
Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

20 October 2008

Report of the Director of City Strategy

WATER END – PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS FOR CYCLISTS

Summary

1. This report advises Members about the results of consultation on proposals to introduce cycle facilities on Water End from the Clifton Green traffic signals to the junction with Salisbury Road. Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and approve the recommended option for implementation.

Background

2. Encouraging more people to cycle has been a long-standing priority for the Council, and this work has recently been given a huge boost by our successful bid to become a 'Cycling City'.
3. As part of our action plan to address existing gaps in connections and routes, we are seeking to create an 'orbital cycle route' to help people to get around the city. This will be located in-between the inner and outer ring roads, and should provide safer and more convenient cycling links to many employment sites, schools, leisure facilities, healthcare and retail sites.
4. The proposed cycle improvements for Water End would form an important part of this orbital route, and would immediately link up with existing cycle facilities west of the Salisbury Road junction with other cycle routes starting in the Clifton area. This would improve cycle connections for many people covering a wide area. The proposed route would also connect with the existing on-road cycle lanes along Clifton Road and Bootham.
5. There are a limited number of river crossings in the city, especially north of the city centre. Providing improved cycle facilities over Clifton Bridge along Water End has huge potential to encourage more people to cycle. For example, it not only forms a very important route for commuter journeys, but also for people travelling to and from school and for accessing leisure facilities. The route also forms a link between the major retail areas of Acomb and Clifton Moor.
6. At present, this section of Water End is not very attractive for cyclists to use. The main problem is the relatively narrow carriageway width (7.3m) which cyclists have to share with heavy traffic flows. The route is usually congested at peak periods, and often has fast moving traffic during the off-peak periods. As a result, many cyclists currently choose to ride on the footways, which causes

some conflict with pedestrians. This is particularly apparent when crossing Clifton Bridge, where the lighting columns at the back of the kerb line effectively create a narrow footway space, bounded by the bridge parapets. Another problem is the lack of any facilities to help people to cross Water End to access the riverside cycle/pedestrian route which passes under Clifton Bridge. Given the traffic conditions referred to above, this can be a difficult crossing movement to make whether on foot or on a bicycle. In addition, cyclists often have difficulty in riding past the queue of vehicles approaching the Clifton Green traffic signals, particularly at the 'pinch point' adjacent to property number 17 Clifton Green, and regularly resort to riding along the narrow footway to bypass vehicles in order to reach the stop line. The proposals have been developed to address these problems.

Proposals

7. As mentioned earlier, the existing carriageway is only 7.3m wide, which is not wide enough to accommodate on-road cycle lanes in both directions. The recommended minimum width of cycle lanes is 1.5m wide, and for roads carrying HGV and bus traffic we would ideally look to provide traffic lanes of around 3.0m for each direction of travel. When combined, these give a required road width of 9.0m. Widening the carriageway by such an amount would not be feasible due to the huge expense involved, and technical difficulties linked to the adjacent embankments and restricted width of Clifton Bridge. However, providing a 1.5m cycle lane on one side of the carriageway is considered a practical solution, and therefore options for routing cyclists off-road on the opposite side were explored. Following further feasibility work, Officers concluded that the best arrangement would be for westbound cyclists to be on-road, with off-road provision in the eastbound direction. The proposals are shown in **Annex A**, and a description of the main elements of the proposals are explained in more detail below:
8. For eastbound cyclists, the proposals take advantage of the section on the northern footway (between Salisbury Road and the Youth Hostel) where pedestrian movements are very light. Here a conversion of the footway for use just by cyclists is proposed.
9. At the Salisbury Road junction, it is proposed to introduce a new Pelican crossing into the signal phasing across Water End, primarily to enable anyone who might be affected by the proposed conversion of footway to cycle track in order to cross and then proceed along the other side of Water End. This will also provide a new facility for those wishing to access the RSPCA and Yorkshire Water offices, as well as the riverside, where many local people walk their dogs.
10. As part of the bridge refurbishment works, the lighting columns over the bridge, which are currently situated in the footways close to the carriageway, are to be relocated behind the parapets. This will ensure that the full width of both paths will be available for use by cyclists on the northern side, and pedestrians on the southern side.

