

<b>Meeting:</b>	Executive
<b>Meeting date:</b>	18 July 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Housing, Economy & Regeneration – Tracey Carter
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Executive Member for Economy & Culture Cllr Pete Kilbane

## **Decision Report: Acomb Front Street - Phase 2 Update**

### **Subject of Report**

1. In October 2023, Executive agreed that £570,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies (UKSPF) be allocated to the development and implementation of the Acomb Front Street Phase 2 Project, including further engagement with residents and businesses.
2. In February 2024, the Executive Member for Economy & Transport approved the content of a programme of open public engagement, to seek feedback on costed designs and ideas for the Phase 2 scheme.
3. The purpose of this report is to provide Executive with feedback from the public engagement and to outline the recommended next steps for the project. As previously reported, all UKSPF monies must be spent by 31 March 2025.
4. The programme of engagement that has now been completed included 3 drop-in events, 6 stakeholder meetings and an online survey. The community response was tremendous and generated 900 completed surveys, and more than 5,000 comments to be analysed. The project programme had to be

extended to allow sufficient time to analyse the quantity of responses received, but the significant level of engagement data has better informed the Phase 2 scheme and demonstrates the Council's commitment to listening to the local community to inform the next phase of work. Learnings from previous consultations as well as comments made in the press/on social media have also been considered as part of the engagement work to help shape the project approach.

5. This report sets out the outcomes of the engagement activity and recommends practical next steps for the project. It recommends that Executive agree the high principles for the Phase 2 scheme and that the decision on the final costed scheme design be delegated to the Executive Member for Economy & Culture to be made at a public decision session on 24 September 2024. UKSPF spend deadlines are challenging and this approach will enable the project to progress whilst also retaining full transparency of decision making.
6. The Council's Scrutiny Committee have also been asked to consider the scheme at their scheduled meeting on 9th September 2024, ahead of the Executive Member decision meeting on the final scheme.

## **Benefits and Challenges**

7. The benefits and challenges of the project are set out below:

### **Benefits**

- i. **Public Engagement** – The objective for the open public engagement was to reach a wide section of residents, businesses, local community groups, stakeholders, shoppers, traders, and young people to test the costed ideas for phase 2, gain their feedback and crucially listen and learn from the local community to inform next steps
- ii. **Engagement Response** – Through offering a variety of formats, days, times, including but not limited to Joint Ward Committee Meeting, drop-in sessions, and online survey over 5,000 comments were received across the full range of ideas. This quantum of feedback provides a valuable insight into the local community priorities and aspirations for Acomb

that can be used to inform next steps for Phase 2 and beyond.

- iii. **Quality of Design** - The appointment of external urban designers coupled with the quantum of feedback received has brought a high level of challenge at every stage to deliver: a better experience and more people friendly space for residents and visitors; to be bold and creative; to remove a significant number of bollards whilst enhancing the character and identity of the area.
- iv. **Accessibility** - Creating a more accessible destination is a key priority of the scheme. Proposed improvements include wider, more generous pedestrian crossings; provision of two accessible toilet cubicles; improved blue badge parking and new crossing point linking with older part of Front Street.
- v. **Real time improvements** – To “kick start” the council’s regeneration work whilst the design of phase 2 and engagement began, a trial of a monthly artisan market was agreed with Make it York (MiY) and ‘Little Bird Made’ market on Front Street. The trial commenced in March 2024 for 3 months and, following positive feedback from residents, businesses, and traders alike, has now been extend until the end of December 2024. The new market has several (six and upwards) York traders taking stalls and the market is delivering increased footfall to the area and boosting the local economy. The high street retail offering is enhanced by the artisan market and the monthly road closure provides useful operational learning for future events/ activities.
- vi. **Identifying short term priorities that support longer term aspirations**– Following the previous Future of Acomb Front Street Study 2021, it was positive to see the bold ambitions and big ideas from the local community. However, the 2021 study also recognised that the level of ambition would take significant time (c. 5-10 years) and resources to fully implement. The recent engagement work has focused on understanding what community priorities can be achieved within the time and monetary constraints of Phase 2, whilst also considering how best the investment can support progress towards the longer-term aspirations. For example, there has been a long-term desire by some parts of the local

community to fully pedestrianise the main shopping area, however this is not achievable in the Phase 2 timescales or budget. The engagement has confirmed a range of differing views about this subject - particularly as the area is required to function as a working high street including deliveries for local businesses. The majority of people support a 'more people-friendly street'. Building on the engagement survey data, the high-level principles outlined in the report for Phase 2 seek to deliver positive steps towards achieving a less vehicle dominated space whilst also keeping options open to potentially progress pedestrianisation in the future, subject to further consultation and resources. This will include work being undertaken to progress a feasibility study into the pedestrianisation/ reduction of vehicle dominance will be commissioned.

