
**Decision Session Public –
Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and
Sustainability**

2 August 2012

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

**Petition concerning proposed University Road/ Field Lane highway
Improvement Scheme**

Summary

1. In response to a petition from residents, requesting the scrapping the proposed highway improvements to Field Lane and University Road, Heslington, this report examines the background issues and evaluates the requested actions. The evaluations within the report conclude that scrapping the scheme will not meet the requirements of the planning approval given to the University of York for the University East Campus project, of which the University Road / Field Lane Improvement Scheme formed a component part of the package of highway improvement schemes identified within the project approved.
2. There are numerous consequences of non-implementation of the University Road / Field Lane scheme. These are detailed in the text below, but primarily the three main aims of the scheme of reducing / removing “through traffic” from the lower section of Field Lane, of providing improved cycling and pedestrian links between campuses, and of providing environmental enhancement in the vicinity of Heslington Hall would not be achieved.

There are numerous additional knock-on effects of not implementing the scheme and these are discussed further below.

Crucially, the requirements of the planning consent will not be fully achieved.

Recommendations

3. (i) That the Cabinet Member notes the content of the petition, but agrees that the University Road / Field Lane scheme is progressed.

Reason: To satisfy the requirements of the planning approval given to the University of York in respect to the East Campus Development, to provide essential cycle and pedestrian links between campuses, to provide improvements to traffic flows in sensitive areas adjacent to the school and church on Field Lane, and to achieve the desired environmental enhancement in the vicinity of Heslington Hall and Heslington Church to be undertaken.

- (ii) That Officers write to the lead petitioner after the meeting.

Reason: To inform them of the Cabinet Member's decision.

Background

4. The University of York submitted proposals for the development of the University East Campus for outline planning permission in 2004. The application was called in for a decision at public inquiry by the Secretary of State in September 2005, and outline permission was granted subject to conditions set out in Appendix A of the Public Inquiry decision report.
5. Appendix A, Condition 1 of the Public Inquiry decision report listed a number of approved plans, indicating various highway improvement schemes to the highway network that needed to be undertaken in conjunction with the East Campus development, to accommodate the potential increases in traffic and to meet the need to improve cycling and pedestrian links between the campuses and public transport.

One of these plans, Plan F(ii) Rev A, indicated proposed improvements to University Road and Field Lane (Provided as **Annex A** to this report).

6. Other highway improvement schemes identified on the approved plans are listed below. All but the Grimston Bar/A64 improvements

have been completed:

- Field Lane Roundabout,
- Field Lane Bus Interchange,
- Deans Acre link road / Innovation Way improvements,
- Grimston Bar P&R access junction improvements, and
- Grimston Bar / A64 junction improvements.

7. The original scheme proposed for University Road / Field Lane had three main objectives:
 - To reduce/remove through traffic from the lower section of Field Lane,
 - To provide improved cycling and pedestrian links between campuses, and
 - Environmental enhancement in the vicinity of Heslington Hall.
8. It should be noted that a new pedestrian / cycle way link has recently been provided between Hull Road and School Lane, and provides an off-road facility linking Hull Road, Badger Hill and the new campus to the fringes of Heslington. This will be extended to the University Road / Innovation Way junction under the proposed University Road/Field Lane scheme. The University Road / Field Lane scheme will serve to link the new Heslington Lane cycle schemes to the proposed cycleway scheme on University Road beyond Innovation Way and to the Field Lane Cycleway, thereby completing the network in this immediate area.
9. Upon commencing the detailed design of the University Road / Field Lane project, the scheme was reviewed and was found to contain several areas of concern relating to road safety and its ability to reduce traffic on Field Lane. After considering various options, a revised proposal was agreed and was presented to the Heslington Forum (a group of individuals representing local stakeholders and residents) meeting in June 2011 to seek the views of the group.
10. The proposals were firmed up following receipt of comments from the Forum members and progressed through internal consultation before being presented to the Heslington & Fulford Ward Committee meeting in October 2011 as the first stage of a public consultation (**Annex B**). The proposals received a poor response and due to the amount of adverse feedback, a decision was made to put the consultation on hold whilst the comments were reviewed and alterations made to the proposals.