11. The converted footway will extend over Clifton Bridge to a proposed Toucan crossing adjacent to the Youth Hostel. The proposed Toucan crossing is intended to provide easier and safer access to and from the existing riverside cycle/pedestrian route which passes under Clifton Bridge. The footway leading from the Toucan crossing to the Youth Hostel entrance will be widened to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians in a shared use area.
12. From the eastern side of the Youth Hostel Entrance to Clifton Green a new cycle track is proposed. This will mainly be situated along the edge of the verge adjacent to the carriageway, but the alignment will deviate slightly around the existing Pelican crossing and the bus stop to reduce potential conflict with pedestrians.
13. Cyclists currently face particular difficulties at Clifton Green due to a pinch point in the road width near house No.17 and queuing traffic at the traffic signals. Usually, the traffic queuing in the dedicated left turn lane on the approach to the Clifton Green signals position themselves tight against the nearside kerb, thereby preventing cyclists from passing on the nearside. As a result, some resort to riding along the existing footway to get to the junction. Therefore, as the cycle track approaches Clifton Green, the proposals include an extension to the kerb line, so that cyclists can safely negotiate the 'pinch point' at the corner (adjacent to property number 17). From that point, a ramped section would allow cyclists to rejoin the carriageway into a cycle lane leading to the advanced stop box at the traffic signals. This proposal will require the current two-lane approach for traffic to be reduced to a single lane (the designated left turn lane would be removed).
14. The proposed on-road cycle lane (1.5m wide) for cyclists travelling in a westerly direction commences just before the junction with the Clifton Green slip-road. Unfortunately, because of the 'pinch point' near No. 17 on Water End, there is insufficient carriageway space to start the cycle lane any earlier than this.
15. The westerly on-road cycle lane will extend all the way from Clifton Green to the Salisbury Road junction. The carriageway will be marked with a 1.5m cycle lane plus a 2.8m traffic lane running alongside it for westbound movements, with a 3.0m lane for traffic movements in the opposite direction (cyclists will be off-road on that side).
16. At the Salisbury Road traffic signals, there are proposals to provide an off-road cycle track to give access to a proposed new Toucan crossing over the Salisbury Road junction mouth, which would replace the existing staggered Pelican crossing. This new crossing will link the proposed route with the existing off-road cycle track leading to Boroughbridge Road in a single stage crossing. For cyclists wanting to stay on-road, a cycle lane between the two traffic lanes is incorporated, leading to an advanced stop box.

Consultation Feedback

17. A consultation letter, together with the plan shown in **Annex A**, was distributed to local residents, businesses, and other interested parties (e.g. the emergency services and road user groups). In addition, an article was released to the York

Press in order to make the general public aware of the proposed scheme. A summary of the feedback received is outlined below.

Residents / Businesses

18. To date, 16 replies have been received. Many of the responses express general support for the proposals, with some reservations regarding particular elements. **Annex B** provides a detailed summary of the points raised along with Officer comments. However, one main issue has emerged, and this is discussed below:
19. Many respondents are concerned that the proposal to remove the existing dedicated left turn lane for traffic at the Clifton Green signals will worsen traffic congestion on Water End, which can already be very bad at certain times of day. Some suggest that the cycle lane could end at, or before, the pinch point near No. 17, and the two-lane approach could then be retained for traffic.

Officer response

In becoming a Cycling City, the Council has committed to promoting cycling infrastructure that will in some instances need to take priority over motor traffic. Cyclists are higher up on the list of user hierarchy than motorists, and the Council is now seeking to deal with the more difficult parts of the cycle network where there are gaps in route connectivity. This is not to say that the needs of motorists should be ignored over cyclists' needs. However, after analysing the situation at the Clifton Green traffic signals, Officers consider that the benefits this part of the route will provide for cyclists is worthy of the disadvantages that motorists may face from increased congestion. Following Officer concerns about the potential increases in traffic congestion, junction modelling was undertaken in order to evaluate the likely effect of the proposals. Modelling shows that after an initial impact that could see traffic queues extend as far as the Salisbury Road junction, it is predicted that some traffic will relocate to other routes. This basically means that after a few weeks of operation, the traffic queues should return to more normal levels, but realistically, this is likely to be slightly worse than the current situation. Nevertheless, Officers are hopeful that some transfer in modal shift will occur from car to bicycle as a result of the improved cycling infrastructure, coupled with a slight increase in congestion levels. The main aim of the Council in becoming a Cycling City is to increase the number of people cycling in the city.

Emergency Services

20. The Police have expressed concern about the single lane approach to the Clifton Green traffic signals, and consider that the proposed Toucan crossing adjacent to the Youth Hostel is not required.
21. The Fire & Rescue Service wrote to confirm that they have no objections to the proposals. At the time of writing the report, no response has been received from the Ambulance Service.

Road User Groups

22. Sustrans responded by saying that they strongly support these proposals, and ask whether pedestrians walking along Water End on the north side towards Clifton will be advised to cross to the south side at Salisbury Road, or do we envisage signing the existing footway as shared use across the bridge?

Officer response

Officers propose that pedestrians will be asked to cross the road. To that end, a pedestrian sign will be mounted on adjacent guardrail. In addition, Officers do not intend to designate the existing footway as shared use across the bridge.