## Challenges

- i. **Timescale** – All Phase 2 works need to be completed by the UKSPF spend deadline which is 31 March 2025. To achieve this, it will be necessary for construction to commence by the start of October 2024. However final designs/costings are not yet complete, and therefore cannot be approved as part of this Executive report. It is therefore recommended that the Executive approve the high-level principles of Phase 2 and delegate authority for the Executive Member for Economy & Culture to take a decision on final designs and confirmed costings in September 2024. This will be taken as a public decision to enable transparency with local community prior to commencement of works.
- ii. **Expectation** – Following the previous Future of Acomb Front Street Study 2021 there are bold ambitions and big ideas for the area and high expectations from local community, therefore priorities for spend and phasing of any work will need to be considered. It will be crucial to set out how the Phase 2 work can complement the progression of a longer 5 -10-year plan for Acomb (subject to funding) and to clearly explain that Phase 2 cannot achieve all ambitions in one go given the time and monetary constraints.
- iii. **Land ownership** – a significant proportion of the high street frontages are privately owned, whilst it is designated as

highway, it is not adopted (and therefore maintained) by the council. In response to the engagement feedback to remove a greater number of bollards, it is proposed that large planters and seating will be used to protect the pavement edge and prevent illegal parking. By replacing some bollards with planters and seating there is a possibility that more pedestrians may be steered onto the non-adopted highway. Although some accommodation work was completed as part of Phase 1 work the condition of the non-adopted is not of a sufficient standard that the council would choose to adopt it. Guiding more pedestrians onto non adopted highway may accelerate the need for adoption discussions with landowners.

- iv. **Highway** – Front Street currently has two “lives”. It needs to function as both a traffic free pedestrianised area when access is restricted, but also allowing for deliveries and parking at different times of day. This brings challenges to the design process and introduces the challenge/ discussion of shared spaces and national guidance on retaining a kerb to delineate the highway for visually impaired users. There are new wide generous crossings proposed in Phase 2 to be introduced alongside a 20mph speed limit, however cycling access and current vehicle access would remain unchanged at the Phase 2 stage of works. These proposed works would not restrict the potential for full pedestrianisation in the future, subject to further consultation and funding.

- v. **Return of illegal parking** – To deliver a more people friendly space, introduction of wide generous crossing points and removal of bollards there is a risk that the potential for illegal parking is reintroduced, which may create a challenge to parking enforcement initially. There must be a focus on enforcing the highway regulations to deter any illegal parking and assist with the behavioural change required to drivers in the area.

## **Policy Basis for Decision**

- 8. The Phase 2 regeneration scheme for Acomb Front Street will contribute directly to the delivery of the commitments in the Council Plan (2023-27).

9. The scheme reflects the four core 'EACH' commitments in the Council Plan 2023-27 – One City, for all by:
- **Equalities and Human Rights** – Creating a more accessible destination proposing level pedestrian crossings, achieved by the introduction of raised tables and 20mph speed limit. Upgrading the existing toilet block to provide two accessible toilets units and improving Blue Badge parking provision at Front Street and Cross Street. Potential trial of new wheelchair tactile paving at the west end dropped crossing, final details to be confirmed.
  - **Affordability** – The creation of a more unified destination, including sign posting local amenities will support residents and visitors alike to better access and support local facilities. The monthly market operator enhances the retail offering of the area. The economic benefit to increasing footfall and supporting reinvestment in the local community will support a more resilient high street.
  - **Climate & Environment** – Introduction of more greenery via planters will provide welcome placemaking and biodiversity enhancements. The introduction of trees into the high street environment potentially will aid urban cooling in this area. The 20mph speed limit will slow vehicles down and therefore create a more family friendly area, which in turn will encourage more people to visit Front Street by foot/ cycle.
  - **Health and Wellbeing** – The creation of a more family friendly space that encourages people to dwell in, encouraging greater use of local amenities will help build stronger social interactions across the generations and reduce social isolation. The project team will continue to meet with community groups to build on the existing community links all parties want to see developed. Community groups have volunteered several event ideas, the coordination of an events programme will need resource and further input from all.
10. Strategic work to develop a pipeline of future projects for consideration by the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) highlights the importance of Acomb (and Haxby & Wigginton) as a key secondary centre within York and identifies

that it should be treated in the same way as market towns in North Yorkshire in terms of access to future mayoral investment. Proactive discussions are underway with the MCA to explore potential future funding opportunities in this regard.

11. The UKSPF funding has clear criteria for outputs and outcomes, the criteria against its funding are a key consideration for Phase 2 spend. On completion of the phase 2 scheme, we are required to report against a range of outputs and outcomes including. Outputs delivered to date in Acomb include:

- Amount of public realm created or improved - 1202m<sup>2</sup>.
- Sqm of land made wheelchair accessible/step free -1202m<sup>2</sup>.
- Number of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed (numerical value) -15
- Number of neighbourhood improvements - 1(Market Trial)
- Number of projects successfully completed – 4 (Highway Improvements, accessible seating, adapted cycle rack trials & Christmas lights)

## **Financial Strategy Implications**

12. The council was awarded a sum of £5.5m for the Shared Prosperity Fund over the period 2022/23 to 2024/25. This allocation included £1.3m capital funding for city centres and key shopping centre, from which £570k was allocated to Acomb.

13. The final design and costings for Phase 2 are not yet confirmed and will be the subject of a public report to Executive Member Economy & Culture in September 2024. For the purposes of this report, the high-level principles for Phase 2 are presented in Table 3 (at paragraph 53) Current estimates indicate that the project principles should broadly fit within the budget available – however this will need to be fully worked through for the September decision as the designs and content are finalised.

14. The costs for preparatory work, engagement, staff time etc are likely to total around £65k across the lifetime of the Phase 2 Project. There is a separate budget available to cover these costs, therefore ensuring that the full £570k can be allocated towards improvement works. Feasibility studies and traffic

surveys to inform future work is identified under future work heading.

