

Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy 8th December 2008 and Advisory Panel

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Walmgate Pedestrian Crossing and Footway Improvements

Summary

1. This report outlines proposals to provide a signal controlled pedestrian crossing on Walmgate, together with extensions and enhancements to the pedestrian areas around Walmgate Bar. Feedback from consultation is discussed, and approval is sought to implement a preferred scheme.

Background

2. The existing layout of Walmgate Bar and the surrounding area is shown on the plan in **Annex A**. The main reasons for implementing a pedestrian improvement scheme are outlined below:-
 - The Bar is one of the main pedestrian access points to the city walls, but the pedestrian route is not continuous and walkers on the walls must descend to road level and cross Walmgate before continuing their journey.
 - The centre arched gateway through the barbican has been closed to all vehicles, except cycles, since October 2004, to protect the medieval gateway masonry from further vehicle strikes. A two-way shuttle system, under traffic signal control, now operates to take all motor traffic through the adjacent arch to the north of the barbican gateway.
 - For safety reasons, extensive guard railing near to the Bar on both sides of Walmgate currently prevents pedestrians from crossing the road on their natural desire line. Furthermore, where the guardrail ends, crossing is still problematic because there are no dropped kerbs, and pedestrians may have to cross between parked cars or stationary vehicles waiting at the outbound stop line (NB : the nearest pedestrian refuge on Walmgate is approximately 120 metres from the Bar, close to the Navigation Road junction). This causes pedestrians to cross at inappropriate locations, creating potentially unsafe conflicts between all road users.
 - There are a number of small shops and services (newsagents, launderette, café and angling supplies) next to a number of flats on Walmgate near to the Bar. A section of on street parking is available on the south side of Walmgate opposite these amenities. The existing designated bays are

shared residents' parking and public pay and display, with a maximum stay of 1 hour.

- An inbound bus stop serving the number 10 route is located on Walmgate. First York have highlighted vehicle accessibility issues with this stop at its present location. Sightseeing buses also use Walmgate outbound, with the City Walls one of the tour sights.
- The local shops, on-street parking, and the bus stop all add to the potential for pedestrian crossing movements on Walmgate in the vicinity of the Bar.

Proposals

3. In developing a pedestrian crossing improvement scheme, the following factors needed to be carefully considered:-
 - The Walmgate Barbican is a Grade 1 Listed Building, the City Walls have 'Scheduled Ancient Monument' status, and the area around the Bar is within the 'Central Historic Core' Conservation Area No.1. In recognition of the historic significance of the location, close liaison has taken place with conservation colleagues, and the relevant outside bodies, such as English Heritage. Hence the proposed scheme aims to minimise the amount of signs, coloured surfaces and highway features required.
 - The footways around Walmgate Bar are also included in the Council 'Paving Policy' schedule of streets where natural paving materials should be retained or encouraged for new paving schemes. Therefore, the use of natural York stone paving was identified as a key requirement in the areas where it is proposed to enlarge pedestrian footways which are adjacent to Walmgate Bar or within the barbican gateway. However, where some visual contrast is required, such as to help the visually impaired locate the proposed crossing point, other paving types will be selected which are also sympathetic to the surrounding environment.
 - The signalised junction of Lawrence Street, Foss Islands Road and Barbican Road already suffers congestion and poor air quality. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the introduction of a pedestrian stage on Walmgate does not impact significantly on overall junction performance.
4. Mindful of the above considerations, the scheme shown in **Annex B** was developed for public consultation. Key features include:-
 - Provision of a signal controlled pedestrian crossing on Walmgate, approximately 10 metres away from the city walls.
 - Extension and enlargement of paved footway areas around and under the Bar, which should reduce conflict between traffic and pedestrians in the vicinity of the Bar.

- Paving of the area beneath the Bar, to improve its appearance and help clarify the appropriate sections for use by inbound cycle traffic and pedestrians wishing to view the Bar from within the gateway.
- Relocation of the inbound bus stop farther away from Walmgate Bar, to improve accessibility for service buses
- Reduction of the on street parking from six to three spaces on the south side of Walmgate, and relocating the designated disabled bay from the east to the western end of this parking area.
- Moving the Walmgate outbound signal stop line closer to the bar, to improve operational efficiency of the Junction.

