report.

Consultation

15. Officers have received multiple forms of communication from local business owners and residents expressing their concerns at the traffic congestions.
16. Business owners on Hazel Court and James Street claim to have had their trade impacted as customers are unable to access their premises for retail or appointment purposes. Officers and Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency met with businesses based in Hazel Court and the surrounding area in August 2025 to hear their concerns and how the congestion has impacted their businesses.
17. Residents have contacted the Council to express their concern for safety of road users including cyclists and pedestrians. Those car users who are not visiting the HWRC, often become frustrated and make dangerous manoeuvres in the highway.

Options and analysis

18. The HWRC has the capacity to receive the demand that is currently ~~been~~ seen through the course of the day, i.e. the congestion isn't preventing residents from disposing of household waste, but they are being required to queue. This is exacerbating traffic issues at the junction of Hazel Court and James Street, which then has a knock on effect along James Street in both directions. Access to commercial businesses has been affected, as well as operational vehicles from the CYC eco depot

and public transport. The environment for all road users at the junction is becoming less safe.

19. The solution to the issue is to put in place a mechanism to even out the demand through the course of the day, particularly where the data is showing peaks. There are a number of mitigations that have been explored to achieve this.

I. Divert commercial visitors to Towthorpe HWRC

The data shows that only 5% of visitors to the Hazel Court HWRC are commercial visitors. This mitigation would likely reduce demand, but not to a level where the congestion around Hazel Court and James Street is impacted. This may also be creating more journey miles within the administrative area, which is contrary to the Council's ambitions around the Local Transport Strategy.

A weigh bridge would need to be installed for commercial customers. This would come at a cost to the Council.

II. Implement a registration system that will restrict usage of the Hazel Court HWRC to residents only

The Council operates Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at both HWRC sites, however, a system would need to be implemented that would allow a resident to register number plates to their residence with an intervention at the HWRC if the visitor is a non-resident (or hasn't registered). This could slow down the process of accessing the site.

III. Implement a booking system

The implementation of an online booking system would enable the management of demand to the HWRC by offering a number of slots to book every half an hour. The purpose of this is to manage traffic around the Hazel Court HWRC, so it is suggested a trial there only and not Towthorpe using the booking system operated during Covid would be appropriate. Longer term if this is successful, the procurement of an external booking system can be explored.

The system can be configured to be flexible in terms of management of demand.

Central government do not state a preference on booking systems but do say booking systems should not obstructive <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/household-waste-recycling-centres-diy-waste-disposal-charges-and-booking-systems/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response#call-for-evidence-on-booking-systems-at-household-waste-recycling-centres> If both sites were on booking systems then this could be viewed as obstructive. There are concerns that internal departments would not have the resource currently due to the ongoing CRM project that is a corporate priority.

Work will be done to ensure that offer is accessible.

IV. Status quo

Health and safety risks to road users and pedestrians at the James Street/Hazel court junction. The traffic congestion will remain, leading to further complaints from local businesses, and continued inefficiencies to CYC operations. In addition, reputational risk to the Council.

Council Plan

20. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there is at least one HWRC in the city and available for residents to dispose of household waste. There are currently two HWRC sites where waste and recyclable materials are separated and sent for processing and where possible recycled.
21. The Council's transport strategy includes an objective to reduce vehicle miles travelled and congestion across the city. A booking system would provide the flexibility to limit the number of vehicles able to visit Hazel Court HWRC at certain times in the day reducing congestion and subsequently reduces air pollution through exhaust emissions.
22. HWRC sites are free to visit and dispose of domestic household waste or recycling. Only commercial operators are charged for disposing of waste. Having hybrid operating across two sites would mean that residents have accessible options to dispose of household waste

23. The Council has a waste strategy (Let's Talk Less Rubbish <https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/641/let-s-talk-less-rubbish>) and this is in partnership with NYC. The strategy sets out the Council's strategy to reduce, reuse and recycle all waste streams. Officers will be working in partnership with NYC to form a new strategy that will set out aims to further reduce household waste, improve recycling and increase the circular economy.

Implications

24. Special implications regarding this report are as follows:

- **Financial** *The proposal is to utilise an existing booking system contract already in place with the Council. Operating the booking system is expected to incur costs of up to £15,000 per year. The cost of implementation will be met from waste budget.*
- **Human Resources (HR)** *There are no HR implications contained within this report.*
- **Equalities** *There are ongoing discussions with the EDI officers regarding the implementation of registration and booking systems and are being analysed to ensure there isn't a barrier to their use.*
- **Legal** *CYC Legal Services shall provide legal support in relation to any future procurement of booking systems (or other matters). All CYC public contracts are subject to the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Further advice and support should be sought from CYC Legal Services, Procurement and other related departments (such as CYC Information Governance).*
- **Crime and Disorder** *Work done engaging with Local Authorities that have implemented booking system suggests that Fly tipping has not increased with the introduction of a booking system. This will be assessed if a trial booking system is introduced.*
- **Information Technology (IT)** *CYC ICT shall provide support from a system implementation and testing perspective. This can include Project Management, Business Analysis and Testing capacity where required. There are some existing solutions in place that provide booking capability, one that was previously utilised for HWRC bookings during Covid. The web services team have offered to*

provide a demonstration to review functionality as just one of the options that is currently available.

This project could potentially have implications for the ongoing CRM (Granicus) Project in terms of resources and depending on the timing for implementation. However, this will depend on the appropriate technical solution being chosen and the resulting project resources required for implementation being determined.

- **Property** *If changes to the property are required as a result of any future options specialist property and legal resource would be utilised internally*
- **Transport** *Traffic flows have increased by approximately 100 vehicles per hour at its peak, since 2009 on James Street. By averaging out the number of visits per day at the HWRC should reduce traffic congestion and ensure vehicle traffic can flow both north and southbound on James Street. It will also improve road safety and help to reduce risk for the most vulnerable road users: pedestrians and cyclists.*

Risk Management

25. There is a reputational risk if the Council do not act to endeavour to reduce the traffic congestion around Hazel Court. This could also lead to Businesses challenging the Council due to financial loss.
26. There are health and safety concerns for all road users using the James Street and Hazel Court pass through. By exploring options to limit the number of visitors to the HWRC congestion on Hazel Court and James Street can be managed leading to a safer environment for wheelers, walkers, cyclists and motor vehicles.
27. As part of any transition to a bookable mechanism, the service and officers would explore potential for free community skip days so residents are able dispose of household waste and recycling in support of transitional arrangements and in support of the Councils waste strategy.

Recommendations

28. The Place Committee are asked to comment on the implementation of an online booking system for Hazel Court HWRC only so that the Council can average out the number of visits to the Hazel Court HWRC throughout the operational days to reduce the traffic congestion on James Street and Hazel Court, but not restrict the total number per day as the HWRC can meet the demand of materials being taken.

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Waste Services

Report
Approved

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Waste Services

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Date 15.09.2025

Specialist Implications Officer(s) <i>List information for all</i>	
<i>Implication ie Financial</i>	<i>Implication ie Legal</i>
Name	Name
Title	Title
Tel No.	Tel No.

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All ☐

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex A - Resident split in relation to HWRC location

Annex B – HWRC Heat Map

Annex C – HWRC Material Tonnages (3 years)

Annex D - HWRC average visits per day, per site (3 years)

Abbreviations

HWRC – Household Waste Recycling Centre.

NYC – North Yorkshire Council