

Report to Norwich highways agency committee
23 July 2015
Report of Head of city development services
Subject Hotblack Road area

Item

5

Purpose

To consider a report produced by residents of Hotblack Road of traffic issues in the local area.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

- (1) receive the report produced by Hotblack Road residents;
- (2) Note the actions already taken on some issues in the report and confirm the residential area will be considered for inclusion in a 20mph speed limit when funds become available.

Corporate and service priorities

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

Financial implications

Actions taken to-date have been funded by the highway maintenance and minor works budgets. Future capital bids such as funding of pedalways through City Cycling Ambition Grants may provide funds to consider further extensions to 20mph areas.

Ward/s: Wensum

Cabinet member: Cllr Bremner, cabinet member for environment, development and transport.

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Background

1. A petition was presented to council on 17 March 2015 by Ben Walker stating:

“Traffic speeds and volumes are unacceptable in the Hotblack Triangle. An area bounded by Dereham, Waterworks and Hotblack Road. We call on Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council to take action to deal with issues outlined in the report ‘Tackling Traffic in the Hotblack Triangle’.
2. The petition summarises issues discussed at a meeting held in January 2014 between residents, local councillors, a local PCSO and a council transportation officer. In this report the residents’ concerns are stated with suggested actions to be taken by the community, police and council.

Residents’ concerns

3. The report is attached as appendix 1. The main issues are stated as:
 - (a) The volume of traffic on Hotblack Road;
 - (b) The speed of traffic on Hotblack Road;
 - (c) The speed of traffic on Waterworks Road; and
 - (d) School traffic on Turner Road for Wensum Junior School.

Considerations

4. Hotblack Road is used by some as a cut through between Dereham Road and Waterworks Road. The signal junction at its connection with Dereham Road does encourage this use, but is necessary for traffic flows on Dereham Road and Bowthorpe Road. Hotblack Road could not be closed at this junction without causing more pressure and probable safety issues on other nearby junctions on Dereham Road.
5. It is acknowledged that there are concerns about traffic speeds on Hotblack Road. However, the existing road humps deter drivers from driving too fast and the number of parked cars gives drivers the uncertainty of priority thereby slowing traffic. A speed survey conducted on 14 May 2015, mid-afternoon when traffic is free flowing on this road, recorded an average speed of 19.5 mph (with an 85%ile speed of 22.8mph).
6. Waterworks Road is a distributor road. The existing speed limit of 30mph is suitable for traffic on this road and speed activated signs are positioned near Wensum Junior School to encourage compliance. A speed survey on Waterworks Road conducted on 14 May found the average speed of 30.1 mph (with an 85%ile speed of 34.6 mph). The survey showed occasional vehicles travelling much faster and local police are aware of residents’ concerns. Consequently the speed limit has been a policing priority for Norwich West section in the past and it is understood that residents are in discussion with the police about improved enforcement; possibly involving a community speedwatch campaign.

7. Parents driving their children to school and causing safety concerns from parking in unsuitable places is a problem associated with many schools in Norwich. Most schools are continually requesting parents to drive and park safely and some have worked with the road safety team at Norfolk County Council to help solve such problems. At present Wensum Junior School has not taken up this opportunity.
8. Other concerns in the report were identified as:
 - (e) Vehicles overrunning the footpath as they turn left into Hotblack Road from Waterworks Road;
 - (f) A sunken road gully on Hotblack Road at the junction with Waterworks Road;
 - (g) The layout of footpath surrounding Jarretts removal company at the junction of Hotblack Road with Waterworks Road is considered dangerous for young pedestrians and is occasionally blocked by large vehicles; and
 - (h) The lack of advance warning school signs.

