

**Decision Session
– Executive Member for City Strategy**

7 December 2010

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Water End / Clifton Green Review: Reinstatement of Left-turn Traffic Lane and Chicane Trial

Summary

1. This report discusses the possible reinstatement of a left-turn traffic lane on the Water End approach to the Clifton Green signals, whilst retaining a dedicated cycle lane. The physical constraints of the site are outlined and the development of an optimum layout is described. Feedback from external consultation is then discussed, along with an Officer assessment of the proposal. This leads to the presentation of options for the way forward for the reinstatement of the left-turn traffic lane.
2. In addition, this report brings to the attention of the Executive Member for City Strategy the response to the proposal to take forward a chicane trial along Westminster Road and The Avenue and puts forward a recommendation for bringing this matter to a conclusion.

Recommendation

3. The Executive Member is recommended:
 - (a) To note the contents of the report and decide if the proposed left-turn traffic lane should be progressed or not.

Reason: To balance various advantages and disadvantages linked to the proposal, and achieve the best overall layout for this arm of the junction.

- (b) That the chicane trial should not be taken forward.

Reason: Because there is little support for the trial.

Background

4. Encouraging more people to cycle has been a long-standing priority within the Council's Local Transport Plan, and this was given a huge boost by our successful bid to become a "Cycling City" in 2008. As part of this, a key infrastructure project within York's Cycling City programme is to complete an Orbital Cycle Route (OCR). The function of the OCR is to create a circulatory cycle route around the city that will connect many existing cycle path networks together, and thereby facilitate the formation

of useful routes between a large number of origins and destinations throughout the city. In addition, there is an action plan to address gaps in the existing cycle route network. The Water End approach to the Clifton Green junction was considered to present significant problems for cyclists. The original layout was considered to be of constrained width and was regularly packed tight with traffic during peak periods. The tight corner approximately 80 metres from the junction was also a factor in providing cycling facilities for increased safety and ease of movement for this vulnerable group of road users.

5. The plan shown in **Annex A** shows the original layout, i.e. before the current scheme was implemented. **Annex B** shows the current layout, which was approved at EMAP in October 2008 and subsequently constructed during the early part of 2009.
6. Since implementation, there have been complaints about increased traffic congestion on Water End as a result of losing the dedicated left-turn traffic lane, and residents of Westminster Road and The Avenue have complained about traffic cutting through their streets. In response, local councillors instigated a Councillor Call for Action, and a Task Group was subsequently set up to conduct a review of the scheme.
7. The Task Group reported its findings and recommendations to the council's Executive on 6th July 2010, where the following resolutions were made:-
 - "That Officers be instructed to undertake, on a trial basis, the installation of chicanes on Westminster Road, with a view to establishing what effect they have on vehicle volumes and speeds".
 - "That Officers be requested, in line with the recommendations of the Task Group, to bring forward for public consultation proposals which would see a left-turn general traffic lane provided at the Water End junction, on the basis that such a proposal would also retain a discrete cycle lane or path. It is recognised that such a project could have significant financial, conservation and road safety implications, all of which would have to be highlighted in any Officer report before a final decision on implementation could be made".
8. In accordance with these resolutions, Officers have also developed a detailed plan for undertaking a chicane trial in Westminster Road. The next section of this report therefore focuses on the potential provision of a left-turn traffic lane on Water End, whilst retaining a discrete cycle lane. The chicane trial is then discussed.

Proposals

Part A – Reinstatement of the Left-turn Traffic Lane

9. During the feasibility design stage of developing the current Water End Cycle Route scheme, Officers started with the aim of trying to maintain two traffic lanes on the approach to the Clifton Green signals. However, it was also considered essential to introduce a dedicated cycle lane to

assist cyclists in this difficult area. At that time, Officers concluded that the available highway space would be insufficient to safely accommodate two traffic lanes plus a cycle lane on the approach to the junction. The main physical constraints that limited what could be accommodated are summarised below:-

- The overall highway is bounded by Clifton Green to one side, and private residential properties on the other side. Therefore, acquiring additional highway space would involve either compulsory purchase procedures with respect to the private properties, or overcoming significant legal issues and public opposition in relation to using part of Clifton Green. Consequently, neither approach was considered feasible.
- The width of the available highway on this section of Water End is not uniform, reducing significantly from east to west away from the junction with Clifton Green. Consequently, whilst two traffic lanes and a cycle lane might be fitted in close to the stop line at the traffic signals, it could not usefully be extended very far back from the junction and would limit the ability of left turning traffic to access its dedicated lane. This was already a problem with the original layout, and would be exacerbated by the need to accommodate a cycle lane as well.
- The existing footway running along the north side of Water End, opposite Clifton Green, was considered too narrow to provide any scope for widening the carriageway.

