

Norwich Highways Agency committee**10:00 to 11:00****22 January 2015**

Present:

County Councillors:

Adams (V) (chair)
Bremner (V)
Sands (M)
Shaw

*(V) voting member

City Councillors:

Stonard (vice chair) (V)
Harris (V)
Gayton
Carlo
Grahame

Apologies:

County Councillor Hebborn

1. Declarations of interest

Councillor Harris declared a non-pecuniary/other interest in item 4 Push the Pedalways - Tombland and Palace Street in that her partner was a trustee of an organisation that had property in Palace Street.

2. Minutes

Councillor Carlo referred to the penultimate paragraph of the minutes of the previous meeting, item 4, Push the Pedalways – Tombland and Palace Street, and said as a matter of clarification that she considered that cycling contraflows worked well outside some schools.

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2014.

3. Public questions/petitions**Public questions - Push the Pedalway – Tombland and Palace Street**

Question 1 - Robert Shreeve, director, Belle Coaches, Lowestoft, asked the following question:

“We currently run a service from Gorleston, Lowestoft and Beccles to Norwich School. Some of the parents are very concerned that, if/when the pedalway is

installed, there will no longer be a safe place for the bus to stop and drop the students close to the school. The current arrangement is that the coach does a U-turn at the roundabout close to the Maids Head Hotel and then stops at the bus stop in Tombland.

I appreciate that the roundabout will no longer exist under the new scheme. If we re-route the bus to come in via Whitefriars and Palace Street, will there be provision for the vehicle to stop somewhere close to Norwich School? I have looked at the provisional plans and it does not seem clear (to me at least) where buses are supposed to stop.”

The principal planner (transportation), Norwich City Council, replied on behalf of the committee as follows:

“There are no material changes proposed to the bus stops in Tombland, which are located to the immediate south of Princes Street. These will remain in their current location on the east side, with a minor adjustment to the position of the stops on the west side.”

By way of a supplementary question, Robert Shreeve expressed concern that the width of Palace Street would be reduced to 5m and would not be wide enough for two coaches to pass each other. The principal planner (transportation) said that the width was considered adequate as the number of large vehicles using the road was low.

Question 2 – Jonathan Cage, on behalf of the Maid’s Head Hotel, his engineering business situated in Palace Street, and in his capacity as vice-chairman of the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, asked the following question:

“I would like to ask the following questions on behalf of my client, The Maids Head Hotel:

- (a) Has a formal consultation response report been prepared for this scheme? The Maids Head and a large number of other businesses in Tombland, whose access arrangements are fundamentally effected have made detailed objections, however we have received no feedback from the scheme promoters, nor has any reference been made to these objections with only Norwich School being given the courtesy of further discussions.
- (b) What is the justification for the scheme, in terms of cycling movements and safety issues. At the moment we know that the area has a good safety record, the existing roundabout works well and provides an effective traffic node.
- (c) The future success of businesses in the Tombland, Princes Street, Cathedral Quarter Areas is essential for the vitality of this historically important city. This scheme will reduce accessibility for servicing, staff, customers and general visitors, all which could be avoided.
- (d) What consideration has been given to alternative routes such as George Street, which is already a well-used pedestrian and safe cycling route with connections for cyclists along quiet roads such as Fishergate and Colegate?

The principal planner (transportation) replied on behalf of the committee as follows:

“The formal consultation response was on the committee’s agenda for its meeting on 23 October 2014, and was reproduced as an appendix to the report considered at the last meeting on 27 November 2014. All the issues raised through the consultation were discussed at length in the report, and in particular the justification for the choice of priority at the Tombland / Palace Street junction, and the reasons for removing the roundabout which is essential to release space in the area to allow for the improved pedestrian, cycling and public realm environment.

The area does not currently have a good accident record, as highlighted in the original report to this committee in June when the principals of the scheme were approved. There have been a significant number of accidents in the area almost all of which involve vulnerable users, with cyclists particularly at risk. This was made clear during the consultation

The scheme has been amended in response to issues raised by local traders to increase the areas available for servicing, but there has never been a proposal to remove the service bay in front of the Maids Head Hotel, which still features in the current proposal.

The previous committee reports have detailed the importance of Tombland as a convergence point for a number of key cycle routes, including National Cycle Route No.1 which includes St Georges Street as well. The Push the Pedalways project seeks to provide a series of coherent long distance routes that interlink at key locations, and Tombland is one of these locations and it is already used by a significant number of cyclists. Given the way Colegate and Fishergate link into the street network in the city they would not fulfil this requirement.”