Way forward

9. Many of the concerns in the petition have already been or are being addressed. These include:
 - The sunken gully on Hotblack Road near to the junction with Waterworks Road has been replaced;
 - Jarretts removal company have been contacted and they have agreed to ensure their staff and other drivers keep the footpath clear of vehicles;
 - An assessment of the school advance warning signs around Wensum Junior School has been carried out and an extra school sign erected on Turner Road;
 - The footpath surrounding Jarretts premises and the Waterworks Road / Hotblack Road junction are on the minor works list for action to bring the footpath up to Norfolk County Council highways standards. This is intended to be completed within this financial year.
10. It is understood that residents and local police are considering additional ways of enforcing the speed limit on Waterworks Road which may involve community speed watch.
11. Looking forward, Wensum Junior School and other nearby schools will be approached to ask them to consider taking up the offer of working with road safety officers from Norfolk County Council to progress with a road safety campaign.
12. It is also a city council priority to introduce 20 mph speed limits in residential areas as funds permit. This would include Hotblack Road (as well as other streets between Dereham Road and Waterworks Road) Presently there is no budget available to do this, however future bids may provide such funding; for example as provided for in the City Cycling Ambition Grant programmes elsewhere in the city.

Tackling traffic issues in the Hotblack triangle

A report and action plan based on discussion, meetings and consultations with local residents

Introduction

'A disproportionate concentration of traffic problems which have been overlooked by the authorities for too long and which are worsening.'

1. Dereham/Bowthorpe/Hotblack Roads Junction

'Rat running due to poor traffic management'

2. Hotblack Road

'Safety at risk due to traffic speed and volume'

3. Waterworks Road

'High speed and school means children's safety at risk'

4. Turner Road/Wensum School

'School drop-off traffic causing danger and problems'

5. Action Plan Summary

Appendix one – Question and response – Norwich city council 28.01.14

Appendix two – Participants 17.01.14.

Introduction

This Action Plan refers to longstanding traffic issues affecting the triangular neighbourhood in the NR2 section of Norwich bordered by Hotblack Road, Waterworks Road and Dereham Road (the 'Hotblack Triangle'). It documents the outcome of a series of discussions, public meetings and consultations in the area involving local residents, councillors, transport planners and the police.

The Plan highlights specific local issues raised by residents and proposes both short-term remedial actions and longer-term requirements if the area is to be made safe and suitable for motorists and pedestrians alike, and small children in particular.

In doing so it is mindful of both the inherent contradiction of managing 21st century urban traffic within a 19th century street layout and the limitations imposed by central government cut-backs to local authority funding.

However, local feeling is that compared with the city at large the Hotblack Triangle is subject to a disproportionate concentration of traffic problems which have been overlooked by the authorities for too long and which are worsening year on end, and that the present situation is inconsistent with the council's ambition for Norwich to be a 'Healthy City'.

It is clear to residents that there are a number of low-cost modifications which cannot be put on hold any longer, and this Plan calls for a number of immediate improvements.

In addition it is felt that if creative solutions and attendant resources are not forthcoming to deal with problems of congestion, speeding, rat-running, inconsiderate parking and irresponsible motor use in this area they will multiply both here and elsewhere.

To that end **this Plan calls for local authorities including both the City and County Councils and the Norfolk Police, to combine in a whole-hearted and public commitment to devise new strategies to deal with those long-term issues for which appropriate responses are not presently available.**

1. Dereham Road/Bowthorpe Road/Hotblack Road Junction ***'Rat running due to poor traffic management'***

A traffic light junction on Dereham Road manages traffic Dereham Road and Bowthorpe Road, including an important link from the City to the Norwich Community Hospital. As Hotblack Road is within this junction it is necessary to include this road in the signal controlled junction, leading to both congestion (as the light sequence favours the other roads) and rat-running (as cars use Hotblack Road as a conduit from Waterworks Road).

Short Term:

At present there are no changes proposed for the junction of Dereham Road / Bowthorpe Road / Hotblack Road.

Some residents have suggested that the restrictions set at nearby Bond Street of "no motorised traffic except for access" which has been in place for many years may be a suitable model for Hotblack. However this was imposed originally due to the road safety implications of subsidence not because of traffic. These restrictions are the responsibility of the police and need their agreement, and it is their strong opinion that the measure is practically unenforceable due to the interpretation of access and evidence. This type of restriction will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and Hotblack is not regarded as a case in point.