10. Given these constraints, which all still exist, the process of bringing forward a new proposal in line with the Task Group's recommendations has proved challenging. However, following a detailed re-examination of the area in question, a potential scheme layout has been developed, which would meet the basic requirement of providing two traffic lanes, plus a dedicated cycle lane. The proposed layout is shown in **Annex C**, and the key features are outlined below:-

- Extra carriageway width would be created via the removal of the narrow strip of cobbles running along the edge of the existing footway and by severely cutting back the large overhanging hedges belonging to the adjacent properties.
- Additional useable carriageway space would be provided by removing the existing traffic island.
- The left-turn traffic lane would be of limited length (approximately 30 metres) and would vary in width from 2.4m to 3.0m wide (ideally, at least 3.0m wide traffic lanes should be provided).
- The cycle lane would be positioned centrally between the two traffic lanes, primarily to avoid those cyclists going straight on or turning right from being in conflict with left turning traffic. It would be 1.4m wide (ideally, at least 1.5m wide cycle lanes should be provided). Left turning cyclists would use the general left-turn traffic lane.

- The straight ahead/right turn traffic lane would vary in width from 2.4m to 3.0m (ideally, at least 3.0m wide traffic lanes should be provided).
- The general traffic lane in the opposite direction, which would accommodate both motor vehicles and cyclists, would vary in width between 3.0m and 3.6m (ideally, a 3.0m traffic lane alongside a 1.5m cycle lane should be provided).

Consultation on the Reinstatement of the Left-turn Traffic Lane

11. The new proposals were publicised for comment on 22nd September via 'Your City', the Clifton 'Your Ward' newsletter, and on the council's website. In addition, a consultation leaflet was distributed locally on 23rd September (**Annex D** shows the extents of the distribution plan). 400 households/businesses received a leaflet directly, compared to 115 in 2008. The distribution area for the consultation on the current proposals included the whole of Westminster Road, Greycliffe Drive and The Avenue.
12. In total, 93 people responded to the current public consultation (this compares with 51 people who responded to the original consultation on the wider cycle scheme in 2008). Of the 93 responses to the recent consultation, 35 support the proposal; 46 are in objection; and the rest (12) suggest alternatives. A profile of the responses is set out in the table below:-

Origin of Response	Support reinstatement of left turn lane	Against reinstatement of left turn lane	Other suggestions	Total
Westminster Road	4	0	0	4
The Avenue	5	2	0	7
Greycliffe Drive	2	1	1	4
Clifton Green & Water End	2	9	0	11
Elsewhere	22	34	11	67
	35	46	12	93

13. A summary of the main comments received is presented below (NB: the figures in brackets represents the number of respondents reflecting these views):-

Positive

- Proposals appear to provide the best solution for both cars and bikes (2);

- The proposals will reduce traffic queues, delays, and air pollution (12);
- I am pleased that the council is willing to alter the traffic flow on Water Lane back to two lanes (17);
- The present arrangements have generated considerable problems including the creation of the Westminster Road/Avenue rat-run and queues on Water End for much of the day (8);
- It is admirable that York is at the forefront of cycle safety in road planning, but this should be in conjunction with provision for vehicles, whose drivers are just as important. Where both can be accommodated, this should be done (2);
- Please make the left turn lane as long as possible (2);
- Hardly any cyclists use the new facilities in contrast to the number of motorists using Water End (5).

Negative

- Having a central cycle feeder lane will result in regular vehicle conflicts with cyclists, as traffic turning into the left lane crosses the cycle lane (21);
- Wider vehicles will encroach onto the cycle lane whilst queuing (16);
- Use of the footway by pedestrians will be intimidating, given its narrow width and the likelihood of continual hedge re-growth, and because it will be situated directly adjacent to traffic in the narrow left turn lane (9);
- The proposal will make the cycle lane unusable, given the potential dangers, and cyclists are likely to revert back to riding on the footway - as they did previously, when in its original layout, due to the difficulties of making their way to the advance stop line (7).
- The current layout is well liked by cyclists, is seen as a vast improvement on the original layout, and is subsequently used as a safe means of moving past the traffic and through the junction (27);
- Removing the traffic island at the junction mouth will compromise the safety of crossing pedestrians (6);
- Spending £35k in a period of austerity to take a retrograde step that will greatly worsen the situation for cyclists is not viewed as being good value for money (7);
- Proposed changes will do little to improve current congestion levels (25);
- Traffic signal timings could be improved to make the flow through the Water End arm of the junction more efficient (4);
- The current facilities have increased cycle usage (3).