Consultation

5. An information leaflet (see **Annex C**, and illustration **Annex B**), explaining the proposals and incorporating illustrations of the proposed layout, was delivered to approximately 170 local residents and sent to various interested organisation or groups on 24 October. A map of the distribution area is shown at **Annex D**.

Resident comments

6. A Huby Court resident is pleased with the proposed scheme, but concerned that it does not address the problem of traffic illegally turning left from Barbican Road into Walmgate and potentially coming into conflict with pedestrians.

Officer response : It would be difficult to introduce more physical measures to deter illegal left turns, without adversely restricting traffic flows approaching Walmgate from Lawrence Street.

7. A Hope Street resident has some reservations about cars waiting to go through the walls occupying the green cyclist area, and the scheme not seeming to take account of drivers continuing to come through the walls from Lawrence Street when traffic leaving Walmgate has started to move off. Locating the proposed crossing so close to the walls could cause hazards, because drivers from Lawrence Street would not be able to see people on the pedestrian crossing in time to stop.

Officer response : The outbound vehicle and advance cycle stop lines on Walmgate would be repositioned with greater separation as part of the proposed scheme. The traffic signal phasing of the whole junction would be reviewed to accommodate the proposed pedestrian phase on Walmgate, and sequencing of individual approaches changed where feasible to overcome potential unsafe conflict manoeuvres.

8. A Walmgate resident supports the scheme, but is concerned that removal of the guard railing would make it more likely that grass cutting or maintenance vehicles will cross and damage roadside verges to access the city walls and moat area.

Officer response : It is understood that the resident has previously raised concerns about damage to verges by maintenance vehicles, and that the relevant department is responding direct regarding this particular issue.

9. Another Walmgate resident thinks the scheme will enhance the area, particularly the removal of the pedestrian guardrail, and provide a useful crossing for pedestrians, They have suggested that in addition, outbound cyclists would benefit from a lead in cycle lane to the advance stop line, and the northern footway should be widened at the pinch point below the city walls arch.

Officer response : We are already intending to move the cycle advance stop line closer to the proposed crossing, and will provide a lead in cycle lane if this is feasible. Although widening of the northern footway is not part of the original scheme, in developing revised proposals as described below, this is an issue which could be addressed.

External organisation feedback

10. **North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service** have no objections to the proposals.
11. **North Yorkshire Police** support the concept of improved walking and cycle facilities, but have some concerns regarding potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, both through the Bar, and on the proposed paved area in front. These issues are described in more detail in paragraph 20, which deals with a road safety audit of the scheme.

Officer response : The Police comments are noted, and the issues raised are discussed below in paragraph 21, when considering revised scheme proposals.

12. **Yorkshire Ambulance Service** had not responded at the time that this report was finalised. Any subsequent comments received following submission of this report will be reported at the meeting.
13. The **Conservation Areas Advisory Panel** viewed the outline proposals in September. The minutes of the meeting record that the Panel are happy with the scheme, and are particularly keen for as many unnecessary signs as possible be removed from the project.
14. The **Cyclist Touring Club (CTC)** would prefer that the cycle route should be more clearly delineated where it crosses the shared pedestrian footway. They also consider there is a risk that by inviting pedestrians to circulate inside the outer barbican they may be tempted to cross the Inner Ring Road where crossing facilities do not exist, or unsupervised visiting children may wander out into the carriageway.

Officer response : The CTC comments are noted, and the concerns raised are discussed below in paragraph 21, when considering revised scheme proposals.

15. **York Cycle Campaign** (YCC) share the concerns of the CTC. In particular, they feel it is important to clearly indicate a cycle route across the paved area to avoid the impression that the Council is encouraging cycling in pedestrian areas.

Officer response : The YCC comments are noted, and the concerns raised are discussed below in paragraph 21, when considering revised scheme proposals.