Long Term:

City Transport Planners recognise that this junction needs to be improved, but the cost makes it not possible for many years. It is possible land will need to be purchased and major civil works will be needed. There is a possibility the re-design of this junction, probably to allow a bus lane for out bound traffic, may have implications for the Waterworks Road / Dereham Road junction, but due to the unlikelihood of having the money in the near future the design has not been finalised.

2. Hotblack Road

'Safety at risk due to traffic speed and volume'

Residents on Hotblack Road consider that not only is the volume of traffic passing through the street a problem, but also its speed, and that action needs to be taken to address this.

Traffic calming measures are already in place which Planners consider suitable for the road, and they point out that the presence of cars parked on the road actually helps slow traffic down. There is no history of personal injury accidents on the road itself (there have been two at the junction) and so they are reluctant to use their (admittedly) limited resources to consider any further interventions. They also insist that although the traffic

may seem to speed, this may be due to the effect of a narrow confined road with pedestrians very close to vehicles. However, it is felt by residents that their perception of speeding should be given due consideration.

With respect to parking issues, council enforcement officers can only enforce signed restrictions on the highway, so the most effective way of addressing inconsiderate parking is by education, but where parking is actually by local residents themselves it is difficult to see an acceptable solution.

The pavement on the corner of Hotblack and Waterworks has a dropped curb which, coupled with a very narrow street width on Hotblack at the intersection causes it to be regularly overrun by vehicles turning left from Waterworks Road. The road geometry is similar to many small residential roads in Norwich, and is difficult to address. Drivers seem to approach not slowly enough or do not wait for cars to emerge from Hotblack Road before turning in.

One of the road gullies maintained by the city Highways Maintenance section has sunken on Hotblack Road. Residents mention that this has the effect of making cars drive in the wrong place on the road and so causes more issues at the corner.

Short Term:

Residents are to be encouraged to report any accidents however minor to the police to establish an accurate record.

The City Council has agreed to carry out a corner survey, asking highways engineers to survey the road and investigate the possibility of installing a bollard or raising the curb on the corner of Hotblack and Waterworks.

The Highways Maintenance section has been informed of the sunken gully.

Long Term:

Having assessed the range of options theoretically available (including restricted entry, making the street one-way, and the introduction of pinch points similar to Alexandra Road) and after measuring them against one another for likely effectiveness and cost, a large majority of residents attending the meetings felt that the preferred response should involve a city council feasibility study into the installation of a 20 mph zone within the area, with a view either to its imposition or the bringing forward of more effective alternatives. It is felt that this status might concentrate the minds of motorists on a wide range of safety issues in the street, not just speeding, and make it more acceptable to pedestrians.

A campaign in favour of this was launched with a public question by a local resident being asked to Cllr Stonard, the Cabinet Member responsible, at the full meeting of the City Council on January 28th 2014. (Question and response at appendix 1)

3. Waterworks Road

‘High speed and school means children’s safety at risk’

There are long-standing concerns about the speed of traffic on Waterworks Road.

Within the outer ring road there remains a 7.5t limit to vehicles except for delivery, while there is no other weight restriction on Waterworks Road. This is a distribution road and has more traffic than a purely residential road and consequently planners feel the speed of 30mph is appropriate. The flashing signs are used as a form of traffic calming and do assist in making drivers aware of their speed.

A subsidiary issue relates to the lack of demarcation between the road, pavement and curtilage on Waterworks Road outside the premises of the Jarrett’s removal company, which is regarded as a danger to children being walked to Wensum School, particularly as lorries can sometimes extend beyond the boundary to the commercial premises and onto the walkway. This has the double impact of both limiting passing space for pedestrians and obscuring the nearby speed warning sign.

Short Term:

Speeding limits on Waterworks Road have been recognised as one of the three policing priorities for Norwich West for the first quarter of 2014. This will involve an increased police presence and active enforcement of regulations.

PCSO Michael Cornaby who patrols the area has also undertaken to borrow a speed gun for use in the area, and to ask roads policing officers to step up the frequency of their checks.