Ward Member Views

14. Officers consulted with the Ward Councillors Douglas, King, and Scott and also Councillors D'Agorne, Gillies, and Potter on the proposals. Their responses, at the time of writing this report, are summarised below:-

Cllr Douglas - is in favour of the left filter lane being replaced.
 Cllr King - no response received.
 Cllr Scott - no response received.

Other Member Views

15. Cllr Gillies said that he supports the left-turn lane proposal, with an appropriate filter light reinstated. He considers that the present system has not worked.
16. Cllr D'Agorne said that having looked at the specific details more closely, the Green Party has concluded that the scheme presents a number of serious concerns:
 - The conflict point at the commencement of the left-turn lane.
 - The inadequate width of the central cycle feeder lane when the traffic lanes on either side are a minimum of 2.4m wide;
 - The risk of the loss of the hedge through severe pruning;
 - The narrower footway and risk of cyclists returning to use this when the lane is blocked by stationary traffic;
 - The loss of the splitter island that currently provides some minimal refuge to assist pedestrians in safely crossing to and from the Green.

Whilst we do not want to criticise the task group for seeking to propose a solution that might improve the junction capacity without losing the cycle lane, the experience of lane widths on Fulford Road leads us to reluctantly conclude it would be unwise to make any change to the present layout at Water End along the lines proposed. It is important to stress the strategic significance of this facility as part of the wider cycle network and a long-term strategy for continuous safe routes around the city.

17. Cllr Potter is happy to support the Ward Members' views on the proposals.

Organisations / Other Interested Parties

18. **The Police** – The Traffic Management Liaison Officer has raised numerous concerns, which are listed below:
 - The removal of the existing splitter island will create conflict issues for vehicles turning into Water End from both Shipton Road and also from Water Lane. The speed of vehicles entering Water End from Water Lane is relatively high and the visibility is reduced by trees and foliage.
 - The reduction in the width of the footpath to 1.8 metres, which is only achieved by the cutting back of the hedge by 0.5metre, will be an ongoing maintenance issue, which will require constant attention. The real width of the footpath will be approximately 1.3 to 1.5 metres, which is well below the minimum standard required (i.e. normal provision would be 2.0 metres; absolute minimum 1.8 metres) and is unacceptable, particularly given the likelihood of usage by vulnerable users, for example elderly / disabled / electric buggies.
 - The cycle lane becomes centralised, which is fine if the cyclist intends to cycle across into Water Lane or turn right into Bootham,

but would be dangerous, as there is a real risk of conflict with motor vehicles wanting to turn left into Shipton Road.

- The traffic lanes are very narrow and there is a great possibility that vehicles will encroach into the cycle lane. This will be especially dangerous as the lights turn to green in Water End and previously stationary traffic starts to move off. There could also be insufficient room for cyclists to manoeuvre in Water End onto and along the centralised cycle lane, leading to potential cyclist casualties.
- Large vehicles in the left hand (inner) lane in Water End will have to travel very close to the kerb line. There is every possibility that the vehicle's nearside wing mirror will overhang the footpath and become a danger to pedestrians and also, this would present difficulties in making the left turn manoeuvre onto Shipton Road because there would be no room to swing out.
- The North Yorkshire Police could not support these proposals on road safety grounds. Due regard should be afforded to the Stage 2 Road Safety Audit in relation to this scheme, which highlights many of the above identified issues, and the comments made within this report are fully supported by North Yorkshire Police.