Member views and comments

Ward Members

16. **Councillor Looker** supports the scheme, and hopes that the pedestrian crossing facility will benefit residents going to and from the local shops, as well as visitors on the city walls.
17. **Councillor Watson** supports the scheme, and hopes the traffic signals would be retimed to overcome the problem of inbound vehicles coming through the bar after the Walmgate outbound signals have turned to green.

Officer response : The traffic signal phasing of the whole junction would be reviewed to accommodate the proposed pedestrian phase on Walmgate, and sequencing of individual approaches changed where feasible to overcome potential unsafe conflict manoeuvres.

Other Members

18. Councillors Gilles and Potter were also made aware of the scheme proposals and asked for their comments.

At the time of finalising this report, **Councillor Potter** had not responded.

At the time of finalising this report, **Councillor Gilles** had not responded.

19. Should further comments be received from Members following submission of this report, these will be presented at the meeting.

Road Safety Audit

20. A road safety audit of the scheme, carried out during the initial consultation period, raised concerns over the potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists on the proposed paved area in front of the Bar. In addition, the audit raised a concern that the scheme will encourage pedestrians into the area within the Barbican to view the historic monument. This would create further potential for conflict with cyclists passing through the Bar, and anyone

unfamiliar with the location could possibly walk out of the eastern end of the Barbican where they would be in danger from passing traffic. To avoid these potential problems the audit team recommend more clearly defined separation between pedestrians and cyclists, or suggest that it may be better to look at re-routing cyclists through the northern arch of the Bar to overcome these issues.

Alternative Proposals

21. In response to the consultation and safety audit feedback, the scheme layout was reviewed to see if it may be feasible to either improve the separation of cyclists in the proposed shared use paved areas, or alternatively safely route cyclists through the northern arch of the Bar. This has led to the development of the alternative scheme layouts shown in **Annex E** and **Annex F**. The key new features of the alternative schemes are:-

Annex E – cyclists continue to enter through the barbican gateway

- Different paving materials, intended to highlight the cycle route, would continue beyond the barbican and across the enlarged paved area adjacent to the proposed crossing facility.
- The cycle route will also be constructed at a slightly lower level than the adjoining footway over most of its length to further emphasise its presence within the footway, particularly for pedestrians who are less likely to be familiar with the area.
- Although the east entrance to the barbican would remain open to cyclists, a partial barrier and signs would be provided to deter pedestrians from walking out of the Bar into the junction.

Annex F– cyclists routed through the northern traffic archway

- A short length of dedicated off road inbound cycle track would be provided on the eastern side of the main traffic archway, with a physically protected entry into an on-road cycle lane through the northern arch.
- A section of pedestrian guardrail to close off the arch at the eastern end of the barbican gateway, to provide a safe area for visitors to view the inner area of the Barbican.

Further Consultation

22. Given that the main changes within the alternative proposals primarily affect cyclists, rather than other road users and local residents/businesses, further consultation has been limited to the key consultees representing cyclists' interests. Their feedback is outlined below:-
23. **Cycling England** – at the time of finalising this report, no formal response had been received following a site meeting on 17 November, when the revised

proposals were discussed. However, initial indications are that they support the benefits of the alternative scheme.

- 24. **Cycle Touring Club.....DITTO**
- 25. **York Cycle Campaign.....DITTO**

Options

- 26. Consultation feedback on the proposals has shown a good level of support for the general aims of providing a pedestrian crossing facility and enhancing the environment around Walmgate Bar. Most concerns have focussed on the issue of potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists in the proposed shared use paved areas. Given this situation, there are four basic options for Members to consider:-
- 27. **Option 1** : Implement the original scheme, as shown in **Annex B**, i.e. provide a signal controlled pedestrian crossing across Walmgate, enlarge the footway on the south side of Walmgate adjacent to the City Walls, and pave the area through Walmgate Bar, whilst maintaining access for inbound cyclists through the Bar and across the new paved area.
- 28. **Option 2** : Implement a revised version of the original scheme, as shown in **Annex E**, using contrasting materials and surfaces at different levels to highlight the cycle route and reduce potential conflicts with pedestrians.
- 29. **Option 3** : Implement an alternative version of the original scheme, as shown in **Annex F**, which closes the barbican gateway to cyclists and provides alternative measures to safely route cyclists entering Walmgate through the northern arch of the Bar
- 30. **Option 4** : Do not implement the current proposals.