## Recommendation and Reasons

15. The Executive is asked to:
16. **Approve the high-level principles set out for the phase 2 scheme design as detailed in Table 3, reconfirming Executive's agreement to allocate £570k of UKSPF monies to Acomb and instruct officers to finalise project designs and costings on this basis.**

**Reason,** In October 2023, it was agreed that an update on Phase 2 would come back to Executive for their consideration following public engagement. Phase 2 timescales are tight because delivery against UKSPF spend deadlines is extremely challenging (March 25). This progress report brings forward as much as detail possible for Executive to agree the high-level principles, thus allowing the scheme design and costings to be finalised in time for a planned start on site by the end of September 2024.

17. **Delegate authority to approve the recommendations on the final costed scheme design be to the Executive Member for Economy & Culture, to be made at a public decision session in September 2024**

**Reason,** Delivery against UKSPF spend deadlines is extremely challenging (March 25). This progress report brings forward as much as detail possible for Executive to agree the high-level principles, however additional work is still required to finalise designs and costings. It is crucial the learnings and analysis generated from the quantum of engagement responses are reflected in the final designs, and thereby addresses community concerns/ future aspirations.

18. **Given the tight spending timescales of the UKSPF funding, agree a number of practical next steps to enable officers to commence further necessary preparatory work ahead of final scheme design/costing decisions being made in September 2024, namely:**

**(a) that work be progressed on the scope, design and**



**procurement of seating/planting, wayfinding/signage and the local ‘place-making/identity’ elements of Phase 2 e.g. public art/mural(s), and that alternative funding options for this work also be investigated, and to delegate authority to the Director of Housing, Economy & Regeneration (in consultation with the Head of Procurement and the Director of Governance) to take such steps as are necessary to procure, award and enter into the resulting contracts.**

**Reason,** to allow necessary preparatory work to progress and to reduce risks around the tight UKSPF delivery timescales for these elements of the project.

**(b) approve commencement of work to enable the statutory consultation for two new Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO’s) required for the proposed new disabled parking area at York Road layby and 20mph speed restriction in main shopping area of Front Street, and to delegate authority to approve the implementation of the TRO’s to the Executive Member for Economy & Culture ( in consultation with the Executive Member for Transport) when considering the final scheme in September 2024.**

**Reason,** Statutory Consultation for a Traffic Regulation Order is required to engage with local traders and businesses to identify any risks or mitigations required to the proposals. There is a 6–7-week lead time with this consultation, commencement of this work prior to consideration of final design in September avoids delay to construction programme and implementation.

**(c) ask officers to commence discussions with Make it York to explore the potential for amending the licence for Acomb Front Street Market granted under the Markets Charter for York, to allow a possible future increase in the frequency of market activity in Acomb, and to delegate authority to the Executive Member for Economy & Culture to determine any recommended future amendments to the licence in this regard.**

**Reason,** initial 3-month market trial has been successful with positive feedback received from residents, local businesses, and traders. The artisan market enhances existing retail offering, increasing market

frequency would deliver against the community's desire for more activity and potentially offer scope to involve the community in events.

The Markets Charter for York has existed since 1316. The purpose of the Charter is to ensure that the Shambles Market is the principal market for York. As such, no markets are permitted within a six and two-thirds mile of the Shambles Market unless they are on a trial basis or unless the Council agrees to a licence under the Charter. Acomb was granted its licence under the Markets Charter in 2016. Any future changes to frequency of markets in Acomb will need to be properly considered in this context and require further advice from officers within Legal Services and Licensing Services.

## **Background**

19. Front Street is a key shopping centre, especially for the local community, residents, and businesses. There has been long-standing desire to make improvements and boost the local economy, and gradually a change is organically taking place in Acomb with new businesses moving into the area. Building on this transformation the approach promotes tangible economic growth and will develop a unique high street environment for Acomb that enhances its character and sense of place to promote diverse community use.
20. Extensive engagement and consultation have been undertaken on Front Street; a 2020 consultation led to the 2021 Future of Acomb Front Street Study. This study outlined 10 emerging ideas, the majority of which were long term ideas which would require further feasibility and viability work prior progression.
21. In December 2022, City of York Council was allocated UK Shared Prosperity Funding, part of the government's Levelling Up Fund intended to reduce inequalities between communities. At this time £395,000 was allocated to phase 1 Front Street highway improvement works.
22. A significant period elapsed between the 2020 community engagement and phase 1 highway improvement work completed in May 2023. The local community challenged the bollards installed as part of phase 1 work. Subsequently the What a Load Of Bollards WALOB Campaign Group presented a petition to Full

Council in July 2023, titled “Get Front St bollards removed and re-design the scheme in line with what people asked for”.