The entrance to Jarrett’s off Waterworks Road is considered by Transport Planning Officers to be unusual. As the arrangement has been in place for many years and it is difficult to enforce change. The difference in road surfaces arguably gives some indication of where the road ends, initially prompting suggestions from officers that a painted line may not be necessary, and that it would only wear away and be a maintenance burden. However, this was felt unsatisfactory to local residents who walk children to Wensum School who argued that it was clearly unsafe even given a responsible level of parental supervision and it has been agreed to review the possibility of resourcing a new line from next year’s budget. Linda Abel, Senior Transport Planner from City Hall has also agreed to write to Jarrett’s asking them to observe the boundary lines.

Long Term:

Information has been distributed to local residents about the process involved in setting up a Community Speed Watch Group in the area. This is an entirely voluntary activity for which training and equipment is supplied by the police. A recent example of such a group in Hellesdon village is understood to have been successful and a link has been made with the organiser who are happy to advise. At the time of writing a number of local residents had expressed interest in being involved and local councillors will help encourage participation.

4. Turner Road/Wensum School

‘School drop-off traffic causing danger and problems’

Residents in Turner Road have concerns about irresponsible and dangerous practices by parents dropping off pupils outside the school. This includes parking on yellow zig-zag lines and pulling up in the centre of the road to let children out.

The street alongside this school has traffic calming and is considered by Transport Planners to have sufficient parking restrictions to ensure the safety of children. They see the problem as being down to the management of parents, but accept that that is very difficult to address. Enforcement officers cannot be on site as often as may be desirable as they are limited in number and since this problem happens all over Norwich they have to conform to a rota apportioning them to schools as often as resources allow.

Short Term:

PCSO Cornaby has agreed to meet with residents in Turner Road to look at options for additional enforcement.

Long Term:

Similar issues have been tackled elsewhere by working with schools to launch a school parking campaign aimed at pupils and children. If the school is in agreement, Norwich CC and the road safety officers from Norfolk CC could help to start a campaign.

The Transport Planning section at City Hall will investigate how the campaign can be brought into the area. Councillors will attempt to meet with the Head Teachers at Wensum and Nelson Primary schools to encourage them to be receptive to the idea and to contact Richard Wiseman at County Hall to request their inclusion in the programme.

City council officer to review signage in neighbouring streets regarding Wensum school.

5. Action Plan Summary

Short Term Actions Agreed:

1. Residents in Hotblack Road (and other streets) to report all accidents, however minor, so that the police can establish an accurate record.
2. City Council to carry out a corner survey, asking highways engineers to survey the road and investigate the possibility of installing a bollard or raising the curb on the corner of Hotblack and Waterworks.
3. Highways Maintenance section to repair the sunken gully in Hotblack Road.
4. Speeding limits on Waterworks Road to be recognised as one of the three policing priorities for Norwich West for the first quarter of 2014, resulting in increased police presence and active enforcement of regulations.
5. Local PCSO Michael Cornaby to borrow a speed gun for use in the area, and to ask roads policing officers to step up the frequency of their checks.
6. PCSO Cornaby to meet with residents in Turner Road to look at options for additional enforcement of parking restrictions.
7. City Council to review the possibility of resourcing a new line separating the pavement alongside Jarrett's from the road and the company's own frontage (to be resourced from next year's budget allocation); Linda Abel, Senior Transport Planner to write to Jarrett's asking them to observe the boundary lines more effectively.
8. City council to look into increased traffic signage in local streets related to Wensum school.

Longer Term Priorities Requiring Attention:

1. City Transport Planners to recognise and acknowledge that the Dereham Road/Bowthorpe Road/Hotblack Road junction is less than adequate and needs to be classed a priority improvement when resources make the necessary re-design work possible.
2. A City Council feasibility study into the installation of a 20 mph zone within the Hotblack Triangle area, with a view either to its imposition or the bringing forward of more effective alternatives, should be conducted at the earliest opportunity.
3. Subject to support from local resident volunteers a Community Speed Watch Group can be established in the area, concentrating on Waterworks Road with training and equipment supplied by the police.
4. A school parking campaign aimed at pupils and children involving Norwich CC and the road safety officers from Norfolk CC could be introduced at local primary schools.