23. The York Cycle Campaign responded by saying that they are generally in support of the scheme overall, but raise a small number of points:
- York Cycle Campaign is generally not in favour of shared pedestrian/cycle facilities alongside roads, regarding them as a last resort, and less preferable compared to on-road cycle lanes;
 - Although large stretches of the proposed off-road path on the northern side of Water End are marked as 'cycle track' and not as 'shared use', it is inevitable that it will be used by pedestrians: there appears to be no room left for a separate footway and it would be unreasonable to expect a pedestrian to cross and re-cross Water End simply to avoid the cycle track. However it is accepted that in this case, the proposed off-road facility is likely to be the only feasible option but, as pedestrians will use it, the detailed design should fulfill Cycling England's guidelines for shared-use paths, not exclusive cycle paths;
 - Confirmation is sought that the cycle track width will be to Cycling England's design standards;
 - The proposals should include a means of joining the cycle track when making a right turn from Salisbury Road.

Officer response

The inclusion of some shared pedestrian/cycle facilities within the scheme was, in effect, a last resort given the limited space available. However, the Council often promotes the use of off-road sections, especially where this may help children to cycle associated with Safer Routes to School schemes, but also for the less experienced or less confident cyclists who would prefer to be separated from the traffic on busy roads. Officers can confirm that the widths satisfy Cycling England's requirements (we are currently liaising with one of Cycling England's consultants on an advisory basis), and that the proposals do include a means of joining the cycle track when making the right turn from Salisbury Road.

Member Views

Ward Members

24. Councillors Douglas, King, Scott, Alexander, Bowgett and Crisp were asked for their comments on the proposals. Only Councillor Douglas responded, and indicated her support for the proposals. Should we receive any further

comments following submission of this report, they will be reported as an update at the meeting.

Other Members

25. Councillor Gillies and Potter were also made aware of the proposals and asked for their comments. At the time of writing this report, Cllr Gillies has yet to respond. Cllr Potter has responded by indicating her support for the proposals.

Options on the Way Forward

26. There appears to be a general support for the proposals in principle, with some comments registered on one main contentious element. Therefore, Officers have formulated the following options for Members to consider:

Option One – implement the proposals (shown in **Annex A**);

Option Two – make any changes to the proposals that Members consider necessary;

Option Three – no cycle improvement measures to be implemented.

Analysis of Options

27. Clearly, Option Three would do nothing to promote cycling, and crucially, this option would not fulfil the Council's obligations in relation to being a Cycling City. This option would also fail to deliver on at least two of the seven aims outlined for spending Cycling England's funding, namely to increase total cycling activity (more people cycling more often), and to address the gaps in connections and cycle routes.
28. Officers consider that the proposals represented in Option One appear to be the best in terms of advancing the aims of the Council as a Cycling City, tailored to suit the individual requirements for cycling measures along Water End. The only major area of concern highlighted by the consultation process is the proposal to introduce a single lane approach for traffic to the Clifton Green signals. Should this be the favoured option, traffic modelling shows that initially, traffic congestion will increase on Water End. However, the traffic model also predicts that this will ease over time as drivers make alternative choices over their route choice and mode of travel. Officers consider that this element of the overall scheme is very important to make cycling along Water End more attractive, which is essential if the aim of encouraging a modal shift from car to bicycle is to be achieved. Therefore, Officers do not consider that any amendments to the scheme (Option Two) can be recommended.

Corporate Priorities

29. Option One appears to be the only option that will deliver uninterrupted cycling facilities along Water End. These proposals would help meet the Council's Corporate Priorities for improving the health and lifestyles of York's residents. In particular, it should also encourage local people to walk and cycle.

Implications

Financial/Programme

30. It is expected that the proposals could be delivered within the budget of £300,000 that was originally allocated within the 08/09 Capital Programme.

Human Resources (HR)

31. There are no human resources implications.

Equalities

32. There are no equalities implications.

Legal

33. There are no legal implications.

Crime and Disorder

34. There are no crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

35. There are no information technology implications.

Property

36. There are no property implications.

Risk Management

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Physical	Low	Possible	5
Financial	Low	Unlikely	6
Organisation/Reputation	Medium	Highly Probable	15

37. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the main risks that have been identified in this report are the potential damage to the Council's image and reputation linked to road traffic congestion at the Clifton Green traffic signals. This is because the proposals may be unpopular with many people, particularly motorists (Governance). There is, of course, the risk of incurring higher than expected construction costs (Financial). Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk scores have all been assessed at less than 16. This 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.

Recommendations

38. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve Option One, to implement the proposals (shown in **Annex A**).

Reason: Officers consider that these proposals will provide significant improvements for cyclists on Water End, and contribute to the aims of the Council as a Cycling City.

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Report Approved



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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist implications.

Wards Affected: Holgate and Clifton Wards

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

“Proposed 2008/09 City Strategy Capital Programme” – report to the Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel on 17 March 2008

“York Cycling City” – report to the Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel on 8 September 2008

Annexes:

Annex A – Cycle Route Proposals

Annex B – Comments in Response to Consultation