

<b>Meeting:</b>	Executive
<b>Meeting date:</b>	7 October 2025
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of City Development
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Councillor Kate Ravilious, Executive Member for Transport

## **Decision Report: Park and Ride: Site Improvements and New Bus Service Contract**

### **Subject of Report**

1. The report presents two connected projects for approval: firstly, a range of infrastructure improvements to five Park and Ride sites to be funded through Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) grant. Secondly a two-year extension to the contract for the operation of Park and Ride bus services is proposed to enable continuity of service until wider conversations with the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA) are concluded.
2. A range of infrastructure changes are required to replace and refresh existing aging site facilities, improve security and offer a more dynamic Park and Ride product. An extension to the contract for the operation of the bus services is essential to ensure continuity of the service and to enable the Council to reduce congestion in the city.

### **Benefits and Challenges**

3. Maintaining a fresh and attractive Park and Ride product is essential for reducing car trips into York City Centre. Whilst Poppleton Bar and Askham Bar are relatively new sites with modern facilities, Rawcliffe Bar and Grimston Bar in particular were constructed in the mid 1990's and are in need of more substantial updating. The current buildings at Grimston Bar housing the staff and toilet facilities are in poor repair, are not located next to the bus stop, do not have sufficient space for optimal toilet facilities and would benefit from replacement.

Rawcliffe Bar suffers from antisocial behaviour and the current layout of the building does not offer quality facilities for passengers.

4. A key element of the BSIP work was to turn the Park and Ride sites into integrated transport hubs and to enable more trips where more than just a bus journey may be required. The proposed infrastructure changes include improving cycle parking provision for both Park and Cycle and those who cycle to the P&R site then take the bus into the city centre, car club bays, micromobility parking and coach (National Express and Flixbus) stops at Askham Bar.
5. Site security is also an issue at Monks Cross where the building has regularly been a target for antisocial behaviour. This situation has resulted in the toilets being closed when the site supervisor leaves and passengers having to use other toilet facilities in the vicinity which is not desirable.
6. A wide range of improvements can be made to improve the accessibility at the Park and Ride sites. From improving the dimensions of accessible parking bays, to introducing the first Changing Places facilities at Park and Ride sites the infrastructure funding will enable more people to comfortably use the service.
7. Overnight Parking at two Park and Ride sites will enable more people to use the service and can reduce the number of vehicles arriving into York Centre looking for a parking space. This can reduce congestion, particularly on Friday afternoons where bus operating conditions are challenging. Visitors arriving for a long weekend will be able to park overnight at Rawcliffe Bar or Askham Bar in a dedicated area with 24/7 access and use the bus to get into the centre, then pick their vehicle up on the day of their departure.
8. The contract for the operation of the bus services and day to day site management expires at the end of January 2026. Optimally a long-term contract would be issued to enable operators to bid for the service, unlock potential longer-term investment in improved buses and provide best value for the Council. However, with the transfer of public transport powers to the YNYCA, work needs to be undertaken to identify the best future model for how the public sector will deliver it's public transport responsibilities and priorities.

## Policy Basis for Decision

9. A new Park and Ride contract and improving facilities at Park and Ride sites contributes towards all four Council Plan commitments;
  - a. **Equalities and Human Rights.** The proposed projects include improved accessible parking, electric vehicle charging for accessible parking spaces, more accessible real time information, changing places facilities and improved accessible toilets. All of which benefit protected groups.
  - b. **Affordability.** Park and Ride offers a more affordable way of parking a car and accessing York. Enabling people to park overnight at the sites will offer opportunities for people who need to drive, but cannot afford to park in central York to access the City Centre.
  - c. **Climate.** Reducing the number of cars coming into York City Centre and replacing the final leg of the trip with a bus journey reduces carbon emissions.
  - d. **Health.** Shifting car journeys onto an electric bus improves air quality within the city, thereby having a knock-on positive impact on respiratory conditions.

Park and Ride contributes to several of the ten policies contained within the Council's Local Transport Strategy and is a core component of the Council's approved Bus Service Improvement Plan.