23. In October 2023 Executive agreed a further £570,000 of UKSPF funding to be allocated to Front Street phase 2 work.
24. In response to this petition and acknowledging the strength of community feeling the council engaged the original external consultants PWP Design and local urban designer, Urban Glow Design to work with the council, acting as critical friends to the design process and bringing creative expertise in developing a phase 2 scheme and longer-term ideas for Front Street.
25. The phase 2 design ideas were engaged upon during February and March 2024. The public engagement methodology is detailed in the following section, the engagement was designed to be far reaching and comprehensive in order that all sections of the community could share their opinion and provide feedback. The status of design is outlined in Table 3, paragraph 55.
26. To “kick start” the council’s regeneration work whilst the design of phase 2 and engagement began, a trial of a monthly artisan market was agreed with Make it York (MiY) and ‘Little Bird Made’ market on Front Street. The trial commenced in March 2024 for 3 months and following positive feedback from residents, businesses, and traders alike MiY have agreed to extend the monthly market until the end of December 2024. The new market has several (six and upwards) York traders taking stalls and the market is delivering increased footfall to the area and boosting the local economy. The high street retail offering is enhanced by the artisan market and the monthly road closure provides useful operational learning for future events/ activities.
27. The UKSPF funding will also support the upgrade to the public toilets, converting the damaged single toilet and older accessible toilet into two unisex accessible cubicles with baby changing facilities. The contract with Healthmatic has been agreed and completion of the upgrade is expected Summer 2024.

## Consultation Analysis

28. The Front Street public engagement commenced on 26 February and ran to 24 March 2024.
29. The purpose of the open public engagement work was to test the ideas set out in the Phase 2 project scope and determine the community priorities in the context of the cost and desirability. We also carried forward what we learned from the previous consultation (Future of Acomb Front Street Study 2021) and community petition July 2023.
30. The public engagement sought feedback on: -
  - enhancing the area through better placemaking, creating a more people friendly space and reducing the number of bollards
  - creating a more accessible destination, with wider, more generous pedestrian crossing points, new accessible toilet facilities and improved blue badge parking
  - extending the benefits beyond the high street to better connect local amenities.
  - longer-term aspirations, including but not limited to looking how to reduce the vehicle dominance in Front Street or the adoption of private frontages.
31. The project team have sought to get to know and build relationships across Acomb to better understand the community, businesses, and aspirations in order to deliver the best use of UKSPF funding allocated to Acomb and design a scheme that would be compatible with any potential future community aspirations including pedestrianisation.
32. The 2024 public engagement used an accessible mixed method to allow for the greatest reach into the community, including in person public meetings/drop-in events, stakeholder meetings and online survey, plus paper-based format.
33. Stakeholder engagement included. Table 1

Public drop-in events	Gateway Centre, 29 February and 16 March* Acomb Explore, 7 March <i>*Market launch</i>
Stakeholder Meetings	What A Load Of Bollards Campaign Group, 12 February Joint Acomb, Westfield & Holgate Ward Committee, 28 Feb Greater Acomb Community Forum, 4 March Acomb Alive, 18 March York Access Forum, 19 March The Place, younger people, 21 March

34. The engagement survey was available at Acomb Explore, West Offices and several local businesses and could be returned by Freepost. The community response was tremendous and generated 900 completed surveys, and more than 5,000 comments to be analysed.
35. Whilst the high level of public responses created some delays to the project programme to allow sufficient time for responses to be received and analysis to be undertaken, the significant level of engagement data has better informed the Phase 2 scheme and demonstrates the Council's commitment to listening to the local community following phase 1 highways improvement work.
36. The summary of engagement feedback is summarised at Annex A and key points are outlined below:
37. Engagement responses produced a range of views however broad support for the phase 2 ideas was evident and caveated that further engagement on pedestrianisation of Front Street would be required, especially with local businesses.
38. Overall, 708 respondents (91%) wish to see more events and activities take place on Front Street, with several suggestions made and community groups potentially volunteering to assist. Suggestions include Big Lunch, Dog Show, Farmers Market, Flea Market, Street Food/ Music Festival, Children's activities. There is potential to devise a programme of activities however all road closures would require Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) to close the road and accompanied by an event plan and risk assessment, consequently the project team will investigate a "block" TTRO

and what steps community groups need to do in order to run an event.

39. There was significant support (592 respondents 71%) for the expansion and improvement to the “welcome gateway”/ entrance into the main shopping area. The ambition for this space is not only to create a greater impact from York Road and attract new shoppers but deliver a new pedestrian friendly priority irrespective of the time of day. When the traffic gate is closed, the new wide generous flush crossing conveys this is a space for people with greater accessibility, more seating and general decluttering of some highway detail. When the traffic gate is open the new 20mph speed limit and physical changes to the carriageway will reduce vehicle movements through the space. That said, the engagement highlighted that a large number of Acomb residents access Front Street via Green Lane/ Morrisons carpark, therefore the design of the street will seek to reflect this and create a west end entrance after the Green Lane traffic lights.
40. The creation of a new central space was strongly supported by both businesses and residents alike, 518 responses (70%). This large (7.5m) central crossing space will significantly change the feel and use of the space, particularly as many bollards will be removed to facilitate this wide crossing and electrical power supply built into this central location that could support events and activities.
41. A large number of responses did wish to see a review of the bollards installed in Front Street and the new phase 2 design enables this. The engagement results were as follows:
- 518 responses (63.5%) support reducing the number of bollards
  - 469 responses (58%) support retaining bollards to protect paving from illegal parking
  - 366 responses (45%) support removing two third of the existing bollards. Of those who did not agree there were two very distinct and opposite views, those who wished to see the complete removal of all bollards and those who wanted to retain more than two thirds.

Finally, when the community prioritised activity across the scheme 386 responses (57%) considered reviewing bollards as high priority.