Jonathan Cage said that the main concern was the hotel’s access following the removal of the roundabout because the front of the hotel was the prime dropping off point. The principal planner (transportation) said that the service bay in front of the hotel would be retained but the removal of the roundabout was critical to the enhancement of the public space.

Question 3 – Gail Mayhew, The Close, Norwich, said that she was a resident, parent of a Norwich School pupil and had a business located in The Close, and asked the following question:

‘Is the Norwich Highways Agency committee, having heard so many objections to the Push the Pedalway scheme for Tombland from across the business, resident and visitor communities , really prepared to spend such a large sum of public money (£800,000) - including a contribution from NHS sources - on a scheme that:

- (a) could in fact create more accidents and injury through introducing a higher level of traffic conflict; and,
- (b) is a sub-optimal design solution for such an important historic space?”

The principal planner (transportation) replied on behalf of the committee:

“In response to the consultation on the Tombland and Palace street proposals, overall, there was significantly more support for the scheme than objections to it. In addition, many of the issues that have been raised have been addressed by the recommended changes to the scheme, many of which were specific items raised by people who were otherwise supportive of the concept as a whole.

The scheme does not affect traffic levels in Tombland, and provides much safer facilities for the most vulnerable user groups. The level of conflict within the scheme will be much lower than is currently the case and the area currently has a significant accident record involving vulnerable users and cyclists in particular. The proposals in front of you today have been fully safety audited, and further safety audits will be undertaken when the detailed design is completed and once the scheme has been constructed.

The scheme fully takes account of the advice in Manual for Streets to ensure that the overall design is of benefit to all users, and full account has been taken of all the issues that have been raised. The scheme has been significantly amended to overcome concerns raised so far as possible. All suggestions for improvements to the scheme have been carefully considered, and the scheme as now recommended achieves an effective balance between the needs of the different user groups, and this important historic environment.”

Gail Mayhew asked a supplementary question about the safety audit and said that it was undermined by the proposal for contra-flow cycling in the Tombland triangle. The principal planner (transportation) referred to the report and said that contra-flow cycling in the Tombland triangle element of the scheme had been dropped following discussions with the school since the last meeting. He pointed out that the safety audit was prepared by a different team to the design team and had been considered by the committee at its last meeting.

Question 4 – Margaret Todd, Norwich Cycling Campaign, asked the following question:

“Norwich Cycling Campaign asks the committee to review the impact of these proposals in the light of two of the principle aims of the Push the Pedalways improvements “to create a route which can be ridden confidently and safely by everyone” and “to reduce the number of accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians”.

In particular, we ask that recommendation (3) to not implement the contra-flow cycling in the 'Tombland' triangle is rejected, and that the easy and safe access from the Green Pedalway route along St Faith's Lane is agreed as there are no safety concerns over this proposal and it would make a safe and convenient connection for cycling. If it is not allowed cyclists wanting to use the cycletrack through to Palace Street will be expected to go into the road in Tombland, with buses pulling in and out of the bus stops and then turn right again.

The proposal for more loading bays in this stretch of the 'triangle' where there is no footpath goes against the wishes of the committee expressed on 27 November 2014, ie, to discourage parents from dropping off and picking up children in this vicinity, and is a key measure to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

In the light of the very large proportion of the Push the Pedalways funding now being spent on this project, £802,000 as opposed to a planned £360,000, Norwich Cycling Campaign asks the committee to refocus on the aims of this project."

The principal planner (transportation) replied on behalf of the committee:

"The recommendation not to implement contra-flow cycling has followed on from discussions with the school and cathedral who are concerned about the safety implications of this measure. Contraflow cycling in the Tombland triangle is not an integral part of the Pink Pedalway and it is expected that issues relating to cycling movement in the southern part of Tombland will be revisited in the future as part of a comprehensive scheme.

The loading facility is necessary to allow for servicing of the many businesses in the Tombland area, which would otherwise have no servicing facilities. It is desirable to discourage parents from driving to school, and dropping their children in very close proximity to it, but this is best achieved (as has been done elsewhere) through the implementation of a school travel plan.

I have already mentioned that the budget for this scheme has been increased to focus on the needs of all users of the Tombland area, and this important historic space."