Analysis

- 31. Option 1 would improve pedestrian safety, but would introduce potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.
- 32. Option 2 would improve pedestrian safety, but would only partially address the main road safety concerns relating to potential conflicts between pedestrians, and cyclists.
- 33. Option 3 would improve pedestrian safety, and address the main road safety concerns relating to potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists and vehicles. However, it would reduce the degree of separation between cyclists and motor traffic when entering Walmgate from Lawrence Street.

NB : Following further consultation with groups representing cyclists their formal views were still awaited at the time of finalising this report. However,

initial indications are that they support the benefits of the alternative scheme and, therefore, Officers are minded to recommend this option.

34. Option 4 would not address any of the known road safety issues in the area and, therefore, could not be recommended.

Corporate Priorities

35. These proposals should help meet the Council's Corporate Priorities for increasing the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport, and also for improving the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest.
36. The enhancement of safety for visitors, in conjunction with the measures to prevent vehicles striking Walmgate bar, are important gains in terms of conservation and tourism.

Implications

This report has the following implications :-

- **Financial**

The 2008/09 capital programme currently includes an £85,000 budget for safety improvements at Walmgate Bar, which comprises £40,000 LTP funding and a £45,000 Section 106 contribution. The latest cost estimate indicates that the scheme can be implemented within this budget.

- **Human Resources** – No implications

- **Equalities** – No implications

- **Legal**

The City of York Council, as Highway Authority for the area, has powers under the following Acts and associated Regulations to implement improvements to the highway and any associated measures, including powers to invoke Traffic Regulation Orders :-

- The Highways Act 1980
- The Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984
- The Road Traffic Act 1988

The revised arrangements in **Option 3**, and shown in **Annex F**, would require a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to prohibit cyclists from continuing to use the existing route through the central arch of Walmgate Bar.

- **Crime and Disorder** – No implications

- **Information Technology (IT)** – No implications
- **Property** – No implications

Risk Management

37.

Risk Category	Impact	Likelihood	Score
Physical	Medium	Possible	9
Organisation/Reputation	Medium	Possible	9

Physical : There is always a potential for new safety issues to arise whenever an existing highway layout is altered, but risks are minimised through careful design and the road safety audit checking process.

Organisation/Reputation : There is also a risk of criticism from the public in implementing a scheme which some have objections to or concerns about, but again this has been minimised by carrying out extensive consultation and amending the proposals in light of comments received.

Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk scores have all been assessed at lower than 16. This 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.

Recommendations

38. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve the alternative proposals described under Option 3, and shown at **Annex F**, for implementation, and give approval to advertise the necessary Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which would remove the exemption for cyclists through the Walmgate Bar gateway.

Any substantive objections to the TRO to be referred back to a subsequent Officer in Consultation meeting for consideration and a decision.

Reason: To address road safety concerns around the area of Walmgate Bar by providing a signal controlled pedestrian crossing on Walmgate, together with extensions and enhancements to pedestrian footways.

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For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Executive Member for Planning and Transport Advisory Panel meeting February 2005
Report of the Acting Director of Environment and Development Services
'Protection of Walmgate Bar'

Annexes

Annex A : Layout plan of the existing situation around Walmgate Bar.

Annex B : Illustration of the scheme developed for consultation.

Annex C : Copy of the two outer pages of an information leaflet explaining the original proposals, as circulated to local residents and interested groups.
(NB : the A3 inner illustration part of the information leaflet is **Annex B**)

Annex D : Map showing the extent of the information leaflet distribution to residents and local businesses.

Annex E : Revised layout plan; e.g. cyclists still routed through the barbican gateway, but with a more clearly defined cycle path through the proposed pedestrian paved areas.

Annex F : Alternative layout plan; e.g. the main barbican archway closed to cyclists, and cyclists routed instead through the northern traffic arch of Walmgate Bar.