42. As demonstrated by the community petition against the bollards in July 2023, and wider discussion with the community, there are a diverse range of views expressed on bollards, suggestions include alternative planters and trees to replace bollards removed and the request that any final scheme should be in the context of a 5–10-year plan for Acomb. A significant number of comments (40) expressed concern over the cost of removing large numbers of bollards and further supported by Acomb Alive traders who unanimously wanted to keep the bollards if it saved £40k.
43. 532 respondents (72%) supported clearer marking of the blue badge spaces, with support to deliver two accessible parking bays at Halifax/ Cooplands location and three at Cross Street and one in School Street. The engagement highlighted that greater enforcement against misuse is required, following installation of accessible bays, parking enforcement should experience less challenge to Penalty Charge Notices (PCN'S). Consequently, it is proposed that Phase 2 work will provide consistency across the 6 accessible Blue Badge parking spaces for the three locations, with a reduction of 1 Blue Badge space. It is noted from the feedback that a review of all parking in School Street area is requested by residents and is an area which potentially could be considered in the future.
44. Residents and business frequently commented on the cost of all elements of the scheme, as such the “pop up” concepts were less supported and permanent seating and planters preferred. Of note was the cost for Cross Street accessible parking however. this work included the provision of a new shared pedestrian/ cycle lane (which provides a pedestrian route to the new toilets) and cost to extend the pavement island to create two new Blue Badge parking spaces to mitigate for the loss of Blue Badge spaces at Halifax/Cooplands and Cross Street.
45. 89 respondents (12%) state they use the existing public toilets i.e. 88% (653) do not use them. Reasons for not using the current facilities included poor state of repair/ condition (201), people live locally so go home (104) however almost 100

respondents cited lack of awareness/ signposting and 37 commented that they felt vulnerable/unsafe.

46. Creating better connections and wayfinding across local amenities was supported by 467 respondents (64%), although some suggested smart phones make this work unnecessary. Businesses support idea of wayfinding and suggest several locations to link across Acomb. The style/ design of any signage, planters, seating should “traditional” as opposed to the brightly coloured examples shown in engagement materials, and the village identity, local history and community should be celebrated. Greater Acomb Community Forum supplied design concepts for consideration, wider engagement on this as part of a design guide will be required.
47. 503 respondents (68%) support a public art project, like a mural and would like to see this across multiple sites. This is seen as an opportunity for a community project and involve schools with its design which will build a sense of place across the generations, however high-quality professional execution would be required with delivery of mural(s).
48. The new crossing proposed near to the Morrisons junction, to help link with the older part of Front Street was supported by 590 respondents (82%) and local businesses alike. The new seating proposed outside the WMC, was supported by 470 respondents (65%). The introduction of seating at this location would provide an important “rest” stop for those walking down to Acomb Explore, however some raised concerns on potential ASB.
49. 489 respondents (70%) support the council carrying out a feasibility study into the long-term aspiration to pedestrianise Front Street. If the study shows this is feasible 577 respondents (82%) would support creating a more people friendly street in the shopping area. However, currently Acomb traders oppose any pedestrianisation to Front Street and would prefer to retain current access arrangements or see a slight extension to access hours. Interestingly, of the 695 respondents, when offered a range of options on a vision for Front Street, the most popular option from the survey was a slight extension to the pedestrian hours into the early evening (217 respondents /31%).



Table 2

	Responses	
A - Access restrictions to remain the same. As set out above – no change.	21.9%	152
B - Access restrictions to be simpler This would consider making the restrictions more consistent every day as opposed to different rules and times midweek, Saturday, and Sunday.	18.1%	126
<b>C - Close street to all vehicles for longer, perhaps like the city centre 10:30-5pm This would keep the street as it is and could explore extending pedestrianised hours into the early evening. It would allow access through, loading and blue badge parking outside of those hours.</b>	31.2%	217
D - Close street to all vehicles 24 hours a day, except emergency vehicles. This would fully pedestrianise the street - no loading, no blue badge parking in road (only in marked bays at edge of area) and vehicles would need to always use York Road.	23.6%	164
E- Other (please specify)	5.2%	36
	Answered	695

50. As a result of the above findings a feasibility study into the pedestrianisation/ reduction of vehicle dominance will be commissioned. This study will use the extensive engagement feedback and consider how we change the relationship with the existing road and the options and mechanisms which will potentially allow that change in a phased approach, which ensures residents and businesses will have further input. This does not impact on the design of Phase 2 works but would help inform potential future phases.

51. It is crucial that Phase 2 work is seen as the start of 5 – 10-year plan for the continued investment into Acomb and should provide the “foundation” for future incremental improvements, to create a pipeline of projects that will seek to attract future funding. Based on engagement survey an initial plan could include: -

- Work with community on trial day events – programme for road closures and funding for events.
- Seek funding to deliver adoption of main shopping area – including look to private owners for contribution.
- Pedestrianisation study options reviewed, consult with businesses to assess impact to any change in road use.

- Feasibility of School Street parking review with recommendations.
- Work with Acomb Explore to extend pedestrian priority and compliment recent Library Arts/ council funding (Arts Council funding for Acomb Explore, completion deadline March 2026)
- Review Morrisons junction.
- Review WMC future plans, scope to enhance green open area.

## High-level principles for Phase 2

52. Table 3 below confirms the community priorities identified via the comprehensive public engagement work, together with a description of high-level principles for Phase 2 and potential longer-term work (subject to funding). It should be noted that the % ‘support’ figures shown in the Community Priorities column are included as a high-level indicator of community views only – the overall analysis of total community feedback is much more nuanced than considering survey responses against the simple headings in the table.

