

Report to Norwich highways agency committee

Item

17 March 2016

9

Report of Head of city development services

Subject End of life signalled crossing on Whitefriars

Purpose

To inform members of the consultation response to the proposal to replace the existing signalled crossing on Whitefriars with a zebra crossing in St Martin at Palace Plain and request approval to construct.

Recommendation

To approve:

- (1) the removal of the existing signal crossing on Whitefriars, and,
- (2) the installation of a zebra with cycle crossing facility with associated works located on St Martin at Palace Plain to the south of the junction leading to Bishopgate as detailed on Plan No.15-HD-028-12.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority to provide a safe, clean and low carbon city and the service plan priority to implement the Local Transport Plan and Norwich Area Transportation Strategy.

Financial implications

The budget for these works is £70,000; £40,000 is to be funded from the traffic signals replacement budget and £30,000 to be funded from the local transport grant.

Ward/s: Thorpe Hamlet

Cabinet member: Councillor Bremner – Environment and sustainable development

Contact officers

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Background documents

Consultation returns

Report

Background

1. In July 2013, members of this committee resolved to agree the principle that when a signal crossing is due for refurbishment, consideration is given to replacing the signalled crossing with an alternative facility such as zebra crossing or pedestrian refuge where pedestrian numbers and traffic levels are suitable and subject to the approval of the committee.
2. The existing signal crossing on St Martin at Palace Plain is nearing the end of its service life and is due for replacement in 2016-17. A crossing assessment was carried out by Norfolk County Council network management (safety) team with the additional consideration of the nearby route of the Pink Pedalway. The conclusion was "In view of the desire to create a continuous cycle route through this part of the city, together with low speeds and low proportion of vulnerable pedestrians, a shared pedestrian / cycle zebra crossing is recommended." A plan showing the suggested location was included, showing the new zebra sited to the south of the junction with the road leading to Bishopgate. This proposal was further developed by the city highways team.
3. A three week period of consultation was carried out in January 2016. An advert of the pedestrian crossing, road humps and cycle order notice was placed in the local press and posted on site in strategic positions. Transportation stakeholders were contacted and immediate residents and businesses written to. Consultation Plan No.15-HD-028-10 is attached as Appendix 2.

Consultation responses

4. Ten responses to the consultation were received, six objected to the proposals. Summaries of the responses and officers comments are attached as Appendix 1.
5. The main concerns raised include the replacement of a signal crossing with a zebra, which some respondents felt was not as helpful to vulnerable road users. The proposed location of the crossing was considered not as convenient and some residents pointed out that the road works involved in the installation would cause disruption.
6. The Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind (NNAB) and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) were particularly concerned about the effect the proposals would have on independent travel. It was felt that with no other signalised crossings in the vicinity, some visually impaired people (VIP) would choose to stay away from the area.
7. Norfolk Living Streets also commented that if pedestrians are walking along riverside walk, it is difficult to cross Whitefriars by the bridge due to poor visibility.

Officer comments

8. As was stated earlier in this report, the principle of replacing old signalised crossing with alternative crossings in suitable environments has been agreed by this committee. A zebra crossing is thought of as more suitable in the city centre as it affords the pedestrian a higher priority over traffic and reduces delay to crossing the

road. Zebra crossings are also more suitable in a 20mph area, which this is shortly to become.

9. The proposed zebra location was chosen based on site surveys which revealed the desire line for many pedestrians crossing St Martin at Palace Plain. It is also the route of the pink pedalway. By moving the crossing to this location, it is possible to include a cycle crossing feature to help cyclists manoeuvre from Palace Street to Bishopgate in a northerly direction along the pedalway.
10. It is acknowledged that there has been a long period of disruption to residents recently with the necessary improvements to the surrounding highway and this proposal will again add to that disruption. However, works will be carried out with the intention of keeping any disruption to a minimum. A closure for one week on Whitefriars will be required at the end of the project to construction the raised table. The ongoing construction at Golden Ball Street should not have any effect on the roadworks in this location as the existing road closures will be finished before the proposed work on Whitefriars begins on 18 April 2016..
11. At the access points to riverside walk on Whitefriars, dropped kerbs are provided for those who chose to cross at this point. It is acknowledged that moving the crossing further south will make the facility less attractive for those taking this east – west direction. The best location for visibility would be to cross on top of the bridge itself and for that reason officers are investigating if it will be possible to provide dropped kerbs on the crown of the bridge.