The main concerns raised were:

- A perception that all traffic was to be diverted down School Lane from Field Lane (and hence on to the unsuitable Low Lane route and back round on to Main Street),
- An increase of traffic on School Lane would lead to added congestion and decrease the safety of children at the school,
- Traffic would have difficulty getting out of the proposed “T-junction” from Main Street back on to University Road,
- Changes to the bus routes and stop locations, which will place them further from the village centre in some cases,
- Increased traffic on Innovation Way and University Road adding to congestion and pollution, and
- Difficulties for buses getting out of Field Lane on to University Road.

11. The plans were further amended to reflect the comments. The main changes to the previous version were:
 - Retention of the gyratory at the bottom of University Road and alterations to the Main Street entrance,
 - Relaxing the restriction on the lower section of Field Lane to allow one way for all traffic, and
 - Addition of speed cushions on Field Lane to control vehicular speeds near to the school.
12. The proposals were presented to the Heslington Parish Council and Heslington Forum on 17th and 30th January 2012 respectively (**Annex C**) in an attempt to update both groups and to seek further feedback. Not many substantive reasons for objecting were put forward, but the Parish Council and some members of the Forum stated that they would prefer no changes to the road layout. They added that, if improved cycle links are needed, a cycle path crossing Church Field should be considered thereby reducing the impact on Field Lane.
13. The option to provide a cycle path across Church Field contradicts the strong opinions on the use of the Church Field detailed in previous policy documents, e.g. Heslington Village Design Statement and Heslington Conservation Area Appraisal, compiled at the time of the planning application.
14. Councillor Merrett met with Councillor Alexander and Councillor

Levene in early February to discuss the main issues and concerns, and agree a means of taking the scheme forward. Three main recommendations were proposed:

- that officers should explore the option of providing a cycle path across Church Field (see **Annex D**).
 - the scheme should also be considered to address potential traffic issues related to the increased development at the new campus. Traffic counts are to be assessed to demonstrate any impact the introduction of the Deans Acre link road may have had on distributing traffic in the immediate vicinity.
 - that additional transport modelling be carried out to assess the likely future traffic generated over and above that previously envisaged (due to the development of the sports village/pool and the application for additional parking).
15. Further consultation has been deferred until appropriate options have been explored and developed. Officers would then propose to take the scheme forward by presenting a small selection of options for further consideration by residents and other consultees.

Suggested preference to scrap the scheme

16. In mid October 2011, subsequent to the ward committee meeting earlier that month (see paragraph 10), residents of Heslington launched a campaign to petition the Council to reject the proposals for the University Road / Field Lane scheme. This was based on the proposals presented at the ward committee meeting.
17. The petition organiser contacted the Council in late October with a view to having an e-petition placed on the Council's website and making it available for residents to sign on line. The e-petition request was rejected on the basis that
- the scheme originated as one of several improvement schemes included within the planning permission,
 - the version of the scheme being objected to had already been put on hold and was to be reviewed, taking account of comments and criticisms received from residents, and
 - it was premature for residents to be raising a petition when the final scheme details had not yet been issued for comment.

The organiser was advised of the decision to reject the petition.

18. Councillor Levene presented a signed petition to the Council on behalf of the residents of Heslington, in early April 2012. The petition has 637 signatures and is headed “we the undersigned petition the Council to scrap the proposed highway improvements to Field Lane and University Road, Heslington”. This was passed to the Transport Projects team on 12th April.
19. It is understood that the petition was submitted in objection to the proposals presented in October 2011 (Annex B), which has already been superseded, but that the general opinion of residents is that they oppose any scheme that would change the road layout within the village area particularly in the vicinity of Heslington Hall.
20. Acknowledgement of receipt has been given to the petition organiser, who has been advised that the petition is to be referred to the Cabinet Member.