In reply to a supplementary question, the principal planner (transportation) said that the scheme needed to provide for cyclists coming from both Princes Street and Palace Street in the short term, and acknowledged that the removal of the contra-flow in the Tombland triangle would be a nuisance for cyclists.

Major road works – regular monitoring

Councillor Richard Bearman, Mancroft division, asked the following question:

"During the recent works to Chapelfield North the pedestrian crossing on Chapelfield road was closed for over 14 weeks. Several residents in who use the Vauxhall centre, some with mobility issues, expressed surprise and anger at the length of this closure. Now I believe this crossing is to be out of use for pedestrians and cyclists for a further six weeks. Can you please explain why the works were not completed during the previous closure and in future consider the needs of pedestrian and cyclists in keeping a key route open during any future upgrade works"

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, replied on behalf of the committee:

“I would like to apologise for the inconvenience the closure of this crossing has caused, both during the works last autumn and now. Regrettably it was not possible to complete the works prior to Christmas, without having a serious detrimental impact on the traffic in the city centre at the busiest time of the year. The decision was taken to suspend the works for the Christmas embargo period.

Wherever possible when a signalled crossing facility is taken out of commission we aim to provide alternative facilities. The Chapel Field crossing is a very popular crossing and while alternatives such as the Grapes Hill footbridge and the Chapel Field Road subway exist, they are not as convenient as the signalled crossing for those using the facilities in the immediate vicinity, such as the Vauxhall centre.

Once the works are complete the crossing of the outer ring road will be much improved, with separate facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.”

Councillor Bearman asked that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists should be given greater priority when designing future road works. The transportation and network manager explained that the needs of all roads users were taken into consideration. In the case of Chapel Field, the prolongation of the road works resulted in there being no footpath so there was nowhere to provide a safe crossing until the works were completed.

4. Push the Pedalways – Tombland and Palace Street

The principal planner (transportation) presented the report and advised members that the council had received letters of support for the revised proposals from the Norwich School and the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind.

Members welcomed the revised proposals, congratulated officers for their work and noted that the scheme was acceptable to the Norwich School and the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind.

At the suggestion of the vice chair, the principal planner (transportation) referred to the suggestion received from a member of the public that the Bury St Edmund scheme could influence the proposals for Palace Street and used slides and artist's impressions to demonstrate the aesthetic similarities of both schemes. The Tombland and Palace Street scheme had a raised courtesy crossing similar to the one outside the cathedral at Bury St Edmunds. However the proposed scheme would have tarmac road surfaces because of the volume of traffic in Tombland. Both schemes used a differentiation in height to separate pavement from the road. Members were also advised that the proposed loading bays in Tombland would be paved and similar to the one in front of the Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form in Bethel Street, whilst the one outside the Maids Head Hotel would have a higher kerb differentiation.

During discussion the principal planner (transportation) and the transportation and network manager answered members' questions and consideration was given to

reversing the flow in the Tombland triangle to make it safer for cyclists. Members noted that there had not been a roundabout outside the Maid's Head in the 60s and early 20s and that its removal was important to the proposed traffic safety scheme. The chair thanked the officers for the robust consultation and providing the best possible solution for this scheme.

RESOLVED, unanimously, with all 4 voting members voting in favour, to:

- (1) note the results of the consultation on the proposed plans for Tombland and Palace Street and the progress since the November meeting as detailed in the report;
- (2) agree the following modifications to the plans, which respond to objections raised through the consultation:
 - (a) replacing the proposed Toucan crossing on Tombland with a traffic light control at the junction of Princes Street and Tombland, with a pedestrian crossing on Tombland immediately to the north of the junction;
 - (b) introducing an additional loading bay outside 9-12 Tombland and in the "Tombland triangle";
 - (c) omitting the proposed pinch point / raised table crossing on Palace Street immediately south of the junction with Pigg Lane;
 - (d) revising the detail of the courtesy crossing at Erpingham Gate (appendix 1); and
 - (e) revising the layout of the parking and taxi rank arrangements in the "Tombland Triangle".
- (3) agree not to implement the proposal to provide contra-flow cycling facilities in the "Tombland triangle";
- (4) approve the plans for Tombland and Palace Street which (in addition to the features mentioned in 2 above include:
 - (a) replacing the roundabout in front of the Maids Head Hotel with a priority junction;
 - (b) removing the central island on Tombland in front of the Erpingham Gate;
 - (c) removing the existing signal controlled pedestrian crossing on Tombland;
 - (d) providing a two-way cycle track on the eastern side of Tombland and the southern side of Palace Street between Princes Street and St Martin at Palace Plain;
 - (e) widening the footpaths in the northern part of Tombland; and
 - (f) amending the waiting, loading and parking restrictions in the area.
- (5) ask the head of city development services to complete the statutory procedures for the following the Traffic Regulation Orders that have been advertised:

- (a) providing a two-way cycle track on the eastern side of Tombland and the southern side of Palace Street from Princes Street to St Martin at Palace Plain;
 - (b) introducing a no waiting no loading restriction on Tombland and Palace Street between Princes Street and St Martin at Palace Plain;
 - (c) introducing a loading bay on Tombland outside Samson and Hercules House;
 - (d) amending the loading bay outside the Maids Head Hotel;
 - (e) shortening the coach bay on Palace Street by St Martin at Palace Plain;
 - (f) amending the position of the bus stops on the west side of Tombland;
 - (g) adjustments to the parking arrangements on the north-south arm of the "Tombland Triangle" to include a new loading bay;
 - (h) The reversion of part of the 24 hour taxi rank on the east-west arm of the "Tombland Triangle" to pay and display parking during the day (reverting to a taxi rank in the evening, as the existing bay does);
- (6) ask the head of city development services (Norwich City Council) to:
- (a) advertise any minor amendments to the already advertised Traffic Regulation Orders required for the revised scheme and in particular the minor adjustment with respect to the loading bay now outside nos. 9-12 Princes Street; and
 - (b) publish the appropriate crossing and hump notices to take account of the revisions to the scheme;.
- (7) delegate the consideration of any objections to these minor changes in (6) above to the head of city development services in consultation with the chair and vice-chair.

5. Norwich area transportation strategy (NATS) implementation plan Cycling Ambition Grant Programme – ongoing funding

The head of city development services, Norwich City Council, introduced the report.

The vice chair in his capacity as cabinet member for environment, development and transport and chair of the Push the Pedalways executive board commended the report to the committee and said that the funding would make the city safer for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle road users. Other members concurred and welcomed the opportunity for the city and county councils to bid for the funding.

During discussion, Councillor Carlo commented on the consultation process and said that ward councillors and residents were consulted on the Push the Pedalways' schemes in their areas but did not see the final proposals until presented at committee. She considered that it was important to take the community and stakeholders along through the development of schemes at each stage and suggested that an additional principle should be added to the list set out in paragraph 13 as follows:

“The early involvement of stakeholders in identifying and developing schemes is critical.”

The vice chair pointed out that the twelve principles set out in paragraph 13 related to the bid and suggested that, as the early involvement of stakeholders was good practice, he would ask the Push the Pedalways executive board to consider incorporating it into the statement of community involvement. This was considered to be a positive contribution by other members who commended Councillor Carlo's suggestion.

Discussion ensued in which members discussed the consultation process on the Push the Pedalways schemes and that members had been surprised at the level of opposition from residents to the proposed closure of Park Lane despite early consultation with local members. Members considered that public engagement should be innovative and interesting and a member suggested there should be more “planning for real” exercises.

RESOLVED with 3 voting members voting in favour (Councillors Stonard, Harris and Bremner) and 1 member abstaining (Councillor Adams) to note that:

- (1) the city and county council have accepted the invitation from the Department for Transport to apply for additional funding for the Greater Norwich Area from its cycling ambition grant programme;
- (2) Councillor Stonard will propose that the Push the Pedalways executive board incorporates the principle proposed by Councillor Carlo into its statement of community involvement.

6. Future expansion of the Norwich Car Club

Members welcomed the proposal to expand the Norwich car club and commented on the increased use of the car club vehicles.

RESOLVED, unanimously, with all 4 voting members voting in favour, to:

- (1) note the continued demand for the car club and welcome its planned extension across Norwich as a result of successful award of Car Club Development funding from the Department for Transport;
- (2) authorise the head of city development services to carry out the necessary statutory procedures to introduce car club bays as detailed in appendix 1 of the report and associated changes to waiting restrictions.

7. Major road works – regular monitoring

The vice chair referred to the question earlier in the meeting about the road works at the Chapel Field roundabout and explained that the timing of the road works had been delayed because of a judicial review. Normally, road works in the run up to Christmas would be avoided but the traffic regulation orders had been about to

expire due to the lengthy legal process which had delayed the commencement of the works.

RESOLVED having considered the report, unanimously, with all 4 voting members voting in favour, to note the report.

CHAIR