



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

5th January 2010

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Westminster Road Area Consultation and Survey Results

Summary

1. This report brings to the attention of the Executive Member for City Strategy the key results of the vehicle surveys and questionnaire carried out in relation to the through traffic in the above area following the introduction of the Water End Cycle Scheme and puts forward a recommendation for taking this matter forward for further consideration.

Recommendations

2. That options C and D below be approved.

Reason:

Because the lower speeds due to the traffic calming justify the introduction of a lower speed limit.

Because the options of closing the area to through traffic does not have support from a significant proportion of the local community that would be affected by a closure.

Because the options of investigating the use of chicanes and road narrowings are not well supported by local residents.

Background

3. Following the implementation of the Water End Cycle scheme 2 petitions were received concerning the apparent increase in the volume of through traffic. It was therefore resolved at the Decision session in June to carry out an Origin and Destination survey of traffic in the area once the road humps on Westminster Road had been put back in place following the completion of the development works at St. Peter's School. It was subsequently resolved following the calling in of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in August that a household questionnaire should also be carried out and reported back to a Decision Session meeting along with the traffic survey results.
4. Although the road humps were put back in place along Westminster Road at the end of the summer they were not within the acceptable tolerance and consequently were not high enough to be as effective as the original humps. The contractor replaced the humps in the first week of December and initial observations would suggest that these replacements will be acceptable.
5. Whilst the Water End cycle scheme has been linked to the problems highlighted in the petitions regarding through traffic on Westminster Road this report does not make comment or recommendations on that scheme. However it should be noted that the Water End cycle scheme is subject an evaluation

review after 12 months of operation and a report by the Transport Planning Unit on the findings will be brought to a subsequent Decision Session meeting.

Traffic Survey and Residents Questionnaire Results

The Traffic Surveys

6. The results of the traffic survey carried out in September are shown in Annex A and the headline figure is that 89% of the traffic from the Water End direction and 85% of traffic from the Clifton direction is through traffic (school traffic is not part of the through traffic), this represents 1259 vehicles per day out of a total of 1440 vehicles recorded between 7am and 7pm. The table in Annex A gives details of the volume and percentage of through traffic during the peak hours of 8am to 10am and 4pm to 6pm. This shows that nearly 770 vehicles of the through traffic occurs during the 4 peak hours of the survey (or an average of around 190/hour) and for the remaining 8 hours the volume of through traffic is just under 500 vehicles (or an average of around 60 to 65/hour).
7. Whilst there has always been an element of through traffic on this route it is difficult to accurately determine the extent to which through traffic has increased. However, the increase is likely to be concentrated over peak periods as the advantage to using this route in off peak is limited. No work has been carried out to determine the length or duration of traffic queues on either Westminster Road or The Avenue, however anecdotally queues of around half a dozen vehicles are not uncommon during the peak periods and as such are not of significant concern from a traffic management perspective.
8. The mean speed of traffic on Westminster Road in June this year, after the road humps were removed, was measured at 24mph with 13% above the 30mph speed limit. In November this year the mean speed was measured at 20mph with 2.6% above the speed limit. Hence the reintroduction of the road humps has had the desired effect of cutting the speed of vehicles in the area. As already noted above the humps were low and have been replaced following the last speed survey and it is anticipated that these new humps will lead to a further reduction in mean speeds and a further speed survey will be carried out in the new year. It should be noted that there have been some concerns expressed regarding the speed of vehicles negotiating the Westminster Road / the Avenue junction. Whilst there is no available speed survey information available at this point on the route further observations can be carried out, though it is unlikely that a practical engineering solution is available that would influence driver behaviour.
9. No assessment has been carried out with regards to accident statistics because there is a 3 month lag in the statistics being confirmed as accurate, hence there is insufficient time to make a comparison that would be meaningful. All that can be reported is that there has been one known injury accidents reported in the area since the implementation of the Water End scheme. This involved a motorcycle overtaking traffic on Water End in collision with a vehicle turning right into Westminster Road. Driver behaviour at this junction has been reported by a number of local residents as a concern due to some drivers overtaking the queue of traffic on Water End for some distance before turning right into Westminster Road. This practise can result in the driver being poorly positioned as they negotiate the junction, cutting across the centre line of Westminster Road.

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10. Further work is to be carried out to provide a better linking of the operation of the traffic signals at the Clifton Green junction and the two pelican crossings on Water End, which should lead to improvements in the flow of traffic. The outcome of these improvements will be included in the Water End review report.
11. In addition, it should be noted that the issue of side roads being used to avoid main road signalised junctions is not uncommon and there are at least 10 other streets in York where through traffic adjacent to signalised junctions is a concern to residents, however removing the through traffic invariably also places significant limitations on the local community. Further survey work would be required to directly quantify the levels of through traffic to residential traffic at other locations to be able to compare with Westminster Road, however the table in Annex F gives the total traffic flows at a number of sites across the city that demonstrates that the traffic flows experienced on Westminster Road are comparable to other similar sites in the city.
12. Hence, the key issue for consideration following the traffic survey is whether or not action can, or should, be taken to reduce the volume of through traffic bearing in mind the subsequent imposition of limitations on local residents. Also, in deciding this matter the likely impact of the current through traffic relocating to the Clifton Green / Water End junction needs to be taken into consideration. Because this junction has been working at capacity during the peak periods for several years any additional traffic will extend the existing traffic queues. Taking the traffic survey figures for the AM and PM peak periods an additional 300 and 156 vehicles would be added to the queue approaching Clifton Green from the Acomb direction in the AM and PM peaks respectively. This is likely to significantly increase both journey times and queue lengths through the junction for all drivers. This would not be limited to the Water End / A19, Clifton route, but may well affect other approaches. Any impacts on this junction would also affect residents who utilise this junction some of which may not have any viable alternative, particularly if any road closures are implemented.

