

MINUTES

Norwich Highways Agency committee

10:00 to 10:35

19 March 2015

Present:

County Councillors:

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

City Councillors:

Stonard (vice chair) (V)
Harris (V)
Gayton
Carlo
Jackson (substitute for
Councillor Grahame)

*(V) voting member

Apologies:

County Councillor Hebborn and City Councillor Grahame

1. Public questions/petitions

Petition – 20mph speed limit for area bounded by Heigham Road/Dereham Road/Edinburgh Road and Earlham Road (Nelson ward)

(An aerial view of the area referred to was displayed at the committee meeting.)

Councillor Jones, Nelson ward councillor, presented the following petition:

“Nelson ward councillors would like to submit a petition signed by residents for a 20mph speed limit, supported by traffic calming measures, for the grid pattern of narrow Victorian terraced streets bounded by Heigham Road/ Dereham Road/ Edinburgh Road and Earlham Road (but not extending to Dereham and Earlham Roads).

This petition is in response to residents raising concerns about the speed and volume of vehicles rat running along the narrow streets. Currently the speed limit is an inappropriate 30mph. Such a scheme would improve safety for residents and those on foot or cycle, especially children. Many residents walk to a range of local facilities that include a shopping centre and a four primary schools across the Earham Road.

Such a scheme would complement the 20mph speed limit and traffic calming between Earham and Unthank Roads. A speed table at the unsafe 5-arm junction of Heigham Road/ Earham Road/ Mill Hill Road and West Pottergate would benefit all roads users at this difficult spot and help to slow down or

even reduce the number of rat running vehicles along Park Lane and Mill Hill Road.

In addition, raised pavements/speed tables across the entrance to several of the side streets off Earlham Road (Alexandra Road, Gladstone Street, Belvoir Street and Heigham Road) would act as a barrier to surface water which runs down Earlham Road during heavy downpours. Earlham Road and its side streets are a designated surface water and sewer flood risk area.

We consider that such a scheme could be funded from three sources:

- (a) the Green Pedalways from Bowthorpe into the city centre via Earlham Road and West Pottergate and the inner orbital Orange Pedalway;
- (b) the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- (c) Central Government funds for reducing flood risk in communities.

A 20mph speed limit and traffic calming for this area would contribute to Norwich City Council's corporate aim of achieving a 20mph speed limit in residential areas of the city."

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, replied:

"Councillor Jones is correct in saying that it is the city council's corporate aim of introducing 20mph restrictions in all residential areas of the city, and the area bounded by Dereham Road, Earlham Road and cemetery is clearly one where a 20mph speed restriction would be desirable.

The obstacle to the introduction of this 20mph restriction is funding; at present there is no identified budget for this. Councillor Jones has suggested three potential sources, however at the current time there is no funding for implementing the Green or Orange Pedalways. The community infrastructure levy is in its infancy and the limited funds that are available to date have been allocated to other improvements across the Greater Norwich area that supports the growth in housing and jobs.

The idea that traffic calming in the side roads could act as a barrier for surface water and therefore could be funded as a measure to reduce flood risk is questionable, as it is likely to increase the flood risk on the main roads. It would have to be considered as part of a package of measures to alleviate flood risks in the general area. The current bid for Challenge funding to central government for flood alleviation works is targeted at specific areas in the north of the city and does not include this area. In the future there may be opportunities to bid for further funding."

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Jones asked that given that the implementation of 20mph speed limits in residential areas was a corporate objective, could he be given some indication when funding would become available for this scheme. The transportation and network manager replied that the successful City Ambition funding had been allocated for the Blue and Yellow Pedalway schemes, which included an element of 20mph areas. The Green and Orange

Pedalway would be the most likely source of funding for this scheme and it was not possible to give a date at this point.

Public question – retention of bus stops in Avenue Road

Hazel Davidson, Caernarvon Road, asked the following question:

"At the meeting of the Norwich Highways Agency committee held on 27 November, I submitted a petition asking the city council to retain the bus stops on Avenue Road in the event of a new bus operator running a bus service along this route.