Subsequent consultation

12. After receiving the response from the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind (NNAB), officers met representatives from the association to consider if any amendments might be possible to make the proposals easier for VIPs to use. Additional tactile navigation clues were discussed along with a simpler footpath crossing at Bedding Lane junction and a second crossing point with tactile paving on the road leading to Bishopgate away from the junction. These amendments to the scheme are outlined on Plan No. 15-HD-028-12, attached as appendix 3. The need for the change in location and the pedestrian desire line was also discussed. It was agreed a separate survey would be carried out to confirm the officers view that the new position of the crossing is in the desire line of most pedestrians as well as being on the pink pedalway route.
13. The survey was carried out on 24 February between 08:00-09:15hrs, 11.45-13:00hrs and 16:00-17:00hrs. Sixty seven people used the crossing location (not all engaged the signals). Only three of these people came from and exited to the north, meaning only three of the people using this crossing would have to walk further if the crossing was moved further south. 13 of the pedestrians came from and exited to the south, these people would need to travel less if the proposal was installed. Of the 67 people using this crossing, 19 were judged to be either disabled, OAPs or children. At the same time another survey was carried out between (and including) the junctions with Bishopgate and Bedding Lane. 122 people crossed the road unassisted in this area. Of these, 94 were able bodied adults and 13 were children. Also a note was taken of the number of pedestrians crossing near Whitefriars bridge and this was 339. The majority of these were travelling along riverside walk.

Conclusion

14. In consideration of the responses received and the further survey carried out confirming the desire line for pedestrians is south of the junction with Bishopgate, it is recommended that Members agree to the installation of the proposals with the amendments as shown on Plan No.15-HD-028-12 with the possible installation of a pair of dropped kerbs on the crown of Whitefriars Bridge if technically possible.