53. Executive are recommended to approve the high-level principles set out for the phase 2 scheme as detailed in Table 3, with estimated total cost of £570k (in line with UKSPF funding allocation previously agreed by Executive in October 2023) and instruct officers to finalise project designs and costings for a final decision by the Executive Member for Economy and Culture in September 2024.

54. Table 3: High Level Principles for Phase 2

	<b>Community Priority</b>	<b>High level principles of proposed approach - Phase 2 (Subject to final designs and costings) &amp; Longer Term (Subject to future funding)</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Activities and Events</b>  (91% support in survey responses)	<u>Phase 2</u>  Infrastructure to enable future events via electrical point “event column” designed/ installed into scheme. Community notice board to advertise activities & events.  <u>Longer term</u>

		<p>Ambition to arrange programme of community events – potential to work with Community groups/ Community Development Officers</p> <p>Investigate the potential of assistance &amp; funding for block/ multiple event TTRO's.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Welcome Gateway</b></p> <p>Maximise impact of new people friendly entrance</p> <p>(71% support identified in engagement responses)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Emerging designs include 6m flush crossing (raised table), clear designated BB parking, new seating. Improving visual impact, placemaking and decluttering are core aspects.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>New central space</b></p> <p>Creation of wide generous crossing that emphasises pedestrian / community focus for large parts of the day</p> <p>(70% support identified in engagement responses)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Emerging designs include 7.5m flush crossing (raised table) and accompanying 20 mph speed limit will build a greater sense that the main shopping area is a place for people and are intended to reduce the vehicle movements in the carriageway. A central place for community to meet. Permanent planters and seaters (not pop up).</p> <p><u>Longer term</u></p> <p>Over time this area could be used to host events</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Bollard review &amp; Highway declutter</b></p> <p>(64%% support identified in engagement responses)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Complete individual bollard review and consider how locations impact on new usage/ events.</p> <p>Remove c. two thirds of bollards and replace with planters/seating in appropriate locations (specific details to be confirmed in final design)</p>

		<p>Remove “Ahead only” from the carriageway and resurface the carriageway to promote greater placemaking, more people friendly space and reduced vehicle dominance of the space.</p> <p>Declutter and optimise highway signage, in accordance with Highway Regulations in place.</p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Feasibility study for people friendly street</b></p> <p>(70% support identified in engagement responses)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Commission a feasibility study for people friendly street to inform future phases of project work. Scope being finalised. Input from Highway Officers for potential phased approach for more people friendly area.</p> <p><u>Longer Term</u></p> <p>Consider outcomes of feasibility study, undertake further consultation with businesses and identify next steps.</p> <p>Investigate funding options to deliver future adoption of main shopping area.</p> <p>Work with Acomb Explore to look at feasibility of extending pedestrian priority.</p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Improved Blue Badge car parking.</b></p> <p>(72% support identified in engagement responses)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>At Halifax/Cooplands Blue Badge bays – formalise two fully accessible, cross hatched parking spaces.</p> <p>At Cross Street – three fully accessible spaces, one cross hatched space at the west end of Front Street, which sits alongside a new shared pedestrian/ cycle route through Cross Street to upgraded accessible toilet block.</p> <p>Within the layby on York Road – extend the current pavement and island to provide greater pedestrian priority through the area and the two additional inline accessible blue badge space will be easy to use.</p>

		<p>At School Street there will be one fully accessible cross hatched BB space which in turn facilitates easier cycling access than currently experienced.</p> <p><u>Longer Term</u></p> <p>Review of all parking on School Street with recommendations for future improvements, subject to funding and potential consider other locations for Blue Badge parking.</p>
7	<p><b>Place, identity public art</b></p> <p>(68% support identified in engagement responses)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Develop a scope and procure specialist to deliver mural(s) involve local schools and community for ideas. Explore potential for alternative funding as UKSPF timescales are very tight to deliver this element of the work.</p> <p><u>Longer Term</u></p> <p>Consider further options for public art in Acomb</p>
8	<p><b>New crossing (near Morrisons junction) and seating (near Working Men's Club)</b></p> <p>(82% support identified in engagement responses for crossing, 65% for seating)</p>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>Create a new formal crossing point from the existing island across Front Street to connect main shopping area to the older section of Front Street.</p> <p>Create a much need rest point for pedestrians by locating bench seating outside the Acomb Working Men's Club.</p> <p><u>Longer Term</u></p> <p>There is a desire to review Morrisons Junction and give greater priority to pedestrians in this area. This would be a significant undertaking and require discussions with Morrisons store to understand their plans for the store.</p>
9	<p><b>Signage &amp; Wayfinding</b></p> <p>(64% support identified in</p>	<p><u>Phase 2 Proposal</u></p> <p>The new signage will be anchored from the two new entrance totems. From this the wayfinding signage will connect local amenities to inform both shoppers and</p>