The transportation and network manager replied:

"The project team contacted Konnectbus in early 2014 when the options for Park Lane were first under consideration and were informed that they were planning to withdraw the service from Avenue Road as it was no longer commercially viable....Can I suggest that members approve the parking proposals in front of them today, and if between now and Easter the residents can convince Konnectbus to reinstate the service then the design team will revise the proposals to accommodate bus stop provision."

On this basis, I wrote a letter to First in February, signed by Councillors Bearman and Carlo, enquiring whether the company would be willing to operate a bus service to the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the hospital along Avenue Road.

The network manager for the First Bus Company replied:

"The city council decided as part of the Pedalways scheme that they didn't want buses running along Avenue Road in the future. We had considered operating the hourly service 27 through Avenue Road, but were told quite clearly that this was not considered appropriate in view of Pedalways".

Having given a commitment that the city council would accommodate the bus stops if Konnectbus would reinstate a bus service, the transportation and network manager now says:

"I am afraid that on behalf of the city council I cannot proactively support the re-introduction of a bus service into The Avenues, particularly in relation to the section on Avenue Road and Park Lane".

First has indicated that it would be willing to consider running a bus service along Avenue Road. Currently, there are no bus services through the area and residents have to walk a long way to Unthank and Earlham Roads, up and down steep hills in all directions, in order to catch buses to UEA and the Hospital.

Will the city and county councillors back residents in their efforts to put bus services along Avenue Road once again?"

The head of city development services, replied as follows:

"My colleague did make a commitment at the November meeting to say that if Konnectbus agreed to reinstate the service by Easter the existing bus stops would be retained. There has been a bus service along Park Lane, Avenue Road and The Avenues for many years and its reintroduction would be generally welcome, providing a useful and for some more convenient alternative to the more frequent bus services on Earlham Road and Unthank Road. Given this, I am happy to approach bus operators to gauge their interest in operating such a service and to also encourage them to do so.

However there is a proviso to this: Park Lane, Avenue Road and The Avenues are part of the Pink Pedalway and the overall Norwich area transportation strategy (NATS) cycle network. The city and county councils are investing significantly to improve conditions for cyclists accordingly; with a view to doubling the number of cycle trips. This would translate to almost 2,000 cyclists per day on The Avenues, which is not far short of the present number of cars that use it.

It is also the case that Park Lane and Avenue Road are very narrow with the junction between them a cause for safety concern that has been recently highlighted at Norwich Highways Agency committee.

If a bus service was to be reintroduced using the smaller type of vehicle that used to provide the service (ie, mini- or midi-bus), then there should be no problem in mixing such vehicles with increasing volumes of cyclists – as well as large numbers of pedestrians and other motor vehicles – all sharing the same narrow road infrastructure.

However officers do have safety concerns if the type of vehicle was as large as a full size single or double deck bus. Large vehicles are a particular risk factor for cyclists and this is only made worse where the width of carriageway is narrow and/or the radius of any junction is tight.

Such full size vehicles are increasingly used by operators but they do give rise to problems where the road infrastructure has not been designed to accommodate them. These range from more minor issues such as footway or verge over-running to ultimately having to stop such vehicles using a particular street – as was the case with Bethel Street.

It would therefore seem very unwise to simply secure a replacement service if the vehicles to be used are unsuitable. To do might simply lead to subsequent calls for such vehicles to be banned.

Therefore, in supporting any steps to reintroduce a bus service, it needs to be made clear that the type of vehicle needs to be suitable for the road infrastructure and mix of traffic."

Hazel Davidson asked, as a supplementary question, whether statistics were available to show the number of accidents on Avenue Road both before and after the cessation of the bus service on 1 September 2014. She considered that the problems that cyclists faced did not outweigh the problems that the loss of the bus service caused to older residents in the area. The chair interjected that the problem was not a bus service on that route but the size of the buses needed to be suitable for the narrow roads. The head of city development services confirmed that he would take steps to liaise with the relevant bus companies regarding the reintroduction of the bus service on this route. He considered that the accident statistics would not be helpful as usually an assessment would be based on a longer period before and after the change and pointed out that the number of accidents was relatively small. The vice chair, at the chair's discretion, reiterated the points made by the chair and head of city development services and confirmed that the city council did not oppose the reinstatement of the bus service on this route.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2015, subject to amending two incorrect references to "Palace Street" and replacing it with "Princes Street".

