

Decision Session – Cabinet Member for
Transport, Planning and Sustainability

19 March 2015

Report of the Director of City and Environmental Services

Petition Requesting an Additional Bus Stop between Rawcliffe Bar Park & Ride and the Shipton Road area.

Summary

1. On 22nd January 2015, Cllr. Keith Aspden submitted a petition to the council, from Rawcliffe Liberal Democrats on behalf of local residents, containing names and postcodes of (62) residents in the Rawcliffe area (attached at Annex A).
2. The petition calls for “an additional bus stop between Rawcliffe Bar Park & Ride and the Shipton Road area”, adding that “residents have expressed concerns that it is too far to walk between the main Park and Ride site and their homes. The elderly and disabled residents are particularly affected.” Cllr. Aspden has provided clarification in regard to the wording of the petition, stating that the request “is for the restoration of a stop just inside the entrance of the Park and Ride, failing that, the possibility of the number 2 service using the bus lay-by next to the entrance, where the number 29, 30 and 31 services currently drop off passengers.”
3. This report provides three options for the Cabinet Member’s consideration.

Recommendation

4. The Cabinet Member is recommended to approve option A, to retain the current stopping arrangements.

Reason:

The Park & Ride (P&R) service has been built, principally for the use of P&R customers. Local residents are, of course, entitled to use the service, but its primary purpose is to provide a fast, frequent, direct service in to the city centre. In the daytime, other accessible bus services are available for Rawcliffe residents who find it too difficult to walk to the P&R site. These local bus services provide, in total, four departures per hour to the city centre and

one departure per hour to Monks Cross and Clifton Moor retail parks. The Dial & Ride community transport service is also available to any local residents with mobility difficulties.

Background

5. City of York Council provides six Park & Ride (P&R) services, currently operated under licence by First York. Over 4 million passengers were carried in 2014 and customer surveys have consistently shown that York's P&R services have an excellent reputation amongst commuters and visitors to the city.
6. Since the late 1980's City of York Council has made P&R one of its key policies to combat traffic congestion in the city centre. The concept of P&R is to provide a frequent, high quality, express bus link from car parks around the outer ring road into the core of the city centre, reducing the demand for city centre parking and improving traffic flow.
7. Rawcliffe Bar P&R opened in February 2000. Due to the proximity of this site to the residential area immediately to the east of Shipton Road, many residents have opted to make use of the high-frequency P&R service in preference to the local bus routes which run both along Shipton Road and through the residential area. A recent passenger survey indicated that 17% of passengers using the Rawcliffe Bar P&R service are local residents. However, a passenger count conducted earlier this month showed that 4.3% of passengers were accessing the P&R site on foot, implying that the majority of Rawcliffe residents using the Park & Ride service are driving to the site.
8. Following representations from local residents, circa 2003, a setting-down-only bus stop was installed inside the site entrance. This was located only 120m away from the main P&R terminus stop, directly across the maintenance access into Rawcliffe Country Park. A small (approx. 1 square metre) area of tactile paving was provided for passengers to disembark on to.
9. Over recent years, First York's management have regularly voiced concerns to the council regarding the suitability of the setting-down-only stop inside the site entrance. The specific concern raised by First was that due to the inadequate length of kerb and small paved area, articulated buses could only safely open the front door when stopping there. Passengers were not permitted to disembark via the rear doors as the dropped kerb at the maintenance entrance into the country park meant there was a large step down to road level.
10. At peak times, it was regularly the case that staff driving buses fully loaded with standing passengers would have to ask several other people to exit the bus whenever a local resident requested to alight at the additional setting-down stop. Equally, stopping at this location caused issues in that visitors would inadvertently alight at the stop, assuming it was the final stop, and then complain to the P&R staff.

