

Decision Session – Cabinet Member for
Transport, Planning and Economic Development

15 January 2015

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

Petition to improve Pedestrian Safety at Sim Balk Lane Crossing, Bishopthorpe, Submission by the Travel Action Group

Summary

1. A petition has been received requesting that the Council improves a pedestrian crossing point on Sim Balk Lane in Bishopthorpe. Visibility for crossing the road at this point is obstructed due to the presence of on street parking which is adjacent to the raised traffic calming table and opposite local shops. The Cabinet Member is recommended to approve the recommendation to improve the crossing point so that visibility can be improved for pedestrians crossing at this point.

Recommendations

2. That the Cabinet Member gives approval for the implementation of the proposed highway improvements detailed at Option 8 (**Appendix B** and illustrated at Annex C).

Reason: To improve conditions for pedestrians using the crossing point on Sim Balk Lane, in particular as part of the journey to and from school.

Background

3. A petition was received in July 2014 from the Bishopthorpe Travel Action Group (TAG) containing over 1000 names of residents from Bishopthorpe and York itself requesting that “*the Council improves safety at the crossing point on Sim Balk Lane (speed table opposite Methodist Church) in order to establish a safe walking route between the Infant and Junior schools and a safe crossing point for the local community*”. The petition also included the correspondence between the Council and TAG. **Appendix A** includes the copies of the correspondence and the 1st sheet of the petition. The full petition is held by the School Travel Advisor.

4. The parents of Bishopthorpe Infant School and Archbishop of York Junior School, both in Bishopthorpe, have formed the TAG which has been in operation for a number of years. The aim of this group is to encourage children to walk or cycle to school. The group regularly organises events in both schools to encourage sustainable travel. They have also negotiated with owners of car parks in the village for parents to park there and walk their children to school (park and stride), providing maps to show their locations. Over the past 3 or 4 years TAG has been campaigning for a school crossing patroller and more latterly safer crossing on Sim Balk Lane at the speed table close to the junction with Appleton Road.
5. This speed table on Sim Balk Lane is the desired crossing point for pedestrians crossing between the two schools as well as for many other pedestrians from the local community. It is located about 15m from the Junction of Sim Balk Lane and Appleton Road to the south. It is also directly adjacent to a vehicle access which provides off street parking to a parade of shops and immediately to the other side of the vehicle access is on-street parking for at least 4 cars which obstruct the view to pedestrians of on-coming traffic from the north when crossing from east to west. Photos 1 and 2 below show the local geography relating to the speed table.



Photograph 01:
From the south side of Main Street looking in a north-westerly direction towards the junction of Sim Balk Lane, the speed table crossing point can be seen in red material.



Photograph 02: From the south side of Main Street looking in a westerly direction towards the speed table crossing point in front of the store at no. 47.

6. An assessment in October 2010 concluded that a School Crossing Patrol (SCP) could not be justified as the combined volumes of traffic and pedestrians did not meet national guidelines. The crossing was assessed again in January 2013 with the conclusion that the crossing did not qualify for a SCP under national guidelines. TAG examined these results and noted that the results fell into area B – needing further investigation - of the graph contained within the national guidelines (See **Appendix C**) TAG then applied additional criteria that could be used to justify the need for a school crossing patrol, but did not take into account the geography of the location and whether or not the location was actually a safe place to work.
7. Taking into consideration advice from North Yorkshire police, the Road Safety team are not prepared to consider the site suitable for a SCP at this location as it is considered unsafe for a patroller due to its proximity to a busy junction, proximity to shops and associated parking, and poor visibility. Taking all this into account the location is not considered to be a safe place to work. On the west side of the road views can be obstructed by overhanging vegetation. The TAG themselves acknowledge that removal of this parking outside the shops would be controversial and likely to be strongly resisted locally.
8. In January 2014 the TAG wrote suggesting that as visibility crossing the road was an issue, it might be possible to construct a build out to improve the view of traffic along Sim Balk Lane. They asked if CYC

could investigate the feasibility of implementing their suggested improvement or find some other solution to making the crossing safer. A feasibility study was included in the 2014-15 safe routes to school programme. In March 2014 a letter was sent to a TAG representative stating that the site would be the subject of a feasibility study during the 2014/15 financial year.

9. On 30 June 2014 the site was visited by the School Travel Advisor and engineers from Transport Projects to observe pedestrian behaviour at the crossing concerned and a feasibility study produced in September 2014.