19. The **Ambulance Service** are not in support of the proposals and request that the following aspects are taken into account:

- Currently we have issues with the ability of an ambulance to make progress along Water End during heavy traffic volume periods, as there is limited capacity for vehicles to move. This is compounded by the vision of the junction when traveling towards Clifton Green, as the ambulance staff have to commit to travelling in the opposing lane in heavy traffic; on-coming traffic does not have the vision until it is committed to the same lane. The introduction of the secondary traffic lane would potentially reduce capacity further, especially as this is below recommended width.
- There is potential for an increase in road traffic collisions, and therefore casualty incidents, due to vehicles having to cross the cycle lane to join the left turn lane.
- The narrow lanes potentially increase the risk to cyclists that would have to travel between two lanes of moving vehicles.
- A cyclist turning right from Water End has the potential of a collision with a vehicle heading straight on, which further raises the risk of casualty incidents.
- Removal of the splitter island commits pedestrians to a complete crossing of the junction head, with no dedicated footway adjacent to the Green.
- The reduction of both the cycle lane and the left-turn lane below recommended minimum standards causes some concern, as this brings the cyclist and motorist closer together.
- This is a bus route and presumably there will be no change to bus services locally. The potential for vehicles to encroach on the opposing lane, due to the restrictive lane width, is greater and potentially lends itself to creating an obstruction to emergency vehicles.

20. The **York Cycle Campaign** - would prefer to retain the current layout, and fear that the cycle lane now proposed would frequently be blocked by drivers wishing to turn left.
21. The **Cyclists Touring Club** – is concerned about the proposed layout being implemented and fears it simply facilitates more car commuting and will add to the rat-run users who turn left at Water End to use Rawcliffe Lane to get quickly to Clifton Moor. It is thought that numbers who turn left from Water End do not justify bringing back the lane, which is so short to have little overall effect. A central cycle lane will not be popular, and could deter some cyclists, given that access to a centre cycle lane could be blocked at peak times by tailing back vehicles from the reinstated left-turn vehicle lane. This already occurs regularly at the inbound centre cycle lane by the Royal York Hotel gardens, where there is a left hand filter lane to Leeman Road. This could discourage use of the Orbital Cycle Route in this area by less confident and experienced cyclists. Any short-term gain from reinstatement of the Water End left hand filter lane would ultimately be eroded by longer-term increases in motor vehicle traffic across the City.

Officer Assessment

22. **Road Safety** - A Stage 2 (detailed design) Road Safety Audit was undertaken in late September by highway safety specialists who had no involvement in developing the proposal. This generally highlighted similar road safety concerns to those raised by the police in paragraph 15, and a detailed summary of the audit comments is provided in **Annex E**.
23. **Traffic Capacity** - Computer modelling has confirmed that the partial reinstatement of the left turn lane will increase capacity on this approach, especially so in the am peak, when there is a higher proportion of left turning vehicles. However, things would not fully revert back to the previous situation due to the shorter length of the proposed left-turn lane, the narrowness of the lanes, and weaving traffic movements between cyclists and other traffic, which are all likely to have some reducing effect on the extra capacity provided in reality. Included at **Annex F** is the technical briefing note presented previously to the Water End Councillor Call for Action Task Group on 14th April 2010. This examines different scenarios and compares the resultant effects on traffic flow and delay/queues of re-introducing a left turn lane on Water End at the Clifton Green junction, and also a point closure on Westminster Road.
24. **Conservation** - The hedges adjacent to the footway are well established and form an attractive local feature. They were planted on the property boundary line many years ago, and cutting them back as far as the back of the footway now would undoubtedly threaten their survival. The removal of the narrow strip of cobbles on Water End would not significantly harm the character and appearance of the area.
25. **Air Quality** - Clifton Green and the surrounding roads are included within City of York Council's first Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Whilst the proposals to reinstate the left hand turn from Water End would

require reducing the existing footway width (and thus would bring the queuing traffic slightly closer to residential properties), it is not anticipated that this would result in a significant deterioration in air quality at these relevant locations.

Options

26. The options for the Executive Member to consider are:

Option 1 – Support the scheme proposals shown in **Annex C** for implementation;

Option 2 – Amend the scheme proposals Shown in **Annex C** for implementation;

Option 3 – Reject the scheme proposals shown in **Annex C**, and retain the current layout (i.e. **Annex B**).

Analysis

27. The implementation of the proposed scheme would bring about a small improvement to traffic flow at the junction, and would be welcomed by many people. However, it would not fully restore the previous situation, which could lead to some dissatisfaction with the outcome. Furthermore, many people are opposed to changing the current layout, and significant concerns have been raised, particularly in relation to the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. Officers consider that these safety matters cannot be resolved by amending the proposed scheme, and therefore on safety grounds retaining the existing layout is preferred.

Proposals

Part B – Chicane Trial

28. A set of draft proposals showing the position of the chicanes was made available for residents to consider and whilst there wasn't a huge response (around 10 letters and e-mails) all were quite firmly against what had been put forward.