The Residents Questionnaire Survey

13. A copy of the questionnaire shown in Annex B was delivered to all the properties along Westminster Road, The Avenue and Greencliffe Drive.
14. The summary of the questionnaire results are:

170 questionnaires sent out, 111 returned, hence response rate of 65.3%, which can be relied upon to be representative for the area. Of those that replied:

43 (39%) opposed to a closure.

68 (61%) in favour of a closure. Of those supporting a road closure:

 - 38% support a closure point at Westminster Road / Water End junction.
 - 22% support a closure point at Westminster Rd. / The Avenue junction.
 - 1% support a closure point at The Avenue / Clifton junction.

29 (26%) are in favour of further investigation into possibility of reducing the road width at the junctions.

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30 (27%) are in favour of further investigation into use of chicanes and / or road narrowings.

67 (60%) are in support of the introduction of a 20mph speed limit.

15. When considering the responses to the questionnaire against the total number of local residents consulted those opposed to a closure represent 25.3% and those in favour of a closure represent 40%. Whilst the option of closing the route at the Water End / Westminster Road junction has the greatest support from those who responded to the questionnaire it is worth noting that when considered in the context of the 170 questionnaires sent out to those residents directly affected the local support for a closure at this point is 24.7%.
16. A breakdown of the results of the returned questionnaires by street is shown in Annex C.
17. A précis of the additional comments made and their frequency is shown in Annex D The most frequent concerns raised and officers comments are as follows:

- Would like the 2 lanes putting back at Clifton Green. x 12

Considering this option is not in the remit of this report.

- Closures would restrict access for residents, deliveries and emergency services. x 7

Access would be restricted for residents and deliveries, but the emergency services would have access through the closure point if necessary.

- Westminster Road / Water End junction is dangerous. x 5

Whilst Water End is a busy road visibility is quite good in all directions, hence the safety concerns are related to driver behaviour. With changing road conditions / circumstances drivers have to modify their driving in order to maintain their safe use of the road.

- Water End scheme needs to be re-evaluated. x 5

The Water End scheme is subject to an evaluation review that will be reported in due course.

- Exiting Greencliffe Drive is difficult / dangerous. x 5

It is acknowledged that restricting residents to one access and exit point to Greencliffe Drive would lead to some difficulties.

18. Whilst there is an acknowledged majority of residents overall in favour of a closure, with the favoured position at the Water End junction, when considering the responses on a street by street basis there are marked conflicting views as follows (see also Annex C):

| Street | N ^o . in favour | % in favour | N ^o . against | % against |
|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Westminster Road | 41 | 79 | 11 | 21 |
| The Avenue | 11 | 50 | 11 | 50 |
| Greencliffe Drive | 13 | 41 | 19 | 59 |

19. Because closing Westminster Road at Water End would leave the open route of Greencliffe Drive through the area that is little used at present there is a reasonable expectation that some of the through traffic and school related

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traffic would choose to use this route. Hence the option of closing this route was put to residents as well. Overall the option of closing Greycliffe Drive at either end had little support (20%) and amongst the replies from the Greycliffe Drive the support in total was 32%, split down as 19% preferring the closure at Water End and 13% preferring the closure at Westminster Road.

20. In addition to the comments returned with the questionnaires a number of residents sent letters and e-mails in before and after the consultation and these comments / concerns are outlined in Annex E.

Options

21. The options available are:

- A. To begin processing a Traffic Regulation Order to close Westminster Road and Greycliffe Drive at their Water End junctions. Whilst this option is not recommended due to the lack of a significant majority of local residents in favour of such proposals, it should be noted that if this option is considered appropriate to proceed with then this would involve further consultation with all affected local residents on any firmed up proposal. Any subsequent objections to the proposals during the Traffic Regulation Process would have to be brought back to a future Decision Session for consideration before any action could be taken to close either road.
- B. To carry out further investigations into the use of road narrowings and / or chicanes to discourage through traffic. This is not a recommended option as support from local residents for such measures is low.
- C. To implement a 20mph zone for the area. This is a recommended option as there is general support demonstrated from the local residents and the reduced speeds brought about by existing traffic calming features justify lowering the speed limit – though it should be noted that this is unlikely to have a significant impact on the volume of through traffic.
- D. To note the outcome of the traffic surveys and questionnaire and take no further action at this time. But, that the results be considered as part of any future evaluation of the Water End cycle scheme. This is a recommended option because these 2 matters are linked.

Corporate Strategy

22. Considering this matter does not impact on the corporate strategy.

Implications

- 23.

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|---------------------------|--|
| Legal | There are no legal implications. |
| Financial | There are no financial implications |
| Human Resources | There are no HR implications |
| Crime and Disorder | There are no Crime and Disorder implications |
| Sustainability | There are no sustainability implications |
| Equalities | There are no equalities implications |
| Property | There are no property implications |

Risk Management

24. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

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Contact Details

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Report Approved



Date

18/12/2009

Wards Affected: Clifton

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annex A – Traffic Survey information

Annex B – The Questionnaire

Annex C – Questionnaire results

Annex D - Précis of comments made in the questionnaire

Annex E – Additional comments made outside of the consultation carried out

Annex F - Comparative Traffic Volumes (published on 31 December 2009)

Annex G – Comments from the Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task Group (published on 4 January 2010)

Annex H – Annex of additional comments received from Members and residents since the Decision Session agenda was published (published on 31 December 2009).