

Accessible Routes in York city centre - Amalgamated note of two workshops

Attending Friday 11 June, 2pm-3pm

City of York Council officers in attendance:

- Julian Ridge (JR)
- Gareth Wilce (GW)
- Tony Clarke (TC)
- Matthew Long (ML)
- Andy Kerr (AK)
- Consultant Martin Higgitt Associates (MHA)

Accessible routes in York city centre (2) – 16th June 2021, 6pm-7pm

City of York Council Officers in attendance:

- Gareth Wilce (GW)
- Julian Ridge (JR)
- Hannah Chivers (HC)
- Martin Higgitt Associates (MHA)

Introduction

- *GW: mentioned a traffic regulation order (TRO) next week announcing intention to make changes permanent regarding the Footstreets and the subsequent consultation process.*
- *TC: This is an informal process then a decision is taken on the formal process.*
- *GW: Executive agreed a full review of city centre access and parking; this includes a full review of Shopmobility, the My City Centre project referenced including the previous workshops involving couriers and delivery drivers.*
- *GW: We will share perspectives to show compromises, how we respond to competition for space, determined to test ideas.*
- A participant asked a question of whether the analysis work will be looking at who isn't using the city as well as where people are currently accessing the city?
- Route wise level paving, not cobbles, no potholes important for access.
- *GW: the pandemic has changed our local economy, none more so that in the city centre. Space is at a premium and there is a competition for space.*
- *MHA: Introductions regarding the work MHA is involved in the city centre. This involves auditing routes, making recommendations to make*

routes more accessible. Comments and recommendations on broader services, Shopmobility, park and ride.

- *GW: asked participants if they wanted to introduce themselves.*
- *GW: Clarification on the background of the strategic review of parking and access. Access to the footstreets was mentioned, there were positive responses from businesses and residents, some of challenges were around Blue Badge access. This is not what we are talking about today. A decision will be taken at a decision session for executive member for transport. We have emailed details of the report and paper today 16 June. Once decision taken there will be a TRO and then a consultation period of at least 21 days before adoption. We want to keep you informed*
- *GW: the City of York Council Executive agreed in November a full review of city centre access and parking.*

GW: Can I get a sense of how you access the city centre?

- 1 participant does not access the city centre at the moment.
- Another participant also does not access the city centre.
- A third participant was shielding during lockdown, doing more driving now.
- *GW: are there any public transport users on the call?*
- A representative from Age UK York spoke about assisting people and the importance of benches
- *GW: not in control of things that are moved in city centre*
- A participant mentioned about education with businesses around bins, bins block access in the city centre.

GW: does anyone use public transport as a preference:

- A number of participants use public transport.
- One participant wanted to make people aware of the dial a ride service, it can be used as a method of access in the city centre.
- One disabled participant uses a cycle to access the city centre.
- Another participant drives into the city centre, they mentioned it was impossible to get into the city centre at times, poor access to toilets in the city centre was referenced.
- Question of Goodramgate mentioned by a participant – they used to be able to access this area. Taxis can't drop off at St Sampson's gate

because Goodramgate closed off. Request to allow at least blue badge holders to go down this road.

- *GW: this sentiment has been shared in other areas of engagement*
- Another participant offered a contrary opinion – it is now possible to access this area without being hit by cars. Difficult balancing act mentioned.
- *GW: Removal of exemption nub of executive decision.*
- Participant question – are there any statistics on safety around Goodramgate/Lendel. Question raised whether there is data on safety, are there figures on this. Speed of e-scooters cited as being more worrying than slow moving car.
- *MHA: referenced to analysis on incidents, this is being looked at.*
- *GW: we will share what we have at the end of the meeting.*
- One of the participants said they changed where they go because no taxi drop off allowed.

GW: dropped kerbs have been mentioned, how accessible is York in terms of the spaces?

- A participant stated there are some spaces where you can get onto a chunk of pavement but can't get off.
- *TC: this is the sort of thing MHA will be looking at with their review*
- *MHA: yes, this will be looked at in terms of the route audit.*
- *GW: Is there space for those with lived experience to get involved?*
- *MHA: People will be able join and to do a walkthrough of routes.*

GW: spoke about street furniture in York. There are quite a lot of pavement cafes, we have accessibility standards, we have done walk rounds, will be talking to businesses not compliant.

