
Meeting of the Executive Members for City Strategy and the Advisory Panel

16th July 2007

Joint Report of the Chief Executive and the Director of City Strategy

PUBLIC PLACES AND FOOTSTREETS

Summary

1. This report seeks Member approval for a proposed review of the City's footstreets as previously outlined in the council's second Local Transport Plan (LTP2).
2. Possible changes to the footstreets may include varying the current use of the footstreet in Goodramgate, which could see this street being physically closed to all traffic during footstreet hours in the same way that some other footstreets such as Petergate operate, and an extension of the existing footstreets to include Fossgate. Local retailers have previously proposed both of these proposals. Any such changes would however have much wider implications and the review therefore proposes to look at these wider issues as set out within this report.
3. The report also raises the issue of a review of the city centre public realm and in particular a proposal by the Dean and Chapter of York Minster to improve the area of Deangate adjacent to the south transept. The proposal if taken forward would create a significantly improved public space in the form of a public piazza and is currently included in a wider bid by the Minster to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
4. The report therefore also seeks Member approval for support in principal for the Minster bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a number of linked improvement projects but in particular for the creation of a piazza outside the south transept.

Future Review of the Footstreets - Analysis

5. The footstreets were first introduced in 1987 and still remain one of the largest pedestrian priority zones in Northern Europe. They cover over thirty streets and their importance in creating a high quality environment within the central shopping area is well understood. This in turn has a very positive impact on York's role as a major tourist destination and therefore plays a significant part in the continuing success of our economy. In more recent years the footstreets have also allowed the extension of a continental style café environment that

again adds to the attractiveness and quality of the city centre offer. The footstreets also have an important role in joining up York's public spaces and attractions thus allowing residents and visitors alike to move about the city centre in a continuous quality environment. However there is now growing pressure from a number of sectors to review the current arrangements.

6. In recognising the need to review both the extent and use of the city's footstreets the council's second local transport plan (LTP2) includes a proposal to carry out such a review. York is one of the very few towns and cities where the level of pedestrian activity is increasing, and the quality of the pedestrian areas is almost certainly a contributory factor. In addition York's tourism business is growing with over 4million visitors spending over £300 million in our economy last year. LTP2 therefore contains a specific commitment for the period 2006 to 2011 to look at the expansion of the footstreet zone in Fossgate and Goodramgate with other further expansions possible in 2011 to 2016.
7. There have also been a number of requests from sections of the retail sector. These have suggested extending the area of the footstreets in the belief that the environmental improvements referred to above, would help to generate an improvement in the trade and viability of retailers in the peripheral retail streets. Examples of suggested extensions are changes to the designation of Goodramgate and the inclusion of Fossgate. This would see these streets changing to the more continental flavour achieved elsewhere, with pavement cafes and other attractions that would encourage people to linger and shop, rather than just pass through.
8. Clearly any potential changes to the footstreets would have wider implications than those outlined above and it is therefore proposed to carry out significant consultation across a broad range of interests. It is proposed to consult with the following stakeholders to ensure that a broad spectrum of opinion as possible is obtained which will highlight the important issues for each group:
 - Pedestrians
 - People with mobility difficulties
 - Elderly people
 - Young people
 - Traders
 - Tourist attractions
 - Servicing companies
 - Cyclists
 - Taxi operators
 - Market traders
 - Emergency services
 - City centre partnership
9. The review will also look at the operational issues relating to the zone including:
 - Access permit scheme (green badge)
 - Statutory exemptions

- Access and parking control
 - Provision for cyclists
 - Safety
 - Effectiveness of the TROs / Enforcement
 - City centre activities and events
 - Paving
 - Signing
10. The review will be expected to investigate and make recommendations on:
- The Boundary of the zone and whether any of the surrounding streets would be suitable for inclusion
 - Linkages between the public spaces in the city centre and how the footstreets can improve these
 - Disabled access
 - Cycle access
 - Taxi access / provision
 - Servicing arrangements for businesses
 - Abuse of the zone and restrictions
11. If Members approve the proposals then the review will take place from August/September and it is envisaged that the overall work will take around 6 months to enable all the consultation and survey work to be undertaken and analysed and recommendations made. It is proposed that the review will be done externally and that upon completion the findings will be reported back to EMAP