29. The main reasons given for objecting to the chicanes are:

- Residents parking bays will be reduced,
- Chicanes will cause vehicles to travel in unpredictable direction,
- Increase the nuisance of noise and pollution,
- Do not believe they will have an effect,
- Waste of money,
- Will make turning into and out of driveways more awkward,
- Position and design of the chicanes is barmy,
- Should not be used on residential roads,
- They're dangerous,
- Will be difficult for school buses to manoeuvre round.

View of Scrutiny Committee Task Group and Ward Councillors

30. The views of the relevant Councillors are summarised in the table below:

Cllr. Douglas	Ward	No concerns raised
Cllr. King	Ward	I would agree with residents.
Cllr. Scott	Ward	I continue to support the residents view on this. I also support the Council Call for Action conclusion that a point closure should be introduced - ideally by way of a rising bollard.
Cllr. D'Agorne	Task Group / Party Representative	From the officer briefing I had it would appear this option is more problematic than it might be first thought to be. If there is no obvious local support for it and no substantive evidence that it would achieve the intended objective there would seem to be little point in moving ahead with it. However it should be made clear to residents that no other means of deterring through traffic is going to be available
Cllr. Holvey	Task Group	No concerns raised.
Cllr. Hudson	Task Group	We must go with what the residents want.
Cllr. Merrett	Party Representative	No concerns raised.
Cllr. Gillies	Party Representative	Alistair, I support your view.

Previous Residents Questionnaire Results

31. A previous questionnaire was delivered to all the properties along Westminster Road, The Avenue and Greencliffe Drive regarding traffic issues in the area in November last year. One of the questions specifically asked was whether they were in favour of further investigations into the use of chicanes and or road narrowings.
32. The result was 30 (27%) were in favour of further investigation into use of chicanes and / or road narrowings. Because the support was quite limited the chicanes option was not taken forward. Other results from the questionnaire were 61% in favour of a closure, 26% in favour of road narrowings at the junctions and 60% in favour of 20mph speed limit.

Options

33. The options available regarding the chicane trial are:
- A. To proceed with the chicane trial as proposed. This is not the recommended option because there is little support from local residents for such measures.
 - B. To re-consult on an alternative chicane trial. This is not the recommended option because there is little support from local residents for such measures and some of the concerns due to the likely inconvenience expressed in the recent consultation will be relocated to the revised chicane points.
 - C. To not implement the trial. This is the preferred option.

Corporate Priorities

34. The proposed re-instatement of the left-turn traffic lane would be a localised amendment to the overall Water End Cycle Scheme, and is thought unlikely to have a significant impact in relation to the council's Corporate Priorities. However, there is a risk that cyclists would find the new layout more intimidating, and some may choose to switch to alternative motorised forms of travel. There is also a risk of more accidents happening. Therefore the proposal does have some potential to impact negatively on the council's corporate aims relating to sustainability, safety, and health. The chicane trial does not impact on the corporate strategy.

Implications

35. **Financial/Programme** - The Transport Capital Programme for 2010/11 currently includes a budget of £5k, pending the decision concerning the proposed reinstatement of the left-turn lane. The reinstatement could proceed in 2010/11 if the spend on other schemes across the programme was lower than anticipated. Failing that, the scheme could be prioritised against other projects and put forward for inclusion in the 2011/12 capital programme. The actual work to implement the reinstatement is estimated to cost approximately £35k. However, this does not include any allocation for potential utility diversions that may be required.
36. **Human Resources** – None
37. **Equalities** – None
38. **Legal** – None
39. **Crime and Disorder** – None
40. **Information Technology** – None
41. **Property** – None

Risk Management

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

42. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the main risks for the reinstatement of 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.

43. 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.

44. There are no significant implications and risks associated with the recommendations on the chicane trial.

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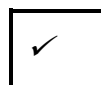
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Report
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Date 19 November 2010

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All

For further information please contact the authors of the report.

Background Papers:

“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 “Water End Approach to Clifton Green – Original Layout (Pre January 2009)”

Annex B Plan showing “Water End Approach to Clifton Green – Current Layout (Implemented in early 2009)”

Annex C Plan showing “Proposed Layout of the Water End Approach to Clifton Green (with a central cycle feeder lane running in-between a reinstated left turn traffic lane and the straight ahead/right turn traffic lane)”

Annex D Plan showing “Extents of Distribution Area for Public Consultation”

Annex E Road Safety Audit Comments

Annex F Briefing Note on Junction Analysis