Need for the scheme

21. The requirement to undertake improvement works on University Road and Field Lane were identified within the planning application process and public inquiry report. Prior to the introduction of the link road across Deans Acre, traffic travelling from the Hull Road direction towards Fulford, Heslington, the existing campus and Science Park had no option but to travel along Field Lane to the junction with University Road. This meant that all through traffic passed the church and school and it was recognised that the volumes needed to be reduced - this was also acknowledged in the Heslington Village Design Statement.
22. The construction of the Deans Acre link road has facilitated a means of diverting a large proportion of this “through traffic” away from the lower section of Field Lane, by taking it through the Science Park and back on to University Road. This includes traffic continuing towards Fulford. However, the route along Field Lane is currently still more attractive for Fulford-bound traffic as the route is more direct and shorter than the preferred Deans Acre route. Motorists need to be discouraged from using Field Lane as a through route and the only means of achieving this appears to be by imposing physical measures along Field Lane between the Windmill Lane and University Road junctions.

23. The Inspector's report for the Public Inquiry identified the need to provide the Deans Acre link road but also recognised that its introduction would have a detrimental environmental impact on the local green space within the conservation area. The scheme on University Road was seen to be a means to redress this loss of amenity by providing enhanced public open space particularly in the area fronting Heslington Hall. The Secretary of State notes the requirement to consider the desirability of preserving the setting of the two listed buildings affected by the development, Heslington Hall and Heslington Church, as well as the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of the conservation area. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusion that, while some elements of the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the setting of the Church and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the area would benefit from the enhancement of the setting of Heslington Hall. The Secretary of State also agreed that, on balance, the overall effect on the character and appearance of the area and the setting of its listed buildings would be neutral.
24. The Inspector's report continues by identifying that the large number of existing traffic signs, bollards and ill-considered highway elements along University Road resulted in visual clutter, and that the highways and their associated clutter detract from the setting of Heslington Hall, the most valuable listed building in the village.
25. The proposed highway improvements would reduce the dual carriageway to single carriageway and provide the opportunity to increase the green space outside the Hall.
26. There is also a requirement to provide improved cycling and pedestrian links between the two campuses, the preferred route being along Field Lane and on to University Road. During the lead up to the planning application, various options were explored and the general consensus from residents was that no paths were to be provided crossing Church Field. The sentiments of the residents were so strong that the requirements were documented in articles such as the Heslington Village Design Statement and Heslington Conservation Area Appraisal. As such, the option progressed through planning providing the improved links within the extents of the public highway, along Field Lane and University Road.

27. The measures for implementing the required traffic measures, improving cycle and pedestrian links and providing the environmental enhancements on University Road and Field Lane have been considered and developed during the preliminary design of the scheme. The proposals have been reviewed and modified in line with public views and opinions where this has been possible without compromising the objectives of the scheme.
28. The Inspector's report acknowledged that "a balance had to be struck between environmental, heritage issues and traffic issues. The provision of the Deans Acre link road was needed to allow the over designed dual carriageway section of University Road at its junction with Field Lane to be reduced and to provide a more lightly trafficked network along which the University Transit System (UTS) can travel".

The University's Sustainable Travel Plan

29. It was always recognised that the development of the new campus at Heslington East would have a significant impact on the local road network. The University would both stimulate and depend on travel to and from the campus and unless this additional traffic was controlled congestion would increase.
30. The University produced a Sustainable Travel Plan in which it identified measures to control the growth and to facilitate a mix of transport modes on the campus to encourage travel by means other than by car to and between the campuses. These measures include actively promoting the penetration of public transport services into the campuses thereby facilitating the inter campus movement of staff and students and encouraging more people to come to the University by bus; and through liaison with the Council and bus providers to develop a public transport network that provides more direct services to the campuses.
31. In addition, an important feature of the Plan is to promote the use of walking and cycling between campuses.
32. An independent traffic survey was undertaken in March 2012. The results indicate that, despite the University's population of staff and students increasing by 15.1% between 2011 and 2012, from 16,706 to 19,234, there has been a 5.3% reduction in the number of vehicular

trips associated with the University. Over the same period, the number of cycle trips has increased by 32.5%, from 4,347 to 5,764 and the pedestrian trips have also increased by 9.7% from 13,342 to 14,638. These figures relate to University-generated movements.