## Financial Strategy Implications

10. The Park and Ride site improvements have a £4m allocation through Bus Service Improvement Plan funding. A further £250,000 of YNYCA Local Transport Grant funding has been allocated to the project for the 25/26 financial year. The options identified in Annex A have been developed to the £4.25m budget.
11. The current Park and Ride contract operates effectively on a zero-cost basis to the Council. An extended contract could potentially incur some cost, though the risk of this scenario is minimised by contracting the existing level of service provision. Should there be a cost, then BSIP1 service improvement underspend can be used for February and March 2026, then a request for YNYCA Bus Grant funding would need to be made for 26/27 onwards or cost savings identified. The likely contract value (including revenue

generated) is approximately £6m per annum. Any cost to the public sector to continue service operation to current standard would be far less.

## **Recommendation and Reasons**

12. Executive is asked to;

- 1) Approve £4m of BSIP1 funding and £250k of allocated YNYCA Bus Grant funding to deliver Park and Ride site improvements as outlined in Annex A.

Reason: To modernise old facilities for existing and future Park and Ride users and to attract more passengers to use Park and Ride services.

- 2) Delegate authority to the Director of City Development (in consultation with the Director of Governance and the Head of Procurement) to implement the proposed Park and Ride site Infrastructure improvements and to carry out any required procurement processes and to take such steps as are necessary to procure, award and enter into the resulting contracts.

Reason: To ensure expedient delivery of the projects.

- 3) Delegate authority to the Director of City Development (in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of Governance) to explore and implement further income opportunities associated with Park and Ride including setting fees for overnight parking.

Reason: To further support the financial viability of Park and Ride provision.

- 4) Delegate authority to the Director of City Development (in consultation with the Director of Governance and the Head of Procurement) to agree an extension to the existing Park and Ride contract and any associated leases, of not more than two years duration, and to take such steps as are necessary to enter into the resulting variation and extension agreement and lease extensions.

Reason: To provide continuation of service and to enable the results of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority bus network review to be incorporated into the new Park and Ride contract.

## Background

13. York's Park and Ride network is one of the most successful in the United Kingdom. There are six sites on key approaches to the city providing approximately 5,000 parking spaces. Between the six sites 3.8 million passengers were carried during 2024;

Site	2024 Total Annual Patronage – all boardings, to the nearest 1000.
Askham Bar	648,000
Designer Outlet	877,000
Grimston Bar	569,000
Monks Cross	762,000
Poppleton Bar	233,000
Rawcliffe Bar	687,000

14. The Council's BSIP (October 2021) makes two commitments regarding Park and Ride, these being;
15. **Commitment P&R1** – is to maintain and improve the existing services so that they continue to enjoy high customer satisfaction and provide an attractive way for visitors and commuters to access central York.
16. **Commitment P&R2** – is to consider how the estate can be used to cater for other trips by developing it into a series of mobility hubs. Elsewhere we are aware that park and ride sites are used by inter-urban buses and coach services, travelling through the sites rather than terminating there - something which offers the potential to reduce trip making on the trunk road network.
17. The second commitment was supplemented by an ask for £5m to fund the work. £4m was allocated by the Department for Transport to the Council as part of the successful BSIP1 award to deliver overnight parking, develop complementary services at the site and to update Grimston Bar and Rawcliffe Bar.