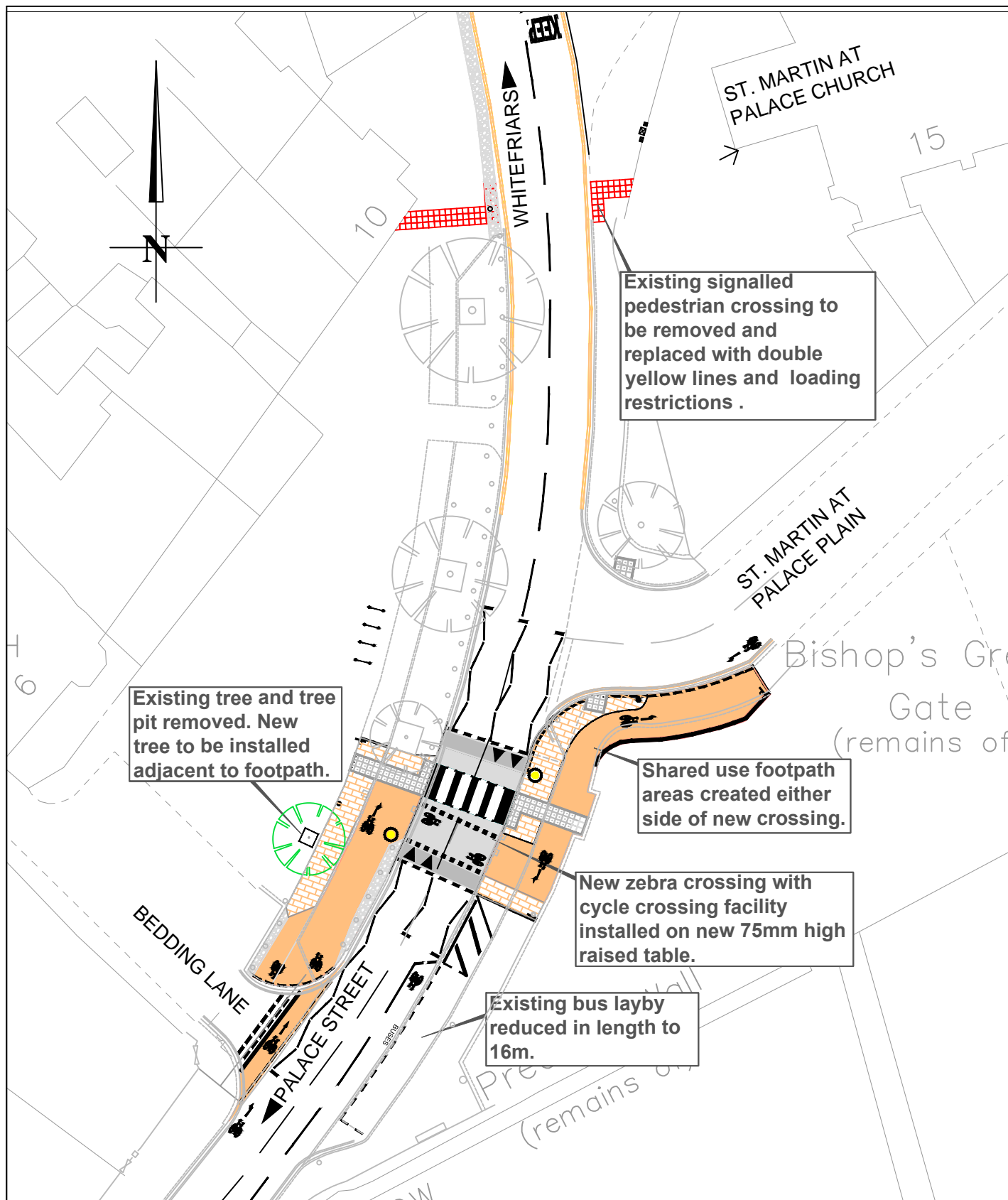
Consultation Responses

Respondent	Comments	Officer views
Norwich Cycling Campaign	Considers the proposed crossing is of marginal benefit to cyclists and many cyclists will choose to stay in the road for an easier route. The crossing would be easier to use if it is not a right angle to the kerb and the raised table should have sufficient inclines to slow traffic down. Moving the existing crossing will mean pedestrians will have to cross the road leading to Bishopgate if going to the courts or river.	It is accepted that some confident cyclists will choose to stay on the carriageway whatever facilities are provided and they have the right to do so. However, it is the intention to make cycling a pleasant experience for everyone to increase participation. Whitefriars / St Martin at Palace Plain has an average of 11,740 vehicles a day, which means it can at times be difficult and intimidating for a cyclist to take a right turn. A crossing facility on the direct pedalway route would be a substantial help to some cyclists. The zebra crossing must be designed to DfT guidance which advises a straight route is taken between kerbs, giving a shorter distance to travel on the road.
Norfolk Living Streets	Agree with the proposed position of the zebra and asks for the "Share with Care" signs to be used on the shared cycleway / footway. They also wanted to point out that people travelling along riverside walk have trouble crossing Whitefriars near the bridge because of sight lines and would not have the facility of the signal crossing to use.	It is not considered necessary to use the "Share with care" signs in this location. This is a conservation area and street clutter must be minimised. If the existing crossing is moved further south it will mean people walking along riverside walk will have a greater detour to use the new crossing. On inspection it was considered possible to mediate this concern and help some pedestrians find a nearby safer position to cross the road by providing two dropped kerbs on the crown of Whitefriars bridge. Further research is necessary on the structure of the bridge before this can be finalised.