	engagement responses)	visitors alike, although it is noted lower within overall priority rating. Through the engagement period Greater Acomb Community Forum proposed design concepts and potentially use these to create a recognisable symbol/ identity for Acomb. Ref Annex A Pg 23
10	<p><b>Wide Crossing at west end of Front Street (Gateway Centre) – Raised Table C</b></p> <p><b>(63% support identified in engagement responses)</b></p>	<p><u>Phase 2 Proposal</u> The engagement highlighted that the west end of Front Street is the entrance that most pedestrians use. As such we will create a west end welcome gateway for those access the area on foot by introducing welcome totem and new seating area.</p> <p>The recently installed dropped crossing is sufficient – there was lower support for replacing this with a raised table in comparison to other community priorities. Ref Annex A Pg 30. By retaining the dropped crossing instead there is an opportunity to trial wheelchair tactile paving at this crossing as part of the final design. York Access Forum have been consulted and support the proposed trial. Consultation has included both wheelchair users and individuals that are registered blind. Final trial details are to be confirmed prior to agreement and implementation.</p>
11	<p><b>Planters / Seating/ Trees</b></p>	<p><u>Phase 2 Proposal</u> From the engagement a third of responses made on alternatives to bollards wanted to see planters/ seating used to protect the kerb line. The balance to be struck is replacing sufficient bollards to declutter whilst not creating another barrier in the area through a row of seating and planters. Careful review of style and size of seating and planters is underway to create cluster/ social seating locations.</p> <p><u>Longer Term</u> Following completion of phase 2 work a design guide should provide useful reference to local amenities (York Explore, Working Men’s Club) that will enhance other schemes in the area.</p>

12	<b>Toilet Upgrade</b>	<p><u>Phase 2</u></p> <p>The tired existing and damaged toilet block will be upgraded to provide two new accessible toilets. The work has already been commissioned and will be carried out by the council's toilet contractor Healthmatic, during Summer 2024</p>
13	<b>Feasibility studies</b>	<p><u>Longer term</u></p> <p>Traffic Surveys – to better inform making the area a more people friendly area we may wish to carry out additional traffic survey to quantify people / vehicle movements in the area.</p>

NB There are also additional Project Management/Staffing/Engagement costs associated with Phase 2 project, however these are covered by a separate UKSPF budget.

55. The February Executive Member report also considered a Jan 24 petition titled “Repair Our Pothole Acomb Front Street”, and it was agreed that the petition would be considered as part of the Phase 2 work. As Phase 2 monies are limited, it is recommended that pothole maintenance will not be included at this time. Instead, Highway Safety Inspectors will continue to monitor Front Street, inspected monthly and any defects repaired in line with our Highway Safety Inspection Manual.

## Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

56. **Option 1 – to approve the recommendations** in the report-enabling officers to work up fully costed detailed designs that can be presented to Executive Member of Economy in September 2024 to approve final designs and construction commencement.
57. **Option 2 – to refuse the recommendations** and request completion of final detailed design work be brought back to Executive later with full costings prior to approval.
58. **Option 3 – to amend the recommendation** in the report requiring changes to the Phase 2 approach and/or further information/ costings/ design to be brought forward to Executive

Member of Economy in September 2024 for consideration prior to approval.

## Analysis

59. **Option 1** - is the recommended option which sets out a deliverable plan to achieve the best use of UKSPF funding against spend deadline of March 2025. This option demonstrates clear commitment to future feasibility work and context within a 5–10-year plan for Front Street, Acomb.
60. **Option 2** -is not recommended because this option would see delay to the delivery of phase 2 scheme, in particular crucial lead in for ordering and highway notices required for October construction start date. If construction delayed it could result in failure to meet spend deadlines and potential claw back of UKSPF budget allocation.
61. **Option 3** –if report recommendation is amended to include further detailed design/ costings there is potential for delay to commence construction and ultimately deliver all construction and spend detail against UKSPF deadlines.

## Organisational Impact and Implications

- **Financial**

There remains funding within the overall allocation to fund the works at Acomb Front Street. As indicated within the report there is a relatively short window between finalising the design of the scheme and the need to deliver the improvements. There can be no expectation that the funding will carry forward into future years and therefore the works must be completed and paid for during the financial year. The cost of consultation, design and construction for the scheme be funded from the £570k SPF allocation.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications contained within this report.



- **Legal**

Any grant funding arrangements sought to deliver the proposals set out in this report will need to be reviewed to understand whether the Council's acceptance and use of any such grant funding will comply with the requirements set out within the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on local traffic authorities to manage the road network with a view to securing, as far as reasonably practicable, the expeditious, convenient, and safe movement of all types of traffic. The Council, as a traffic authority, has the power to make Traffic Regulation Orders and temporary Traffic Regulation Orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the procedures contained in the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Procedure Regulations 1992.

- **Procurement**

Any proposed works or services which are undertaken by external providers on the Council's behalf will need to be commissioned via a compliant procurement route under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (soon to be the Procurement Act 2023).

- **Health and Wellbeing**

Public Health support the proposals. By making the Acomb Front Street more accessible, sociable, and family friendly the proposed Phase 2 development has the potential to make a positive contribution to people's health and wellbeing. The measures to make the area less vehicle dominant should have a positive impact on active travel and reduce pollution levels, which in turn impact health.

- **Environment and Climate action**

The proposals for Phase 2 of Acomb Front Street development have the potential to contribute towards the Council's climate change ambitions. Design and delivery of

any new initiatives and infrastructure should consider both embodied and operational carbon emissions and seek to minimise these as much as possible.

Consideration should be given to climate adaptation and risk resilience, ensuring that the scheme is suitably designed to account for more frequent extreme weather events and temperatures e.g., providing shading to avoid overheating and ensuring materials are used that can withstand higher extreme temperatures.

