

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

COPMANTHORPE PRIMARY – LOW GREEN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Summary

1. A key aim of the Council's safe routes to school programme is to facilitate and encourage walking and cycling on the school journey to reduce the number of cars on the transport network at key times. Safety concerns have been raised about walking to Copmanthorpe Primary School via the entrances on Low Green, which are well used by children from the west of the village. Concerns like these are typically addressed from two different angles. Firstly, a highway improvement scheme has been developed to increase visibility at crossing points and discourage parents from parking at the school entrances. Secondly, a programme of travel initiatives to reduce car use or at least encourage more considerate parking has been devised by working with the school. However, it is difficult to monitor the effectiveness of these initiatives as the collection of mode of travel data is no longer compulsory. There have been no objections to the highway proposals during consultation. Consequently, the report seeks approval to: implement the proposed highway measures and; to re-examine the collection of key data to help monitor the effectiveness of travel initiatives at this and other schools.

Background

2. Copmanthorpe Primary School is situated in the middle of the village with the main and a secondary entrance off Low Green to the west of the site as shown in **Annex A**. However, any parents who have to drive are actively encouraged by the school to use the Recreation Centre car park off Barons Crescent which links to a rear entrance of the school via a short footpath. More details on work with the school to support more sustainable travel can be found in **Annex B**.

3. Some 15-20% of pupils now live outside the village. This is likely to have resulted in an increase in the number of cars travelling to the school, but accurate figures do not exist as City of York Council no longer collects mode of travel data through Management Information Service termly reports. In 2011, the Government decided that this data was not required as part of its policy of reducing the administrative burden on schools. Consequently it was decided that the data should not be collected within the authority. Other local authorities such as Wakefield, Leeds, East Riding of Yorkshire, Oxfordshire and Darlington have continued to collect this data as it is seen as important to inform on the success of school travel plans and other sustainable travel initiatives in their authority.
4. The Council's School Travel Advisor has been working with the school for some time, although inconsiderate parking on Low Green was not specifically raised until May 2012, with a full discussion taking place in the school travel group's meeting in June. A further meeting was held in the new school year in October to discuss how highway improvements could be used to help alleviate the situation. This street is a cul-de-sac and part of a larger 20mph traffic calmed zone. Vehicle speeds are generally low but visibility at a well used speed table crossing point is restricted by the existing road layout. Parents parking near two of the entrances has made it difficult for large groups to use the footway and to cross the road at convenient points. The school would like to promote more sustainable travel, but these safety concerns could be sufficient to deter walking to school.
5. Independent of these discussions, a 16 signatory petition was presented to the Council in February 2013 on behalf of the residents of Low Green and Croft Farm Close objecting to 'inconsiderate parking'. As with many schools in York (and across the whole country), the school suffers from anti-social parking by parents and carers at the start and end of the school day. This parking can typically cause obstruction, inconvenience other road users, and damage highway verges.

Proposals

6. Work will continue with the school to promote a programme of travel initiatives to reduce pressure on the surrounding road network including Low Green. In addition, proposals have been developed to provide a safer route to school by improving a footway and increasing visibility at crossing points as shown in **Annex C**.

7. The alignment of the Low Green junction with Church Street makes it difficult for pedestrians crossing north of the junction to see vehicles coming around the corner. Parked cars sometimes make this worse and a shallow angle allows higher vehicle entry speed. It is therefore proposed to realign the junction using a footway build-out, so vehicles have to turn at a right angle, reducing speed and also increasing their visibility. This would be further improved as the footway build-out would also prevent parking immediately at the junction. In addition, a short section of adjacent footway widening would be undertaken to provide more space for pedestrians to pass on the narrow footway.
8. A new 'school keep clear' marking would be installed at the most northerly entrance to the school on Low Green, and the existing 'school keep clear' marking at the main entrance would be extended to provide pedestrians with more visibility when they are using the adjacent speed table crossing point. These markings are only advisory but existing markings in the village have been observed to be well respected.
9. As City of York Council no longer collects normal mode of travel data, the school is being encouraged to collect their own data to monitor the effectiveness of these and other sustainable travel initiatives. On a larger scale, it is also proposed to examine how other authorities have continued to collect mode of travel data with a view to reintroducing it in York.

Consultation

10. Consultation on the highway proposals has taken place with relevant Councillors, the Parish Council, North Yorkshire Police, the School, and local residents. The responses are summarised below:

Ward Member Views

11. Cllr. P. Healey – asked about the financial implications of the scheme.

Officer comments

There is £12,000 allocated to the scheme in the school safety block of the Transport Capital Programme, however the latest cost estimate is £9,000.

12. Cllr. I. Gillies – supports the scheme, subject to the outcome of the public consultation.
13. Cllr. C. Steward – No response received.