11. In 2012, First informed council officers that they were not prepared to continue using the stop. Council officers agreed that First's request was reasonable as the stop was having a negative reputational and operational impact on the P&R service.
12. Rawcliffe Bar P&R (route no. 2) is not the only bus service available to Rawcliffe residents. Routes 30, 30X, 31 and 31X (Easingwold-York) serve all stops along Shipton Road approximately 3 times per hour during weekdays, routes 19 (Skelton-York) and 20 (Acomb-Clifton Moor-Monks Cross-University) each provide an hourly service via Eastholme Drive, Howard Drive and Bowness Drive. All of these local bus routes are operated using low-floor, accessible vehicles, with short walking distances to the nearest stops for a significant proportion of Rawcliffe residents.
13. The government's Inclusive Mobility Guidance document (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/3695/inclusive-mobility.pdf) states, in section 6 (Bus Stops), that:

"In residential areas bus stops should be located ideally so that nobody in the neighbourhood is required to walk more than 400 metres from their home."
14. The map in Figure 1 shows that the majority of residences in the Rawcliffe area are located within 400 metres walking distance of a local bus service. Of most concern are the areas around the eastern part of Manor Lane and Holyrood Drive, which require more than a 400m walk to access any local bus service. However the nearest bus stops (on Shipton Rd just south of the Manor Drive junction) are still closer than either of the proposed P&R options. Residents at the eastern end of Manor Lane also have the option to use the Hurricane Way footpath and cycleway to access the Clifton Moor area, which is served by the frequent no. 6 bus route.