Background to the improvement of the city's public spaces

12. The city centre public spaces are another important factor in providing a quality environment in the city centre and they also provide the opportunity for entertainment activities which in turn adds to the attractiveness and vitality of the city.
13. In 2005 the council submitted a proposal under the "Big Lottery Bid" initiative with a bid titled "Songlines". The key objective of the 'Songlines' proposal was to better link the key routes, attractions and areas of public space within the historic centre of York to enhance the 'experience' of the city centre for visitors and residents alike. A key part of that bid was improving the links between Museum Gardens and the Yorkshire Museum with the Minster and other key focal points for activity within the city centre such as the Eye of York, the Castle Museum and Cliffords Tower. The "Songlines" were the sequences of high quality links, nodes and spaces along this path which in themselves would 'tell the story of York'. Proposals to enhance the quality of the civic space around the Minster and also improving its pedestrian linkages with the rest of the historic centre were a fundamental part of the bid.
14. The national bidding was intense and our bid was unsuccessful. However the preparation of the bid greatly enhanced partnership working and there remains

strong support for the actual proposals and a desire to implement them. Any proposals for enhancing the area around the Minster and creating better public space are complementary to and would help to deliver this wider initiative.

15. Subsequent to the “Big Lottery” bid there is now a further piece of work being undertaken looking into a Cultural Quarter for York. The York@Large cultural partnership, one of the key partnerships under the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership, has commissioned consultants to look at developing the concept of a Cultural Quarter in York. This would stretch from the National Railway Museum to Museum Gardens and across to the Minster. Within this area there is a critical mass of nationally important tourist attractions. One of the key initiatives identified by the consultants was the need to enhance the public realm and the attractiveness of the links between these attractions. Again any proposals to improve the footstreets and to enhance the public space outside the Minster, would be entirely complementary to, and would be a key component in kickstarting this initiative.
16. The recently published Future York Group (FYG) report into York’s economy recognised the importance of both tourism and retail in terms of the recent past/present economic success and in terms of the future success. In the report’s section on the visitor economy it states *“City of York Council should give priority to improving the quality of the public realm across the historic city, including paving, lighting, signage and public spaces.”* This is further emphasised in the report’s key recommendation E4.

Proposed Minster Piazza - Analysis

17. There is currently an opportunity to make a significant impact on the requirement to improve the city’s public space offer by a proposal to radically transform the area outside the south transept of the Minster.
18. The Dean and Chapter of York Minster recently submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £10,000,000. The bid, which is titled “York Minster Revealed”, covers a number of linked projects that could see, if successful, a significant contribution from the HLF towards the current restoration work, together with other improvements to the Minster and its immediate environment. One of the outcomes of such improvements would be a substantial enhancement of the tourist offer in and around the Minster. In particular a major improvement in access to the Undercroft, substantial improvements in the interpretation of the Minster story and in particular the story of the East Window and its major restoration works. The bid also proposes a new piazza immediately outside the south transept, which would be a new public space on what is currently Deangate, at a cost of approximately £1,200,000. This latter proposal would provide the opportunity for creating a quality environment for the thousands of tourists who visit the Minster each year. A place where people can linger in a quality environment and one that would properly respect being adjacent to York’s most important building.

19. The business case to support the overall bid shows the following benefits:
- An extra 100,000 visitors per year adding £9,400,000 per year to the local economy
 - This equates to around £47,000,000 over the life of the “Minster Revealed” project
 - Sustainable tourism through improving and developing the Minster as a successful attraction, making the Minster a place of repeat visits through continuing innovation in interpretation and the presentation of conservation.
 - Quality of place and product and in particular developing the Minster as a place of family destination. (This was identified especially by BME groups in audience research)
20. Draft proposals have already been drawn up for the new piazza as part of this Heritage Lottery Fund bid. It is envisaged that this new civic space would be created by the use of quality natural materials that would complement the Minster and the other adjacent historic buildings. The new piazza would have seating and a much improved disabled access into the Minster by means of a permanent stone ramp to the South entrance. Deangate is of course an important cycle route across the city and any new proposal would have to accommodate this as a continuing requirement.
21. This proposed new piazza would fit very well with the wider aspirations for the city centre and would perfectly compliment the previous and current initiatives which are outlined in the paragraphs above.

Proposals

22. The footstreets have helped to provide an outstanding environment to the heart of the historic city since their introduction in 1987. There is now increasing pressure to review their use in certain areas and a programme of wide-spread consultation needs to be drawn up to ascertain public opinion. It is therefore proposed to carry out this consultation with the stakeholders set out in paragraph 8. The review will:
- (i) look at the operational issues relating to the zone as outlined in paragraph 9
 - (ii) Investigate and make recommendations on the issues in paragraph 10 and in particular -
 - (iii) report whether the designation of the existing footstreet in Goodramgate should be changed to prohibit traffic entering the street during footstreet hours and
 - (iv) whether the extent of the footstreets should be increased to include Fossgate.