- On streets like Fossgate all the pavements are allocated to tables and chairs, on cobbled street there are restrictions. There have been noticeable changes, which is quite challenging.
- *GW: Does this come back to predictability of a route and capacity to get around it?* The participant stated yes.
- *GW: In York, we hear shops/cafes are inaccessible, but it's how it's executed.*
- *MHA: Spotted problems on Fossgate for those who use a mobility aid.*

GW: talked about accessible pavements, are road clears clear, are there exit routes. How good is York in terms of rest points, such as benches?

- A participant mentioned about benches being removed in York

- *JR: there isn't a policy to remove benches, they do come and go if vandalised or sent to be repaired, if ones are missing we can look into it to find out what goes on.*
- *GW: is there anything we should look like in terms of accessible furniture? There's lots at moment due to the commitment to outdoor spaces.*
- A participant spoke about the new benches at exhibition square, they are all wooden, this is great if you have good leg movement and no issues with your back.
- Issue of toilets breaking down in car parks was raised.
- *GW: on anything we implement there has to be maintenance in terms of toilets and benches. Should there be various heights, with backs on?*
- Participant question if there is a national standard? It would be good if there was, certainly benches with a back, not enough toilets.
- Communication about toilets referenced, and notifying people if they go out of use.
- *GW: Whatever is put in place and when things change, we just need to give real time information. Without this it is far more difficult if not impossible for people to access the city centre. Big challenge about making an accessible guide to the city using itravel – a live list of assets.*
- Apps mentioned by a participant as being useful to communicate assets.
- *GW: apps are only as good as the information we have.*
- Question around a bus stop survey which includes seating, some kind of joining up would be useful

GW: Are there any areas that are really good in terms of the quality of route, are there any no go's?

- A participant said no benches in Coney Street was an issue, because you can't access until 8pm at night. Sitting on a bench in Coney Street would be good for those with access needs.
- A comment in the chat mentioned Coppergate being a good part of town.
- A participant stated they couldn't get to the post office.
- *GW: is there a particular space/spaces that could be seen as best practice?*
- A participant said that extra Blue Badge spaces are good but they are shared loading bays, Duncombe Place challenging to get a parking space, same on Piccadilly - people deliver, there are Uber/Deliveroo drivers

parking all the time. It was mentioned that this was worse than it was before and couldn't think of any positive to say.

- *GW: mentioned notion of shared space and previous Blue Badge workshops, on Duncombe Place there is a problem, information has been produced for delivery drivers and more enforcement has been taken.*
- *GW: all the information from the previous work will be shared on a report for the Executive Decision Session for Transport on Tuesday.*
- *TC: mentioned competition for space and changes during cover period encouraging more food deliveries, pickups, takeaways.*

GW: on accessible routes, are there accessible routes in York?:

- Issue with dropped pavements and kerbs mentioned by a participant. Issue with being stuck in a path, having to 'double back' on, can get onto pavements but not get out. Streets in York 'terrible',
- *GW: is there anywhere that is actually good?*
- 1 participant said the best surface is the road, footstreets make the road more accessible
- There was a walk with City of York Council Councillors last week, when we were on the road as long as there was no blockage on the road or carriageways with signage it was much safer.
- Another participant on the walkabout mentioned Fossgate was good with number of dropped kerbs. Issue with backtracking on footstreets near black boar. Expanded seating in some areas make it an issue for disabled users.
- The camber was mentioned in certain areas. At the back of Coppergate car park, the surface is very 'up and down' and bumpy in nature.
- Participant raised that the question posed was difficult to answer. Everyone is going to have 'wins and losses'. Tactile pavement not consistent, this is a standard expectation for blind and partially sighted. Ad hoc responses to things mentioned from City of York Council. The participant was unsure of the focus of the consultation – is it to consult people or find solutions? People with neurological illnesses such as dementia, need to be solutions to help these groups.
- *GW: Focus of engagement is not to create a win in one place that removes accessibility for others.*
- A participant felt like they were fighting a battle with cars in the city centre. Disabled drivers excluded. Maintenance of non-carriageways such as Parliament Street, compared to a rollercoaster in that it is

impossible to traverse through. It's a great area with potential as its traffic free, at danger of going off the camber raised.