Findings of the Feasibility Study

10. **Appendix B** contains the full feasibility report. In addition to a feasibility study to investigate the safety concerns relating to the crossing on Sim Balk Lane, the report also includes a review of the existing School Safety Zone for both Bishopthorpe Infants and Archbishop of York Junior schools.
11. A total of 14 options have been considered (details of which are contained in the feasibility report). Seven of these options are feasible for delivery. However, three of these would create new problems including increasing the risk of accident. Several of the options required the removal of existing on-street parking outside shops. This action is likely to be highly contentious and probably would be objected to, so these options have been discounted
12. The perception of the junction as being dangerous by pedestrians is not borne out by the accident statistics which show that in the last 3 years there have been 2 minor accidents, neither of which involved pedestrians (details are included in the feasibility report). Thus any work cannot be justified on a casualty reduction basis alone. The low incidence of accidents suggests that the existing school safety zone is helping to keep accidents at a low level and reduce risks to road users.
13. At present there is an alternative crossing point further up Sim Balk Lane near the Infants school which is some distance away from the junction with Main Street and comprises a build out to improve pedestrian visibility. Many pedestrians prefer not to use this as it means walking on the slightly narrower pavement on the west side of the road (1.6m wide compared to 1.8 m wide on the east side) and this is perceived as more dangerous. It may also be blocked by bins on collection day making it difficult for users with prams to use. The desire line for

pedestrians is to cross at the speed table near to the junction with Appleton Road.

14. The feasibility study recommends that Option 2 (to cut back the hedges) is carried out in conjunction with Option 8 (to build out the footway). A visit on 6 October 2014 found that vegetation had been cut back by residents and there was no need to formally request the work to be done. It subsequently transpired that the Parish Council request such work to be carried out in the village on a regular basis by writing to residents
15. Option 8 of **Appendix B** addresses local concerns as it will improve visibility sight lines for pedestrians and approaching drivers and provide a safer means of crossing Sim Balk Lane as the build out will provide a line of sight to oncoming vehicles beyond nearby parked cars. This is illustrated in Annex C of **Appendix B**.

Consultation

16. The feasibility study was sent to the Head teachers of both schools, TAG, the parish council and Cllr Galvin, the Ward Councillor for Bishopthorpe, in advance of a meeting on 9th October. This meeting included representatives from TAG, the Head Teacher for Archbishop of York Junior School and the Clerk to the Parish Council. Cllr Galvin was unable to attend, however in a telephone conversation with the School Travel Advisor to discuss the feasibility study he confirmed that he was happy with the proposal in Option 8 and gave his support for it.
17. The aim of the meeting was to explain to those present how the preferred option in the feasibility study was derived and why the location was considered for a SCP. Although reasons had been set out in correspondence, the residents had the opportunity to question and subsequently stated that they understood reasons for decisions made
18. As a result of the meeting TAG confirmed that they would like Option 8 to be taken forward. Option 8 is also supported by the Parish Council, and Councillor Galvin, the Ward councillor.
19. As no scheme has yet been formally approved, the wider community has not been consulted at this stage.

Options

20. The Cabinet Member has two deliverable options to consider:

21. Option One: To approve Option 8 in the feasibility study to build out the pavement from the location of the raised table to the junction.
22. Option Two: Note the contents of the report but take no further action.

Analysis of Options

23. There has been much work by both schools and TAG to encourage sustainable travel to school and the use of park and stride sites rather than parking near the schools. This has helped to improve safety around the two schools and in the village generally. However visibility crossing from east to west at the speed table on Sim Balk Lane is impaired due to parked cars and this has led to the perception that crossing at this point is dangerous.
24. Approval of Option One would benefit not only families crossing on their journey to school but also the local community who regularly use that crossing point. The work would improve visibility, increasing perception that the crossing point is safer to use. As the amount of parking is not affected, local objection is likely to be minimal if any. The 1000+ name petition suggests that there may be considerable support within the community for an improvement to this crossing point.
25. Option Two to take no action would bring no improvements to the crossing point and is not recommended.

Council Plan

26. The potential benefits for the priorities in the Council Plan are:
27. Get York Moving – Highway improvements that along side school travel initiatives encourage walking and cycling, particularly at busy times, and should result in less unnecessary car use and reduced local congestion.
28. Protect vulnerable people – A safer highway environment would benefit the local community, particularly school children.
29. Protect the environment – By reducing car use, carbon and other emissions would be cut, improving air quality.

Implications

30. This report has the following implications.
31. **Financial** – The scheme is estimated to cost £11,000 including fees. The scheme could be included within the 2015/16 School Safety block of Transport capital Programme subject to available funding.
32. **Human Resources (HR)** – None.
33. **Equalities** – It is likely that more vulnerable road users would benefit most from safety improvements.
34. **Legal** – The City of York Council as Highways Authority of the area, has powers under the Highways Act 1980 and associated Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 to implement the measures proposed.
35. **Crime and Disorder** – None.
36. **Information Technology (IT)** – None.
37. **Property** – None.
38. **Other** – None.

Risk Management

39. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, no significant risks associated with the recommendations in this report have been identified.

Contact Details

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**Chief Officer Responsible for the
report:**

Neil Ferris
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Report
Approved



Date: 6th January 2015

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

There are no specialist implications

Wards Affected: *Bishopthorpe Ward*

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

There are no back ground papers

Appendices

- Appendix A Copy of correspondence submitted by the Travel Action Group between TAG and CYC and the first sheet of the petition.
- Appendix B Feasibility Study
- Appendix C Part 2 – Criteria for establishing School crossing patrol Sites (SCP Guidelines, Revised November 2013)