33. It is probable that the improvements to and provision of additional footway and cycleway infrastructure has encouraged the increased use of cycling and walking. The University Road scheme would serve to improve on the provision of the necessary cycle and pedestrian links along the lower section of Field Lane and University Road, to link between those facilities already provided and to other adjacent proposed cycle facilities.

Consequence of non-implementation

34. Non-implementation of the University Road scheme would result in the non-compliance of the planning consent.
There doesn't appear to be a specific timescale trigger for implementation of the University Road / Field Lane scheme in relation to levels of development at the campus. However, the Travel Plan does indicate that there is a requirement to provide improved footpath and cycle link improvements between Heslington East and the Church and then on via Deans Acre link road or Field Lane to Heslington West by completion of the Cluster 1 development. The Deans Acre link road has already been completed but the off-road cycling facilities fall short of extending to Heslington West. The Field Lane Cycleway scheme, also completed, provides off-road facilities between the Church and Hull Road roundabout, linking to Heslington East.
The University Road scheme would serve to complete the links for cyclists and pedestrians along safe routes to Heslington West. Plan F(ii) rev A demonstrates that the scheme is closely associated with and interconnected to the proposals for Deans Acre link road.
35. Residents consider that the road layout does not need altering, as it is functioning adequately at the moment. Although this may be the case for traffic flows as they presently are, traffic flows are expected to increase over time despite the measures being implemented to control the University-generated movements. The package of schemes was developed to accommodate for the potential increases in traffic.
36. The scheme at University Road will serve to rationalise vehicular flows along the preferred routes and distribute the flows more evenly

through Heslington, particularly benefitting Field Lane. If the improvements are not carried out then vehicles would continue to use Field Lane instead of diverting through the Deans Acre route and the tendency would be that volumes and hence congestion would increase on Field Lane, with added noise and air pollution. Increased congestion results in increased journey times, which in turn impacts severely on businesses and public transport, and will inevitably result in increased rat running through back streets (School Lane, Low Lane and Main Street), something that residents are strongly opposed to.

37. Vehicles would continue to use Field Lane instead of diverting through Deans Acre and the Science Park. Unless vehicle speeds are controlled and vehicles are persuaded to use the preferred route, children of primary/junior school age will continue to be put at risk, and at more risk as vehicle volumes increase.
38. Failing to implement the scheme will result in the improvements for cycling and pedestrian facilities not being provided, and links to adjacent cycling facilities not being made. Cyclists and pedestrians will continue to have substandard facilities and be put at increasing risk when in conflict with motorised road users. Adequate provisions to link into adjacent cycle facilities would not be facilitated, thereby failing to meet the objectives of the cycling programme.
39. The desired environmental enhancements within the conservation area, to offset the detrimental impact of providing the Deans Acre link road, would not be achieved should the scheme not proceed.

Member Views

40. Councillor Levene is the only ward member of the ward directly affected by the proposed scheme. He has generally acted in the interests of residents querying aspects of the scheme and has tended to support the views of the residents.
41. Councillor Levene presented the signed petition to the Council on behalf of the residents of Heslington, but has not offered any comments in reference to the petition.