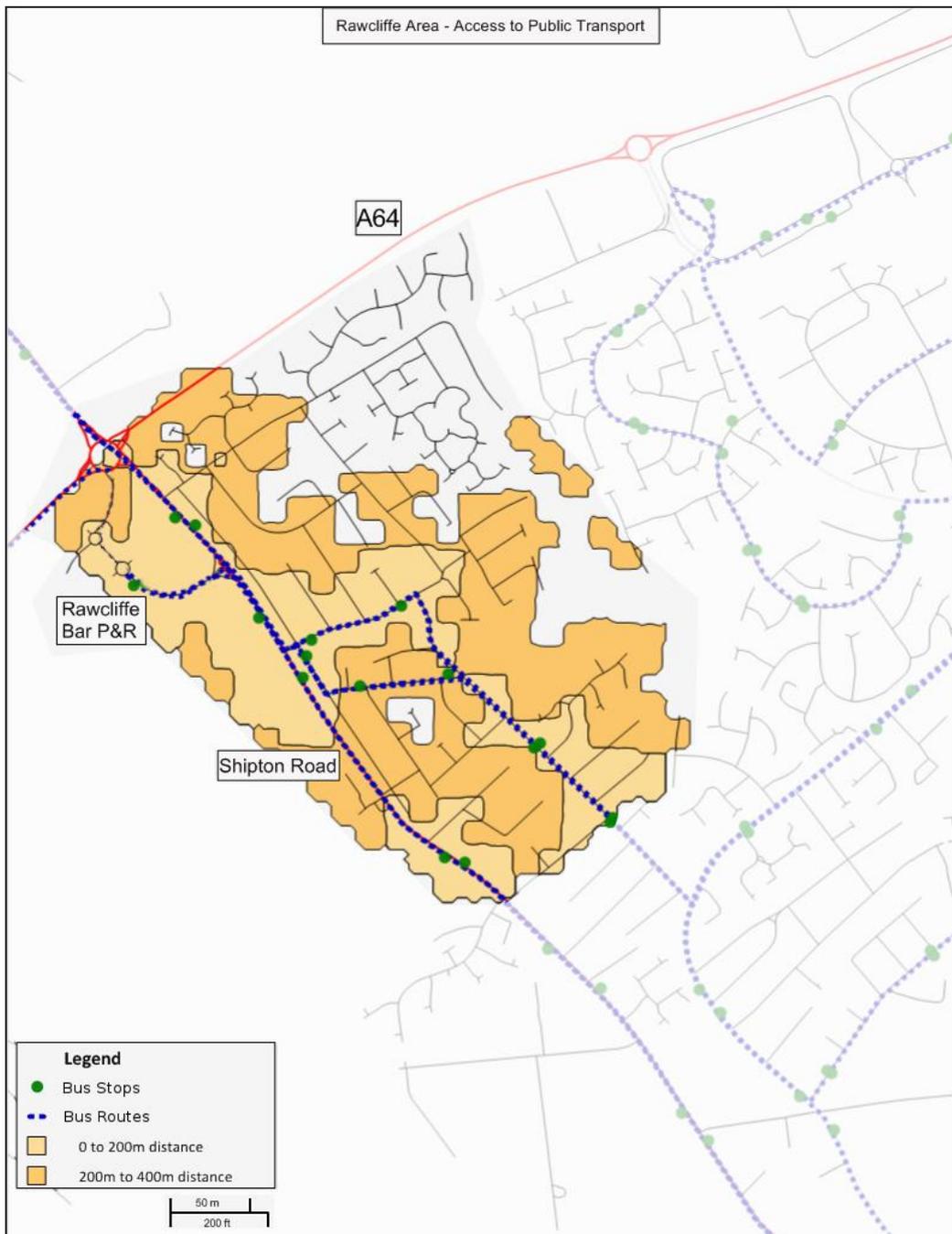


Figure 1: Access to bus services (within 400m walking distance) in Rawcliffe area.

Options

15. Option A – Retain the current stopping arrangements.
16. Option B – Construct a safe, fit-for-purpose setting-down stop inside the site entrance. A straight 20m length of hard standing and kerbs would be necessary, which will hinder maintenance access into the Country Park.
17. Option C – Reconstruct the northbound bus stop on Shipton Road immediately south of the P&R site entrance to allow safe operation of articulated buses. The lay-by would be partially or wholly filled in, with a straight 20m length of kerb installed.

Analysis

Option A

18. This option would incur no cost. The majority of Rawcliffe residents have a number of accessible local bus services available to them with a shorter walking distance than any of the proposed P&R options. Older and disabled residents also have the option of using the council's Dial & Ride service.
19. Whilst the Rawcliffe area does have a lack of evening bus services, giving residents improved pedestrian access to the P&R service would provide limited benefit as the last weekday P&R bus departs from the city centre at 20:05. In any case, Rawcliffe Parish Council currently provides funding to residents for evening taxi travel.

Option B

20. This option would incur a one-off cost of approximately £10,000, to provide a bus stop flag, hard standing and kerbs along a 20m length immediately inside the site entrance (see figure 2). This would reduce the walking distance for residents alighting at the P&R site by 120m. Residents would still have to walk to the main P&R stop to board the service towards the city centre. By way of comparison, stops on local bus routes are typically spaced 250m to 400m apart in suburban areas.
21. There is currently a dropped kerb at the proposed stop location, which allows vehicle access into Rawcliffe Country Park for grounds maintenance and occasional events. Installing a 20m bus stop kerb at this location would block access to this entrance. The council's Parks & Open Spaces Officer advises that blocking this would hinder maintenance work at the Country Park and would obstruct the hosting of major events such as firework displays in future. The current maintenance access was reconstructed in 2012/13 to permit improved access for major events.
22. Without providing suitable kerb length to allow safe use of both doors of the articulated buses, First are not prepared to resume use of this stopping point as their previous concerns, which led to the removal of the original set-down stop, will not have been addressed.
23. Proceeding with this option would provide a bus stop which is slightly closer to the Rawcliffe area (120m). The re-installation of this stop will make it easier for passengers who have difficulty walking or who are carrying heavy shopping. There would be a small ongoing reputational risk to the Rawcliffe Bar service due to P&R passengers having to make an additional stop such a short distance from the terminus. First have reported that the previous set-down stop at this location caused frustration for regular P&R users and confusion for occasional users.

24. The bus stop construction could potentially be funded from the 2015/16 P&R capital budget, but other necessary P&R refurbishment schemes may have to be delayed until the following financial year.
25. However, by impeding the maintenance vehicle access to Rawcliffe Country Park and preventing the venue from hosting future events, there would be a substantial risk of long-term revenue loss and reputational harm to the council. It may be possible to provide a new maintenance access into the country park (eg. directly from Shipton Road or via the camper van parking area at the rear of the P&R site), but this would require a safety and feasibility study to be undertaken. The cost of relocating this access point would require currently unidentified budget for completion.