And the Over-riding Priority:

- **Local authorities, including both the City and County Councils and the Norfolk Police, should combine in a whole-hearted and public commitment to devise new strategies to deal with those long-term issues in the Hotblack Triangle for which appropriate responses are not presently available.**

Appendices

One - Question 3 - David Berwick to the cabinet member for environment, development and Transport, Norwich City full council meeting, 28.01.14.

"The area of the city encompassed by Hotblack, Dereham and Waterworks Roads has been be-devilled by traffic problems over a long period of time, giving us serious cause for concern as residents. Problems include speeding, rat running, inconsiderate parking and many other instances of poor driving. Residents and councillors have been meeting as a group since the summer of 2013, to consider the options which might improve the situation. A recent consultation, (involving a senior transportation planner from the council and a police representative) considered a range of potential responses including traffic calming, one-way systems and the implementation of a 20MPH restriction. After examination of the probable costs and effectiveness of each of these, it emerged that the most likely option to immediately mitigate the current difficulties, was for motorists to be asked to drive at, or under, 20MPH in the area. Will the council conduct its own examination of this situation - with a view to implementing a strategy to improve this area for residents, (both pedestrians and other road-users alike) by giving us 20MPH limits in the above area?"

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport responded

"Back in 1999 the Norwich Highways Agency committee introduced the Nelson Street area traffic action plan. As part of that traffic calming was introduced, Nelson Street was made no entry from the Heigham Road junction and parking restrictions were implemented where there were parking problems. I am sure that without these measures the problems Mr Berwick described would be significantly worse.

The traffic action plan was reviewed after it had been in operation for a few months, and this review included collecting speed data. This showed that average speeds in the area were at or below 20mph and at the time it was decided by the Norwich Highways Agency Committee that introducing a 20mph speed limit was unnecessary as traffic already complied with that limit.

Thinking around 20mph limits has changed in the last 14 years and these days a 20mph speed limit would be considered appropriate for the area. As my fellow members know, it is the city council's policy to adopt a 20mph speed limit in all residential areas in the city. However achieving this requires a significant amount of funding which is unaffordable within existing highway budgets.

When the Tory led coalition government came to power in May 2010 they made an immediate cut of 25% to that year's integrated transport grant which is paid to the county council to fund highway improvement and safety schemes.

The effect on Norwich saw our budget reduced from £1.4 million to spend in the city to £1.05 million that year. For 2011/12 the county wide integrated transport grant was reduced from £10 million to £2 million and has remained at that level since. The share of this funding for the city was £195,000 in 2011/12; £215,000 in 2012/13 and

for this year the figure is £280,000. These budgets contrast with the one million or so per annum budgets seen in the preceding decade.

This budget cut has resulted in difficult decisions being made about what the money can be spent on. To give you some idea what these figures could fund, a standalone signalled crossing is in the region of £100,000; modifying a signalled junction to provide pedestrian crossing facilities is upwards of £200,000; an area wide traffic calming scheme can be between £100,000 and £300,000 and a major cycle improvement would range from £100,000 to £500,000.

Officers and members continue to have discussions with other stakeholders, including colleagues in public health and at Norfolk Constabulary, to find ways of funding a city wide 20mph speed limit in residential areas. I will continue to keep council informed and updated.”

David Berwick asked, as a supplementary question, if the cabinet member would investigate the particular issue of double parking and cars not observing all due care when driving through this narrow channel in the 30mph zone. Councillor Stonard said that this would be a matter for the police and it should be brought to the attention of Norfolk Constabulary.

Two: Participants

Cllr Neil Blunt – ward councillor

Cllr Lucy Galvin – ward councillor

Linda Abel - senior transportation planner Norwich City Council

Ben Hathway – chair of Wensum Community Centre, local resident

Mac Cornaby – PCSO 8469

Emma Pocknell – local resident

Mark Wiseman – local resident

Jenny Wiseman – local resident

F. Matthews – local resident

Derek Simons – local resident

Stan Marley – local resident

Brian Hillyard – local resident

Sandie Hillyard – local resident

Daphne Jones – local resident

Ray Jones – local resident

David Berwick – local resident

Richard Holmes – local resident

Ian Docking – local resident

Rosey Docking – local resident