- Participants raised issues with exemptions, what exemptions are available and where, what does this mean for residents who live in narrow areas, etc.
- *JR: speaking on behalf of colleague Helene, whilst we have areas vehicles can't access there are exemptions. For example, the post office has exemptions because of the natures royal mail are delivering.*
- *JR: doesn't know position with residents, there are other exemptions with tradesman.*
- *GW: we will clarify if there is a residential exemption.*
- A participant spoke made reference to the walkabout that there was a residential access exemption
- A question was raised by a participant about why there are exemptions for the post office but not for disabled people Blue Badge holders. Referred to the post office providing a service/business so not a problem. There aren't a lot of Blue Badge holder in total.
- *GW: We will explain exemptions and rationale for them*
- A different participant spoke about the principles of the consultation and what they were, the participant was not disabled but an ally, has been speaking with disabled people, the issue of how close disabled people can get to the city centre a real problem. Issue with pushing chairs a distance. Lived in York all life and the person can't get to places they used to go to. Distance is crucial, can't manage shuttles.
- A participant asked a question if someone with a Blue Badge can drive to the central post office
- Dual use stays around Dean Court cited by a participant as an issue. There are a large number of delivery drivers in the spaces.
- *GW: competition for space evident no more than in Duncombe place. There has been a huge surge in demand. We are looking at how spaces are divided up, does it need to be divided up, understanding different group's needs, also enforcement action, leaflets also circulated – to ensure people aren't abusing spaces.*
- One of the participants said there is a service for those wishing to access the city centre, this is the Dial a Ride service, it does have access in from 9am – 4pm. Requested to do runs from car parks where taxis are in place

- Other participants not familiar or have seen advertisements for Dial a Ride. A participant mentioned people have Blue Badges for a reason because they can only walk 50 metres. A petition has been started with 1500 signatures, everyone who is disabled knows that disability is a protected characteristics. Historically not enough dedicated parking, when footstreets closed, parking went and not replaced. Offers of parking bays are too far away, this has been going on for seven months, in that time disabled people have not been able to access disabled services/meet their friends – granted there is a lockdown. Now with pavement cafes people need to manage this.
- *MHA: Referenced accessibility audit that would be taking place in person and online*
- A participant welcomed the accessibility audit that would be taking place. Questions around whether there will be a full audit of access into the city centre including bus, cars, trains. Is this thorough?
- Dial a ride great for some people, wouldn't work for me or for people I know. For example, if you have carers, families can't get on the bus. It's good for those who can use it.
- A participant mentioned people want to do a quick run into town, nip in for 10 mins, can't last in town for 6 hours as too tired. Need for flexibility, this is hugely important.
- *JR: this does cover access around areas such as the station*
- A participant said steps could be taken to make it easy for people to report issues.
- *JR: Reporting mechanisms available will find their way to the right person.*
- Participants mentioned issues with Duncombe place that have been reported for several months, it's being used as a turning circle, ridiculous and not enough enforcement.

GW: spoke about shared spaces and cyclists, what are your experience on shared spaces with cycling would you have an issue with this?

- A participant mentioned the large number of cyclists 'left, right and centre' - especially near the Minster and by Cross Keys near Goodramgate. Spoke of lack of enforcement going on, nerve wracking experience getting through these areas.
- Agreement from other participants - but it was mentioned that there are two sides to consider.

- A participant mentioned around the Minster was a problem area, could the signage be better and meet everyone's requirement. An area with lots of competing needs. A lot of older people, delivery cyclists moving at fast speeds.
- *GW: spoke of cycle couriers in York forming a group, aiming to be more responsible with a voluntary code of conduct, they have fed into the review of access. Balance referenced, need to let people earn their living, keep everyone safe, and perception of safety for partially sighted residents and visitors.*

GW: Talked about car parks, are there any 'gold standard' car parks? The route between the car park and the destination areas was mentioned. Are there any car parks that we should be working on?

- Chat comment: Castlegate car park has potential for coppergate access, it has toilets but the paving is not good around it.
- Coppergate car park is very difficult as are any multi-storey car parks, laborious process of getting parked.
- *GW: Coppergate is the old piccadilly multi-storey car park*
- London example for congestion zone and how it charges/makes it easy for those with access barriers – mentioned by a participant as a very good example.
- *TC: Mentioned back office work to improve issues about laborious nature of car parks in York.*
- Chat comment: Bootham very difficult car park as route from car park to the street is 'awful'.
- Bootham location excellent car park for theatre and art gallery.
- Chat comment: Monk Bar very far away from city centre.
- Chat comment: Marygate too far away and requires going uphill either up road or via museum gardens.
- Differences of participants mentioned - 1 participant struggles to walk but not in a wheelchair, other participants are in a wheelchair.