42. In February 2012, Councillor Levene made the following comments about the scheme:
- “Without modelling showing a substantial and problematic future increase in traffic along the affected route, I am not convinced the changes as currently proposed are worth the scale of disruption and potential congestion in front of Heslington Hall, especially considering that I believe there is significant potential for more traffic to be diverted along Innovation Way as the signage is still inadequate. The environmental improvements are marginal, creating a relatively small strip of not particularly usable space along the bottom of University Road.
- The need for improved cycle links between the two campus, recognised as important by residents and myself, can be met by a cycle lane down the side of Church Field as you mentioned. This would be at far less cost and disruption and would provide a superior off-road route rather than an on-road route. My understanding is that this would adequately meet the Inspector’s original decision. On this basis, I support the Parish Council’s position, taken after a public meeting with residents - that the road layout should be left unaltered and a cycle lane added to Church Field”.

Options on the way forward

43. The Executive Member has two options to consider:

Option 1 – note the content of the report and decide that the scheme be progressed.

Option 2 – note the content of the report and decide that the scheme should be scrapped.

Option Analysis

44. If Option1 was chosen and the scheme was progressed, the impact of this would be that the planning requirements would be met and a scheme would be implemented that meets the objectives regarding improving cycling and pedestrian facilities within the village, linking to other existing and proposed facilities; reducing the traffic along a sensitive route; and providing an environmental enhancement to offset the detrimental impact of construction of the Deans Acre link road.

It should be noted that the scheme still needs to go through a formal external consultation exercise to a wider distribution, during which the residents of Heslington would be able to respond to the proposals.

45. However, if option 2 is chosen it would result in a planning consent not being fulfilled and the current facilities would not be improved, resulting in substandard facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, increased traffic and congestion within the village, particularly along Field Lane, and the necessary environmental improvements not being achieved.

Council Plan Priorities

46. Progressing the scheme would meet two of the Council's Corporate Priorities:
- 1) Getting York Moving, by developing York's cycling and pedestrian network, and
 - 2) Protecting the Environment, by improving the quality of York's streets and public open spaces.

Implications

47. This report has the following implications:
- **Financial** – None, the scheme is funded entirely by the University of York.
 - **Human resources** – None.
 - **Equalities** – If option 1 is chosen, the scheme will serve to improve facilities for both pedestrians and cyclists, and reduction of the traffic on Field Lane will improve safety at a school.
 - **Legal** – City of York Council, as Highway Authority, has powers under the following Acts and associated regulations to implement improvements to the highway and any associated measures:
 - The Highways Act 1980
 - The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
 - The Road Traffic Act 1988
 - **Crime and Disorder** – None reported.

- **Land and Property** – None, all works are within the public highway except in the case of a cycle path if this is to be provided across Church Field, which is owned by the University.
- **Sustainability** – None.
- **Information Technology** – None.

Risk Management

48. Residents have petitioned the Council to have the highway scheme scrapped. The main risk associated with the recommendations in this report is considered to be to organisational reputation as there is a high risk of continued criticism from affected residents if the scheme is progressed. However there are strong and justifiable reasons as to why the scheme should progress.
49. Congestion in the Heslington area has been well documented and so there is a risk that the congestion will increase if no works are undertaken. In time there may be a need for a scheme to be undertaken to reduce such congestion.
50. Safety, in particular near the school and for cyclists and pedestrians in general, will be reduced in the event of increasing traffic, particularly if facilities are not improved for these at risk groups. Implementation of the proposed scheme will serve to enhance these facilities and encourage further cycling and walking as a means of moving between campuses.

Contact Details:

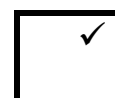
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**Report
Approved**



Date 2/ 8 /12

Wards Affected: Heslington

All

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist implications.

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Background Papers:

- The petition
- Public Inquiry Decision Report.
- Heslington Village Design Statement.
- Heslington Conservation Area Appraisal
- University Sustainable Travel Plan

Annexes:

Annex A Plan F (ii) Rev A

Annex B Proposals presented to Ward Committee meeting, October 2011

Annex C Proposals presented to Heslington Parish Council and Heslington Forum, January 2012

Annex D Draft proposals including cycle path across Church Field.

Annex E Cycle route network.