Respondent	Comments	Officer views
Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind	<p>Strongly object to the removal of the signal crossing and downgrading to a zebra in a new location. They advise the proposals will be less safe for the visually impaired. There is no other signalled crossing in the vicinity for a visually impaired person (VIP) to use, leaving this area less accessible for VIPs who may choose to avoid the area completely. The new location will cause pedestrians to cross more roads if going to the courts, Great Hospital or river. VIPs need clear shorelines (extent of footpath) to navigate, the new proposal with shared surfaces and a raised table leaves large areas without navigational clues for VIPs, this can lead to anxiety, loss of confidence and concerns over personal safety.</p>	<p>The objection from the NNAB and RNIB to replacing a signal crossing with a zebra is understood. It is acknowledged that some VIPs are less confident in using a zebra than a signalled crossing, but it is thought that this concern over personal safety is a perception rather than a fact. In terms of relative safety of crossing types, the DfT Local Transport Note 1/95 'the assessment of pedestrian crossings', advises that "there is little difference in the average rate of personal injury accidents at Zebra and signal controlled types". However, it is accepted that some VIPs will choose not to use zebra crossings and so the surveys carried out could have been biased. With the introduction of a 20mph zone in the city centre and a larger number of zebras in the area, drivers will become more aware of pedestrians and their needs, giving a greater priority to all pedestrians. It is hoped that VIPs will find that the interaction between drivers and pedestrians will improve and the "fear" of drivers not stopping for them will reduce.</p>
Royal National Institute for the Blind	<p>Supports the views of the NNAB and strongly objects to the proposals. They believe these proposals would making walking around this part of the city less safe for people with sight loss and could lead to social isolation as people feel less able to get out and about. They also state "In addition, RNIB is very concerned about the increasing number of proposals by the City Council to downgrade controlled crossings to zebra crossings. Both NNAB and RNIB</p>	<p>As was stated earlier in this report, the principle of replacing old signalised crossing with alternative crossings in suitable environments has been agreed by this committee. A zebra crossing is thought of as more suitable in the city centre as it affords the pedestrian a higher priority over traffic and gives less delay to crossing the road.</p>

Respondent	Comments	Officer views
	have made it clear in previous responses and discussions with the City Council that this makes the pedestrian environment unsafe for blind and partially sighted people, yet this does not seem to have been taken on board.”	
Norfolk Constabulary	Supports the proposals.	Support appreciated.
Maids Head Hotel	Do not object to the proposal but requested more information on the traffic management arrangements when the works are carried out.	As in all roadworks carried out in Norwich, local businesses and residents will be kept informed of traffic management for scheduled road works.
Resident of Pyes Yard	Supported the proposals but suggested the street lighting in St Martin at Palace Plain may need improvement. They also congratulated officers for the recent changes in Tombland.	The support is appreciated. The street lighting has been assessed and improvements will be included in the detail design.
Resident of St Martin at Palace Plain	Considers the existing signal crossing should remain as many parents and children use it and others crossing further south are just taking a 'short cut'. Road works will cause further disruption to residents and is concerned with the possibility of light pollution from the zebra beacons.	The flashing beacons used at the proposed zebra crossing will be “Zebrite” which have a directional light to oncoming traffic. The distance between the residential buildings and the proposed crossing should be adequate not to cause a light pollution problem. It is acknowledged that there has been a long period of disruption to residents recently with the necessary improvements to the surrounding highway and this proposal will again add to that disruption. However, the works will be carried out with the intention of keeping any disruption to a minimum and residents are asked to bide with us

Respondent	Comments	Officer views
		whilst this extra work is carried out. It is estimated the work involved with this proposal will entail eight weeks of construction on site.
Resident of Beckwiths Court	Does not agree with spending more money on cyclists when they consider 'very few' cyclists use the facilities already provided. Concerned with more disruption to residents when the works are installed.	Cyclists are entitled to remain on the road if they wish. As part of the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy, we are promoting cycling for everyone and need to provide facilities so the less confident cyclists can travel around Norwich. Disruption to residents is regrettable but as above, we aim to keep the disruption to a minimal.
Resident of Pyes Yard	Objected, as a disabled pedestrian they need to walk slowly and find the signal crossings easier to use, especially with children. They would like to see more pedestrian crossings in the area, but consider the proposed location is too near the Bishopgate junction for safety. They applaud the effort to help cyclists, but find shared spaces stressful and consider cyclists should be prepared to dismount.	It is acknowledged that some vulnerable pedestrians prefer to use signal crossings, but the installation and upkeep of signalised crossings puts a real strain on both capital and revenue budgets. If zebra crossings are installed which are relatively cheaper to provide and maintain, more crossings can be provided for the budget available, a bonus for pedestrians. The proposed crossing has been assessed by the network management (safety) team of Norfolk county council and is considered to be in a safe location. The use of short lengths of shared cycleway / footway is necessary to enable safe and easy passage to the crossing for cyclists. If cyclists are given easy access to the crossing they will be more likely to use the facility.