Item 1, Declarations of interest, amending the reference to Councillor Harris's partner's premises from "Palace Street" to "Princes Street".

Item 3, Public questions, question 3, amending Johnathan Cage's address from "Palace Street" to "Princes Street".

4. Rose Lane car park

The vice chair introduced the report and said that it made sense to apply these changes to facilitate access to the new car park.

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

- (1) note that the replacement car park for Rose Lane has received planning permission, and is expected to be completed by Spring 2016;
- (2) ask the head of city development services to advertise the necessary traffic regulation orders to remove the three short sections of 'pay and display' parking outside the old Fishmarket and shown on the plan in Appendix 1 to facilitate access to the new car park;
- (3) delegate the consideration of any objections to these minor to the head of city development services, in consultation with the chair and vice-chair.

5. Disabled Parking Bay Review

In reply to a question, the NATS/NDR manager, Norfolk County Council, explained that there would be consultation as part of the full review of the county council's parking principles in 2017. The proposal was to review the current approach to residential disabled parking bays in advance of the full review. The city council was represented on the review group and details of the review of residential disabled parking bays would be reported back to this committee as the project progressed.

During discussion a member referred to the review as being county wide and not just based around the city. Another member referred to paragraphs 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 and pointed out that the necessity and provision of parking spaces for the disabled were considered for all highway improvement schemes and road resurfacing undertaken by the council; and that in Norwich, the city council's approach was similar to the county's, in that requests relating to individuals were not generally taken forward and that provision was around community hubs.

RESOLVED, with all 4 voting members voting in favour, to note the report to the county council's environment, development and transport committee, Provision of residential disabled parking bays.

6. Update on the flooding events of 2014

During discussion a member referred to the government funding and asked whether it could be used to fund deep cleansing of the gullies in other areas of the city designated at risk of flooding from surface water. The highways manager, Norwich City Council, replied that the Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund was to improve infrastructure and not for general maintenance. The city council would be reviewing the frequency of deep cleansing street gullies. There would be further opportunities for Challenge funding in the future and any bids would need to be evidence based and provide a solution.

During discussion members considered that the report reflected the excellent work that had been done since the flooding events of 2014.

RESOLVED, unanimously, with all 4 voting members voting in favour, to note the current position on the flooding events in 2014 and that the county council has accepted an invitation from the Department for Transport to apply for additional funding from the Local Highways Maintenance Challenge fund.

7. Major road works - regular monitoring

The vice chair said that temporary disruption during implementation of major road improvement schemes was inevitable but this was outweighed by the benefits of the schemes in the long term. He considered that the Chapel Field North scheme was doing well and had turned out as expected. There was currently some discontent about the implementation of the Push the Pedalway scheme in Magdalen Street but it would bring long term benefits to the area, including local businesses, when the scheme had been completed.

During discussion the transport and networks manager and the NATS/NDR manager answered members' questions. The issue of cars continuing to use St Stephens Street was being addressed by the installation of cameras and enforcement action. Members generally concurred that the Chapel Field North scheme was a success. A number of issues had come to members' notice which included concerns about pedestrian safety at the corner of Cleveland Road and that bus drivers had reported that they were caught in traffic when egressing Chapel Field North on to the ring road. The committee noted that all schemes had a stage 3 safety audit to assess the scheme after implementation and that the final improvements to this scheme would be funded in the next financial year.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. Committee schedule of meetings for 2015 to 2016

RESOLVED, having considered the report of the executive head of business relationship management and democracy, Norwich City Council, to agree the following schedule of meetings for the new civic year 2014-2015, all meetings at 10:00 at City Hall:

4 June 2015
23 July 2015
17 September 2015
12 November 2015
21 January 2016
17 March 2016

CHAIR