23. The need for enhanced and improved public space in the city centre has been recognised by the council for a number of years and in particular the prospect of creating a public piazza in Deangate has previously been considered. This need has been further emphasised in the recent Future York Group report. The current proposals by the Dean and Chapter of York Minster contained in their HLF bid offers an opportunity to realise significant economic benefits for the city including the creation of a much needed quality new public space. As with all such bids its success may well depend on support from partners and HLF representatives have recently indicated that support from the council and Yorkshire Forward would not only strengthen the bid but could also be crucial to a fully successful outcome.
24. As a result of this advice high level discussions have taken place with the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Forward who indicated that he would consider matching any funding that the council may be prepared to contribute up to a maximum of £500,000. The outcome of this consideration will be reported verbally to Members of EMAP at the meeting.
25. There is therefore a significant opportunity to attract considerable external investment of the order of around £10,000,000, which would have widespread benefits to both the economic well-being and transport aspirations of the city. It is therefore proposed that:
 - The Executive Member supports the HLF bid including the creation of a new piazza in Deangate outside the south transept of the Minster
 - Subject to the success of the HLF bid a sum of up to £250,000 be allocated from the LTP2 capital programmes for 2008/09/10 with further justification of the detailed transport benefits being established within the capital programmes for those years.
 - The Executive Member recommends to the council's Executive that a further £250,000 be allocated from the council's reserves from the 2006/07 underspend, recognising the significant economic benefits to the city of this proposal.
 - The proposed funding allocated to this proposal is wholly dependant on the success of the HLF bid

Options

26. The council has the option of:
 1. Reviewing the footstreets as proposed in paragraph 22
 2. Reviewing the footstreets in a different way to that proposed
 3. Not Reviewing the footstreets
 4. Supporting the Minster's HLF bid with the funding proposed in paragraph 25

5. Supporting the Minster's HLF bid with a different level of funding than that proposed
6. Not supporting the Minster's HLF bid

Corporate Priorities

27. The quality and success of the footstreets and public spaces is a major factor in the success of York's economy and is recognised in the recently published Future York Group report in key recommendation E4.
28. The *hierarchy of transport users* is firmly embedded within the second Local Transport Plan (LTP2), with pedestrians and cyclists being given priority when considering travel choice. Extension of the footstreets and the improvement to public spaces will encourage pedestrian activity both of local residents and visitors which fits soundly within Council transport policy. The encouragement of travel by sustainable modes also corresponds with other 'wider quality of life objectives' as contained in the Community Strategy, such as those relating to health and also ties in with Objective 1.3 to: *Make getting around York easier, more reliable and less damaging to the environment.*

Implications

- **Financial**

29. The cost of the footstreet's review is already included in the approved budget to deliver the transport capital programme for 2007/08 Any subsequent proposals to change the footstreets would be covered in a future report with specific costed proposals.
30. The cost implications of supporting the Minster's HLF bid and in particular the proposed Deangate piazza as set out above, would be that a total sum of £250,000 would be allocated from the 2008/9/10 LTP2 budgets with a full review of the transport benefits of the scheme within those years. Additionally and dependant on the decision of the Executive a further total of £250,000 would be allocated from the council reserves recognising the 2006/07 revenue underspend. The Council had £8.1m of general/DLO reserves at 31/3/07, but committed £1.5m to carry forward requests, £1.3m to support the 2007/8 budget and £0.2m for Chief Executive's and CPA expenditure. Thus the Council would have £5.1m reserves, to which can be added £0.3m related to the Bellwin reserve transfer making £5.4m available. The government advised limit for CPA purposes is about £5.2m, therefore the Council can just about afford to agree this amount without going below the advised CPA limit. This does of course mean that there are very limited resources for any other discretionary one-off spend. Although in addition to this the Council does still have the Venture Fund

- **Human Resources (HR)**

31. There are no HR implications.

- **Equalities**

32. Any improvements to the footstreets or the creation of a piazza outside the Minster would include measures that would improve disabled access to meet all current standards.

- **Legal**

33. Any proposals that come forward in future reports will identify any specific legal requirements to comply with relevant highways and traffic acts.

- **Crime and Disorder**

34. In creating or improving any city centre public spaces due consideration will need to be given to crime and disorder issues and this would be covered in detail in future reports containing specific proposals.

- **Information Technology (IT)**

35. There are no IT implications.

- **Property**

36. There are no property implications.

- **Other**

37. There are no other implications.

Risk Management

38. In compliance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

39. It is recommended that the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Members to approve the proposals in options 1 and 4 as set out in paragraphs in paragraphs 22 and 25 above.

Reason

The reason for making this decision is that the footstreets and public places provide the necessary quality environment to support the York economy and promote sustainable transport and their proposed improvement will help to ensure continued success in this area.

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Wards Affected:

All

Guildhall Ward

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For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None