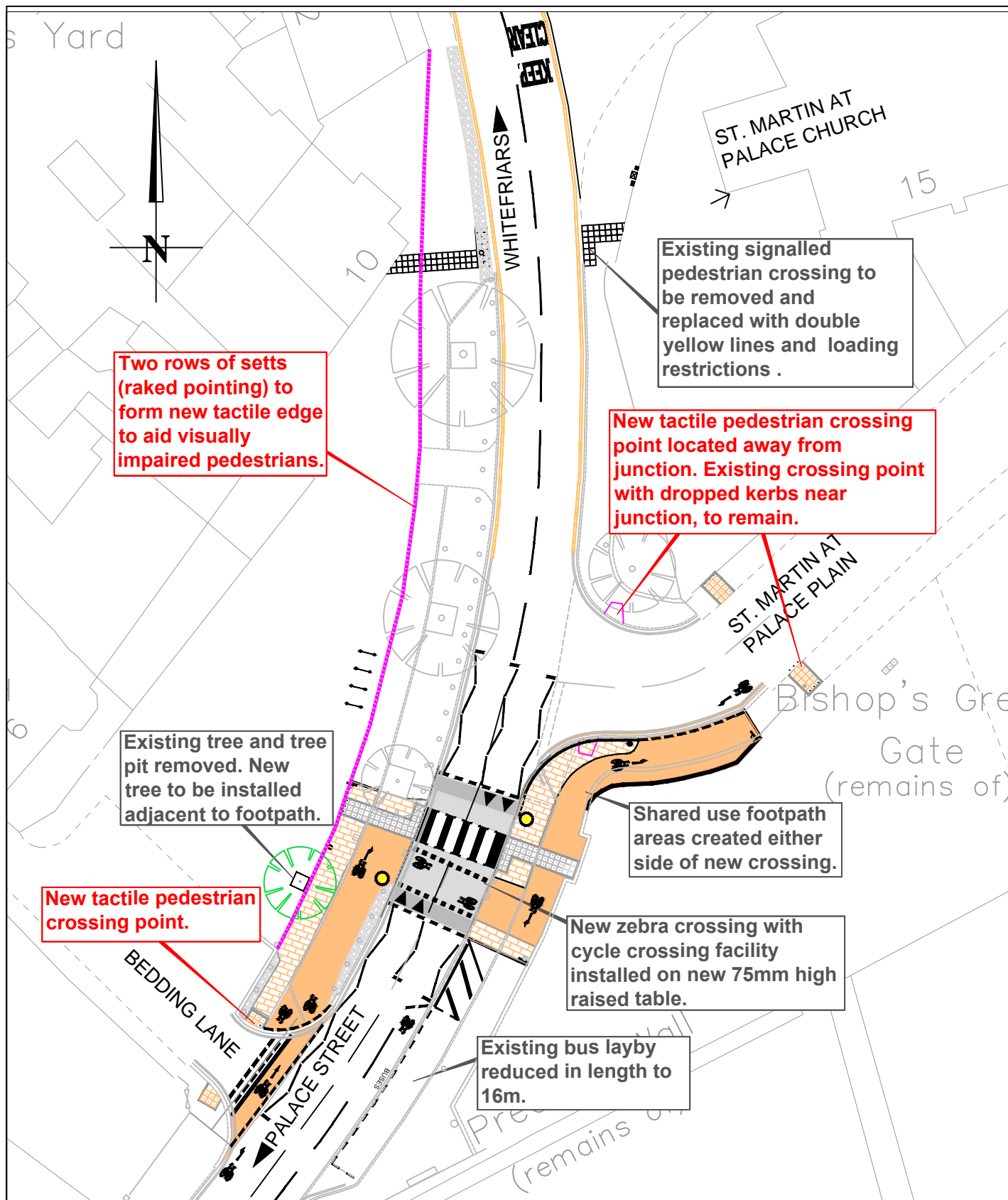
NORWICH
City Council

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Title
St. Martin at Palace Plain, Norwich.

Proposed zebra crossing with cycle crossing facility

Date	Scale(s)	No.	Date	Notes	REVISIONS	Int.	Ckd.
Jan. 2016	Not to scale						
Drawn By AE	Designed By AE						
Checked By LA	NEG. No.						
DWG. No. 15-HD-028-10							



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Proposed zebra crossing with cycle crossing facility - NHAC March 2016
Amendments post consultation - noted in red

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. 2016	Not to scale						
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