18. Design work has been undertaken to deliver improvements in line with the expectation in the BSIP and budget allocated by the Department for Transport; these proposals were consulted on in May/June 2025 and listed in Annex A. The Designer Outlet Park and Ride site has been excluded from the improvement programme due to the Council not having long term control over the lease.
19. Whilst the Council has responsibility for delivering new infrastructure at the Park and Ride sites, the management and general maintenance of the sites plus the operation of the bus services connecting the sites with the City Centre lies within a contract, currently held by First Group. The current contract is due to expire on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026. The contract has run for eight years. As per The Public Service Obligations in Transport Regulation 2023, the maximum a public transport contract can be let for is ten years.
20. YNYCA is now the Local Transport Authority (LTA) for York. The LTA holds a range of powers, duties and responsibilities in relation to Public Transport. These powers, duties and responsibilities have been delegated back to both City of York and North Yorkshire Councils until the end of March 2026, when it is hoped that a permanent model for delivery of public transport functions will have been agreed across North Yorkshire and York.
21. YNYCA is currently commissioning a number of studies to help establish a future direction for public transport across its area. One such study is a network review. There are a wide range of options about how the York Park and Ride network and contract could be adapted to deliver wider benefits to public transport across York and into North Yorkshire. Procuring a new service with a contract length of 5 plus years, which is what would ordinarily be procured, would likely prevent some shorter-term opportunities identified by the network review from being delivered.

## **Consultation Analysis**

22. Several briefings and discussions were held to understand the views of stakeholders prior to public consultation. Groups engaged included; York Access Forum, York Bus Forum, York Tourism Advisory Board, the York Enhanced Bus Partnership, both operator and stakeholder groups. The views articulated by

attendees at these meetings directly informed the design proposals presented at public consultation.

23. The public consultation comprised an online questionnaire, supplemented by opportunities to speak in person with staff from the project team on a weekday and Saturday at all sites identified for infrastructure works. The consultation was relatively light touch with officers particularly keen to seek the views of existing users of the sites. The consultation was publicised through media (including coverage in the Yorkshire Post and BBC), via social media channels (with 49,636 views in total) and through CYC newsletters. Accessible versions were also available and materials were written in an engaging and accessible style. Posters were also placed in each of York's libraries and Explore centres, as well as several to surrounding towns such as Tadcaster, Selby and Sherburn.
24. The online questionnaire received 433 responses with a further 74 responses received through in person conversations, emails and direct social media engagement. Approximately 400 people had conversations with the project team at the in-person events too. A summary of the responses is detailed in Annex B.

## Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

25. **Option One:** Proceed with the £4.25m infrastructure work package to improve Park and Ride sites. Recommended.
26. **Reason:** The projects have been developed in line with the principles outlined in the Councils BSIP, have been fully consulted on, through stakeholder meetings, in person conversations and an online questionnaire and are deliverable within the funding available.
27. This enables delivery of Council priorities; it will add an overnight parking option to two sites, will deliver two changing places facilities, will offer a much-improved passenger experience at Grimston Bar and Rawcliffe Bar, will improve security across the sites in scope and will improve accessibility and passenger information provision.

28. **Option Two:** Do not proceed with the work package as proposed. Not Recommended.
29. Taking this option would result in cost and timescale changes, may not be in line with the priorities outlined in the BSIP and could, depending on changes proposed require further consultation.
30. **Option Three:** Agree to extend the Park and Ride contract for bus operations and day to day site management for a further two-year period.
31. **Reason:** To enable continuity of the Park and Ride service in the city and to allow work to be concluded with the YNYCA around delivery of public sector public transport functions.
32. A short-term extension will provide a service in line with current provision, is achievable under current legislation and will enable consistent provision in the timescales before the current contract end date.
33. Not extending the Park and Ride service contract is not considered an option due to the serious negative impacts on access to the city, it's economy and congestion and air quality.
34. Tendering a full new contract is not possible within the available timeframes and would potentially preclude the delivery of some of the outcomes to be identified from the YNYCA wider review. There are a range of detailed options which need full consideration prior to a major retendering such as whether routes could be packaged in groups, or individually, whether routes could be extended, or linked and whether site management is included in contract for bus operation.
35. **Option Four:** Allowing the Director of City Development to investigate commercial opportunities will mean that prices can be set for overnight parking, agreements can be made for the provision of facilities such as coffee vans and overnight motorhome parking can be fully considered. Should these matters not be delegated then further decisions will need to be politically agreed in future which would prevent quick delivery of the project.