- **Affordability**

The creation of a more unified destination, including sign posting of local free amenities (Library, play spaces) will support residents and visitors alike to better access and use local facilities. The economic benefit to increasing footfall and supporting reinvestment in the local community will support a more resilient high street.

This will potentially reduce the need/ requirement for low income groups to use public transport and incur additional expenditure to travel beyond the local shopping area as frequently as they might now.

- **Equalities and Human Rights**

A full EIA is included at Annex C. This highlights some positive improvements for some groups including disabled people and those on low income. Any further consultation will include groups outside of the York Access Forum when considering the views of disabled residents.

- **Data Protection and Privacy**

Data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) are an essential part of our accountability obligations and is a legal requirement for any type of processing under UK data protection and privacy legislation. Failure to carry out a DPIA when required may leave the council open to enforcement action, including monetary penalties or fines.

DPIAs helps us to assess and demonstrate how we comply with all our data protection obligations. It does not have to eradicate all risks but should help to minimise and determine whether the level of risk is acceptable in the circumstances, considering the benefits of what the council wants to achieve.

The DPIA screening questions were completed for this report, reference AD-06716, and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed for the options set out in this report, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed where required, on the approved options from this report.

- **Communications**

The Communications team have been working proactively with the Regeneration team on the communication and engagement elements of this project and will continue to do so as it progresses to implementation stages.

- **Economy**

Acomb Front Street is a key secondary shopping centre within the City of York Council area. It is positive to see the proposed Phase 2 approach seeking to build on the 2021 Future of Acomb Front Street Study, which was commissioned to identify ways to support economic growth and drive footfall in the area. The engagement undertaken demonstrates a strong commitment to ensure that Phase 2 is based upon local resident and stakeholder views about how UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) monies can be invested to deliver positive outputs and outcomes for the local area.

## **Risks and Mitigations**

The principal project risks are:

- (i) The tight spending deadlines for UKSPF funding require all funds to be spent by 31March 2025. To achieve this construction must

commence no later than the start of October 2024. Further work should be done internally to look at financial recharge processes and ensure that any internal costs incurred (e.g., work delivered by highways team) can be completed to meet the UKSPF spending rules.

- (ii) Costings are still based on original project estimates and are subject to change as designs are finalised over the coming weeks. There remains a risk that the emerging Phase 2 proposals could cost more than the £570k budget available. If this happens then prioritisation of interventions would need to be undertaken and reported as part of the September decision report. In the meantime, alternative funding options are also being explored for some elements of the work.
- (iii) Community expectation/ response to phase 2 final designs by sections of community. There has been strong representation from the community on phase 1, during phase 2 the council has listened and responded to the engagement, however with regeneration schemes of this nature it will always be impossible to satisfy everybody's views. Stakeholder objection or campaigning by the community could delay the final scheme design and construction and jeopardise the UKSPF funding. This must necessarily be set against the risk of not delivering a scheme which has strong community support.
- (iv) Ongoing scrutiny by community and stakeholders is anticipated, the project team will continue to proactively share progress of the work through the council website Acomb Front Street. At implementation stage, this will highlight work completed, next fortnightly work plan and important road closures.
- (v) By replacing the bollards with alternative wide planters and seating the kerb line will continue to be protected and prevent illegal parking (within the adopted highway). By using large planters and seating to replace some bollards more pedestrians may be steered onto the non-adopted highway. Although some accommodation work was completed as part of phase 1 work the condition of the non-adopted is not of a sufficient standard that the council would choose to adopt it. More pedestrians on non-adopted highway may accelerate adoption discussions with landowners.
- (vi) Project components that involve additional external procurement e.g., Community public art project, that involves liaison with local schools, needs to consider seasonality (when to paint the mural for best

results) and could take longer to deliver than March 2025. Exploring alternative funding sources is recommended.

- (vii) The removal of a significant number of bollards and introduction of wide speed tables for pedestrian priority could result in an increase in illegal parking on the pavements, which the phase 1 scheme had sought to address. This can be mitigated by the introduction of planters, clear signage, and reduced vehicle journeys through the area, and by parking enforcement.
  
- (viii) Front Street currently has two “lives”, it functions as both a traffic free pedestrianised area when access is restricted but allows deliveries and parking at different times of day. Sections of the community would prefer the existing road to be “filled in” / levelled off and have cited examples nationally where this has been done, including Uttoxeter, Winchester and Tadcaster. Examples have been reviewed by Highways and Access Officers and at this time the Department of Transport (DoT) national moratorium and guidance shared spaces / retaining a kerb to delineate the highway for visually impaired users prohibit this. The measures taken as part of Phase 2, to change the feel of the area and reduce the “highwayness” of the existing road, are proposed to create a better sense of place and maintain the council’s commitment to accessibility for all. It is recommended that a feasibility study be undertaken into the long term pedestrianisation of Front Street will build on the phase 2 development with potential incremental / phased approach to any potential Front Street enhancements.

## Wards Impacted

Acomb, Westfield & Holgate Wards

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## Background papers

Executive April 2022: 'Future of Acomb Front Street – Enhancing Economic Growth for Secondary Shopping Areas'

Executive – October 2023: 'UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Executive Member Decision Session 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 - Acomb Front Street Phase 2 – open public engagement on costed designs and ideas for the scheme.

## Annexes

- Annex A: Executive Summary Engagement Feedback
- Annex B: Engagement Survey Questionnaire
- Annex C: Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)