GW: are there any good car parks in York city centre?

- Most important thing is the route in to the car park.
- Piccadilly horrible to park in – but close to Shopmobility. A participant would like to use Monk Bar but terrified to get there due to crossings.
- A participant stated that it was good to have a great facility, but needs to be good to get in, there needs to be consistency. People need to know what to expect.

- *GW: mentioned crossings, is that the size of pavement – on south end of lord mayors walk have constraining bars, pavements uneven and narrow*
- *Excellent plans for a super crossing at Bootham and St George place, there's an excellent one in Sheffield (near the train station).*
- *GW: Does anyone else want to talk about car parks? If not, you mentioned Piccadilly/coppergate car park – they have pay on exit which has raised issues, Piccadilly good proximity wise but it is a multi-storey car park. If you had a blank canvas what would need to be done to make it attractive and usable?*
- *Height restriction to get into Coppergate a problem, meeting participant can't reach out of car to take/put in a ticket. Better signage needed was raised.*
- *Confidence in lifts, level access, having parking spaces removed from circulation of traffic.*
- *GW: This car park has pay on exit that should mean that people don't have to use ticket machines. If there is number plate recognition there needs be an extra system on top for someone who is driving the Blue Badge holder.*

GW: What can be done to make multi-storey car parks more attractive?

- A participant said unpredictable lifts.
- Those in a wheelchair not visible in dimly lit car parks. In narrow multi-storey car parks there is not much space.
- A participant mentioned a well laid out multi-storey car park near St. James' hospital as a good example.
- One of the participant's mentioned routes in and out of car parks - the route isn't always clear. This is problematic if someone has dementia etc,.
- Chat comment - lifts are too small for wheelchair/scooter and a carer/assistance dog.
- *MHA: One of the consultant's spoke about design of car parks and how their lived experience regarding the difficulties of getting out of their car in car parks. Parking can be positioned in a good way, so people do not have to get in and out of vehicles in traffic areas.*
- Need space to get your wheelchair out, many non-disabled cars don't understand problem of getting the wheelchair out of the boot, main issues are space.

- *GW: spoke of community brief from Martin and consultancy team on access.*

ML: Long spoke about the shuttle service feasibility study.

- *TC: Early stage feasibility work, a service could be provided if money was available.*
- *GW: would this be a useful service?*
- *ML: It would be like the dial a ride.*
- A participant mentioned disabled people may want to travel spontaneously without booking.
- Ramps, suitable seating, mix of turning up and booking would make this service useful.
- Participants apprehensive about an automated service with driverless vehicles.
- Booking service mentioned and questions around who should be prioritised e.g. a family, single person, 6 people booking it.
- Restrictions of service having to decide the day before.
- *GW: would need to facilitate some form of spontaneity.*
- A participant added that people may jump ahead for a quick way to get into city centre.
- *GW: spoke about user design and involving groups in York such as YRDF.*

Language

- Messaging mentioned by a participant, City of York Council losing trust of disabled people. Terminology used was questioned by the participant
- *GW: apologies if language has been perceived out of context, we are trying to learn.*
- *MHA: The council has brought in consultants with lived experience. Not here to tick boxes, here to find viable solutions. Messaging is important, start of a longer conversation to a certain extent.*
- *MHA – mentioned audit planning meeting next week in York city centre and then an online session to feed in issues. Keeping dialogue, getting lived experience.*

Chat notes

- A participant said that a big issue is the length of route and how far people are expected to walk to services.
- Dedicated parking bays not central and forgetting Blue Badge holders because they cannot walk more than 50 metres.

- Timings of footstreets restrictions should be considered before 10.30 is not possible for some people.
- Dropped kerbs at Duncombe place are bad for wheelchair users.
- Dial a ride mentioned in the chat. A comment was raised about having to book 24hrs in advance which put the participant off the service.
- Feedback provided around running meetings later in the day for those who work/have daytime commitments.