Other Member Views

14. Cllr. A. D'Agorne - supports the scheme, subject to the outcome of the public consultation.
15. Cllr. J. Galvin – defers to Ward Councillors on this issue.
16. Cllr. A. Reid – supports the scheme, subject to the outcome of the public consultation.

Parish Council Views

17. Copmanthorpe Parish Council supports the scheme.

Police Views

18. North Yorkshire Police's Traffic Management Officer has no comments.

School Views

19. Copmanthorpe Primary School supports the scheme.

Residents Views

20. The 40 most directly affected residents received a consultation leaflet with a plan of the scheme. Six responses were received, which mainly support the principle of the proposals but raise a number of specific issues as detailed below. Some issues unrelated to the scheme were also raised and these have been dealt with separately.
21. Five residents asked for more to be done to tackle anti-social parking by parents on Low Green and Croft Farm Close. This included the general volume of vehicles, parking on verges and obstructing driveways.

Officer comments

The most effective way of tackling inappropriate parking is to communicate with the parents through the school. This is covered in more detail in **Annex B**.

22. Two residents asked for vehicle access to be prohibited on Low Green at school times for all but residents and essential visitors.

Officer comments

There is no suitable legal mechanism to prohibit all but residents' and essential visitor's vehicles into Low Green at school times. Access

restrictions are only introduced in exceptional circumstances because they are difficult to enforce, partly because the definition of access is not clear cut. Indeed it could be argued that dropping off or picking up children from school is entering the area for access. The Council does operate residents parking schemes in areas which have persistent problems with excessive parking throughout the day such as near the city centre. There are high costs associated with administrating and enforcing these schemes so residents typically pay £93 per year for one permit that allows them to park on-street in marked bays. Some provision is required for short term visitors, servicing and deliveries, so typically non-permit parking is allowed for a maximum of 30 minutes rendering these schemes unsuitable to prevent school parking.

23. One resident asked for parking to be prohibited on Low Green at school times.

Officer comments

To be effective, parking restrictions near schools are kept to a minimum and reserved for locations where parking could significantly impact on the safety and movement of large groups of children such as at school entrances and crossing points. This is because:

- Parking may be displaced onto nearby unrestricted streets transferring the same problems to other residents.
- Restrictions would apply to residents as well as parents. Not every household has adequate off-street parking to meet their needs and could be concerned if either themselves or their visitors could not park close by. Restrictions would also apply outside of term time, further inconveniencing local residents.
- Double and single yellow line restrictions allow for dropping off and picking up passengers. Parking enforcement officers typically allow around five minutes for this purpose, which is often enough time for parents to leave or collect their children.
- There are over 40 schools with parking restrictions in the Council area which require attention from Parking Enforcement Officers, in addition to all their other responsibilities. There are only adequate resources to visit every school once or twice a year, although they are able to target individual schools for a few days in support of specific travel initiatives. However, it is typical for drivers to modify their behaviour when Parking

Services attend. It should also be noted that Enforcement Officers only have jurisdiction to deal with yellow line contraventions, they have no powers to address anti-social parking such as on verges or obstructing driveways.

- Where schools have large areas of restrictions, parents are more likely to ignore them and park as close as possible to the school gates, usually the least safe place.

24. Two residents were concerned that the 'school keep clear' markings could displace up to three vehicles onto other parts of the street.

Officer comments

This is a potential consequence of any type of parking restriction, but the markings are considered to be the minimum suitable length to discourage parking where there are likely to be the most significant movements by pupils, at a school entrance and a crossing point.

25. One resident asked what steps would be taken if the advisory 'school keep clear' markings proved ineffective.

Officer comments

If low compliance at school times is observed, the introduction of a mandatory no stopping order with accompanying upright signs would be considered.

26. One resident asked for the proposed footway widening on Church Street to be increased to provide more space for pedestrians. This may also require measures to prevent parking on the widened footway.

Officer comments

There are areas on both sides of Church Street where parking is permitted, and at busy times it is quite common for these areas to be full. The design of the footway widening and build-out allows the parking to continue whilst still allowing the passage of a large vehicle, such as a delivery vehicle, through the area. Restricting the number of parking spaces could lead to displacement onto less suitable areas. Drivers have a habit of parking on the footway if they feel they do not have enough space to park on-road, this can be prevented by installing bollards, but as a consequence the useable footway width is reduced. Therefore, the design of the footway widening and build-out aims to strike a balance between increasing the space available to pedestrians, whilst still allowing an adequate amount of parking near the local shops.

27. One resident asked if anti-pedestrian paving could be installed on the build-out to discourage loitering on the extended area of footway.