## Organisational Impact and Implications

- **Financial**, Capital funding is available through the Council's BSIP1 allocation and the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Bus Grant. Should there be a cost to the Council from the proposed contract extension, revenue funding would need to be sought from existing BSIP funds (for February and March 2026) and future Bus Grant allocations.
- **Human Resources (HR)**, There are no HR implications associated with this report.
- **Legal**, In implementing the proposed Park and Ride site Infrastructure improvements, any proposed works and services, including those funded by the grant funding identified in this report, will need to be commissioned via a compliant procurement process under the Procurement Act 2023 and the council's Contract Procedure Rules. Any associated contracts will need to ensure that relevant terms and conditions under the Grant Agreement with the YNYCA are passed on accordingly.
- In exploring further income opportunities associated with Park and Ride, consideration will need to be given to the existing contractual and lease agreements in place at each site to ensure any identified income opportunities can be accommodated within the terms of those agreements or whether any variations are likely to be needed.
- The current Park and Ride contract has been in place since 15 February 2018 and was extended in accordance with the terms of the contract to 31 January 2026. The further extension of the Park and Ride contract will necessitate a variation to the contract to enable it to be extended. Such an extension will be in accordance with The Public Service Obligations in Transport Regulations 2023 which allows such contracts to be in place for up to ten years.
- There are leases in place with third parties for some of the Park & Ride sites which will also need to be extended to correspond with the extension of the contract.
- **Procurement**, The infrastructure improvements will need to be delivered in accordance with corporate procurement guidelines.
- **Health and Wellbeing**, Improved Park and Ride sites will help better connect people to the wide range of recreational, employment, sporting and volunteering opportunities in the

*city. The sites will also offer improved active travel connections and by reducing the number of private cars in the city centre, replacing them with electric bus journeys, will also contribute to improving air quality, reducing congestion and emissions*

- **Environment and Climate action**, The objectives of this report align with the Council's Climate Change Ambition and the objective to increase the uptake of active travel and public transport in the city.
- **Affordability**, Park and Ride offers a cheaper way of accessing York City Centre for residents and visitors alike. Improved facilities and overnight parking help make Park and Ride a better value product.
- **Equalities and Human Rights**. An EIA for the Park and Ride Site Improvements is included at Annex C.
- **Data Protection and Privacy**, The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- **Communications**, The communications team works closely with transport colleagues and partners to promote Park and Ride services and any potential changes to the service. This was evidenced through support for the recent engagement around potential improvements.  
Any improvements to Park and Ride sites will be supported by a communications strategy covering before, during and after any construction work and will tie in with wider marketing and promotion of Park and Ride. On top of this communications support will also be required as any new contract/extension is signed relating to the Park and Ride, in conjunction with partners.
- **Economy**, Improved Park and Ride provision and an extended contract will minimise the number of vehicles accessing York City Centre whilst maintaining access for everyone. Overnight parking at Park and Ride sites has the opportunity to make multi-night stays more attractive.

## Risks and Mitigations

36. If the infrastructure works are not progressed then there is a high risk that the Department for Transport would request the funding to be returned. This would leave the Council to seek alternative funding, either from its own funds or YNYCA sources to replace or refurbish the aging facilities at Grimston Bar and Rawcliffe Bar. The maintenance costs of these sites in particular will increase without the proposed investment and the cost of that would be passed onto the Council through any future operating contract.
37. There is a cost risk. To manage the risk of an overspend the Council has engaged external cost management professionals throughout the BSIP programme and emerging designs are regularly reviewed to keep the cost plan current.
38. The main risk associated with this report is that without a contract in place the Park and Ride services would cease to exist. City Centre Car Parks would not be able to cope with the increase in demand and the city would highly likely lose significant visitor income. There would be major negative impacts for people working in the City Centre (parking cost, availability etc.) and for residents accessing destinations such as Designer Outlet or Monks Cross on the fringe of the city.

## Wards Impacted

39. All

## Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

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## Background papers

N/a

## Annexes

- Annex A: Park and Ride site improvements
- Annex B: Park and Ride site improvement consultation summary
- Annex C: EQIA