Option C

26. This option would incur a one-off cost of approximately £20,000, to wholly or partially fill in the current north-west bound lay-by stop on Shipton Road (see figure 2), providing a suitable stop for the use of articulated buses. This estimate does not include any provision for an additional pedestrian crossing point.
27. The walking distance from the main P&R stop to the eastern (residential) side of the signalised pedestrian crossing point on Shipton Road is 200m. The walking distance from the Shipton Road lay-by stop to the eastern side of the pedestrian crossing is 160m, a reduction of just 40m.
28. Proceeding with this option would also result in an ongoing slight reputational risk to the Rawcliffe Bar P&R service due to P&R passengers having to make an additional stop such a short distance from the terminus.
29. Due to the distance to the signalised crossing, a P&R setting down stop at this location is highly likely to encourage more people to cross Shipton Road (which is subject to a 40mph limit) at the southern end of the bus lane. The crossing point at the pedestrian 'desire line' is not signalised and is in close proximity to the busy junction at Howard Drive. Consequently, there is a road safety risk attached to this option. A road safety audit would need to be carried out to assess whether further engineering works would be necessary to create a safe crossing point south of the bus stop.

This option would require currently unidentified budget for completion.



Figure 2: Map showing locations of options B and C.

Consultation

30. Rawcliffe Parish Council and the three Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without ward members were asked to provide additional comments on behalf of residents. Cllr. Neil McIlveen and Cllr. Joe Watt both responded, stating that they have not been approached by any residents on this matter and are not in favour of introducing the extra stop requested by the petitioners. No responses were received from Rawcliffe Parish Council.
31. Will Pearson, First York's Business Manager advises that *"The former set down stop was created as a half-measure some years ago... when it was requested that we serve the narrow layby on the approach. The set down stop since its creation has been unsafe in its design as there is no appropriate kerbing.*

"The typical bus used on service 2 is a Mercedes [articulated bus] which is 60 feet in length and the rear is close to the entrance when parked... This is also an inconvenience to the true P&R users. Stopping at the stop creates a hazard due to the lack of kerbing, the centre doors cannot be used for safety reasons and so the driver calls the customer forward to the front door, on busy trips this

delays process and creates confusion as first time users are not sure if they are at the final point or not.”

32. Brian Williams, the council’s Parks & Open Spaces Officer, advises, in reference to Rawcliffe Country Park; *“We modified our maintenance gates about two years ago to make it safer and easier to arrange events on the park. We needed to so vehicles and pedestrians alike could access and leave safely... Therefore if taller kerbs were installed it might compromise the work we have done to help us utilize the site as taller kerbs might prevent vehicles entering the site.”*

Council Plan

It is in the council’s best interest not to take any action which, directly or indirectly, undermines the successful operation of P&R or local bus services in the Rawcliffe area, both of which help to deliver Council Plan objectives. Specifically these are to ‘Get York Moving’, ‘Protect Vulnerable People’ and to ‘Build Strong Communities’.

Implications

This report has the following implications:

Financial –

Option A: none.

Option B: Approx. £10k plus potential long-term revenue loss at Rawcliffe Country Park.

Option C: Approx. £20k plus potential cost of constructing a new crossing point on Shipton Road.

Human Resources (HR) - None

Equalities – Older and Disabled persons: Options B and C would both slightly reduce the walking distance for passengers alighting from (but not boarding) the P&R service. Regardless of which option is chosen, there are other local bus services which stop closer to, or the same distance away from, the residential areas of Rawcliffe. There are no implications for other equalities groups.

Legal – None

Crime and Disorder – During the hours of operation of the P&R bus service, Rawcliffe Bar is staffed and has CCTV coverage across the site. There have never been any crime or disorder / personal safety incidents reported in relation to passengers walking from the site back to the main road.

Information Technology (IT) – None

Property - None

Other -

Road Safety: Option C is likely to increase the number of pedestrians crossing Shipton Road at the southern end of the current lay-by stop instead of at the signalised crossing point. Options A and B have no road safety implications.

Parks & Open Spaces: Option B would obstruct maintenance vehicle access to Rawcliffe Country Park. Options A and C have no impact on Parks & Open Spaces.

Risk Management

Options B and C would require further work to be carried out to identify the actual cost of implementation.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member is recommended to approve Option A.

Reason:

The P&R service has been built, principally for the use of P&R customers. Local residents are, of course, entitled to use the service but its primary purpose is to provide a fast, frequent, direct service in to the city centre. Other accessible bus services (five departures per hour Mon-Sat, 2 per hour on Sundays), plus Dial & Ride, are available for Rawcliffe residents who find it too difficult to walk from the P&R site.

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**Report
Approved**

 tick

Date 11/3/2015

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Patrick Looker, Finance Manager

Wards Affected:

Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Annex A – Copy of Petition.