Officer comments

There is little of the footway build-out which would not be useful for the passage of pedestrians. The footway on Church Street is narrow and pedestrian movement is often restricted by parked vehicles, so the section of build-out adjacent to the existing footway is likely to be used to let others pass. In addition, the section across the junction mouth is on the desire line for pedestrians crossing Church Street. Consequently, this would only leave a small segment of footway (where the post for the no entry sign would be installed), on which there would be little benefit from installing anti-pedestrian paving. However, as there is nowhere to sit adjacent to this area, loitering is not anticipated to be a problem.

Options

28. The Cabinet Member has options to consider in relation to the highway proposals and travel initiatives:

Highway proposals

Option One – approve the scheme as shown in **Annex C** to improve conditions for walking and cycling to school on Low Green;

Option Two – approve the scheme as shown in **Annex C**, with any amendments considered necessary, to improve conditions for walking and cycling to school on Low Green;

Option Three – note the contents of the report, but take no further action.

Travel initiatives

Option A - note the progress made with the school and support the intended programme of initiatives to address inconsiderate parking. Also, to request officers look at re-introducing the collection of mode of travel data for pupils to monitor the effectiveness of work with schools.

Option B - note the progress made with the school and support the intended programme of initiatives to address inconsiderate parking.

However, request that officers do not investigate re-introducing the collection of mode of travel data.

Option C – ask the school to continue unsupported with its efforts to decrease car use and change driver behaviour.

Analysis of Options

Highway proposals

29. It is considered that the implementation of the footway improvements and 'school keep clear' markings would help improve conditions for pupils walking and cycling to the entrances on Low Green. Consultation has shown no objections to the principle of the proposals, with mainly more restrictive measures requested. However, there are many disadvantages associated with extensive legal restrictions to tackle short term parking problems. A more effective approach is considered to be working with the school to try and change the behaviour of parents, alongside any complementary highway improvements. Option one to approve the scheme as shown in **Annex C** would benefit pupils walking and cycling to school, and is therefore the preferred course of action. No suggested amendments to the scheme are considered to be practical, so as a result, option two is not recommended. Option three to take no action would bring no improvements to the route and is also not recommended.

Travel initiatives

30. Modal shift in schools is achieved via a partnership between the schools and City of York Council, with the input of a variety of departments, particularly the Sustainable Travel team and Transport Projects. Encouraging the school to collect normal mode of travel data and plotting that information would inform the school which initiatives would potentially be most effective at reducing car use. It would therefore be appropriate for the Council to examine how other local authorities have continued to collect this data and to revisit the Council's approach as it is difficult to employ evidenced based initiatives without any data to target initiatives and monitor effectiveness. Option A is therefore the preferred course of action. Option B may still improve the travel situation in Copmanthorpe, although the effectiveness of initiatives here and at other schools would be difficult to assess without the objective monitoring of mode of travel data. Whilst the school is having some effect on changing driver behaviour, without the support and encouragement of officers impetus may stall and

the number of vehicles parking inconsiderately may begin to increase. Option C is therefore not recommended.

Council Plan

31. The potential benefits for the priorities in the Council Plan are:
32. Get York moving – Highway improvements and travel initiatives that encourage walking and cycling, leading to less reliance on the car have the potential to cut congestion, improve air quality and improve traffic flow.
33. Protect vulnerable people – A safer highway environment would benefit the local community, particularly school children.
34. Protect the environment – By reducing car use, carbon emissions would be cut and air quality improved.

Implications

35. This report has the following implications:
36. **Financial** – The highways scheme is included in the School Safety block of Transport Capital Programme for 2013/14 and is estimated to cost in the region of £9,000 including fees, less than the £12,000 originally budgeted for.
37. **Human Resources** – None.
38. **Equalities** – It is likely that more vulnerable road users would benefit the most from safety improvements.
39. **Legal** – The City of York Council, as Highways Authority of the area, has powers under the Highways Act 1980 and associated Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 to implement the measures proposed.
40. **Crime and Disorder** – None.
41. **Information Technology** - None.
42. **Land** – None.
43. **Other** – None.

Risk Management

44. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report have been identified.

Recommendations

45. The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- i) Give approval for the implementation of the proposed highway improvements shown in **Annex C**.

Reason: To improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists using Low Green to travel to school.

- ii) Support the work of the School Travel Advisor with the school, and request that officers investigate how other local authorities have continued to collect normal mode of travel to school data, and consider the applicability of this for City of York Council

Reason: The school is already engaged in working with officers to address anti-social parking and has a programme of initiatives that will continue this work. Collection of mode of travel data will allow more targeted work and improve effectiveness.

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Report Approved



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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist implications.

Wards Affected: Rural West York

All



For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers

None.

Annexes

- Annex A Copmanthorpe Primary School – Location plan
- Annex B Travel Initiatives
- Annex C Low Green – Proposed highway improvements