

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES**

**WASHINGTON BUS LINK IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES  
FORMAL OBJECTION**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Planning and Highways Committee, 20 February 2012, deferred the decision on objections by Washington Hackney Operators to the published order for buses and pedal cycles for 9 bus links in Washington.
- 1.2 This report is a revised submission of the objections.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The bus links are an original feature when Washington New Town was constructed.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 Washington Area Committee agreed to consider removing all the bus links in the Washington area subject to the evaluation of three bus link removal pilot schemes.
- 2.3 The pilot bus link removal schemes were evaluated during 2009/10 and it was concluded that many of the bus links were subject to different environmental characteristics. Removal en masse was not considered appropriate, so each bus link was reviewed independently.
- 2.4 On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010 an improvement programme involving a range of treatments for the nine bus links received the support of Washington Area Committee.
- 2.5 Implementation of the bus link improvement schemes was approved in a Delegated Decision of 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011, which gave approval to implementation subject to a positive public response to the publication of proposals.

**3.0 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 The proposed scheme of measures involves the introduction of a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and associated signing to create a route for buses and pedal cycles only, which is considered to be more robust and enforceable. The bus links affected by the proposals are listed below and drawings attached at Appendix A.

Table 3.1 – Location of proposed measures

<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>DRAWING NO.</b>
Well Bank Road, Donwell	TRS/10/2018/01
Barmston Way, Barmston	TRS/10/2019/01
Newstead Court, Glebe	TRS/10/2020/01
Raby Road, Oxclose	TRS/10/2021/01
Titchfield Road, Biddick	TRS/10/2022/01
Hambleton Road, Lambton	TRS/10/2023/01
Vigo Lane, Rickleton	TRS/10/2024/01
Marlborough Road, Sulgrave	TRS/10/2025/01
Un-named bus link from Sycamore Avenue to Sedling Road, Harraton	TRS/10/2026/01

3.2 The estimated cost of introducing the improvements to all nine bus links is approximately £25,000, which will be funded from the 2011/12 Public Transport element of the Local Transport Plan.

#### **4.0 PUBLICATION OF PROPOSALS**

4.1 Notices for the publication of proposals were posted on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011 with formal objections required in writing by 6<sup>th</sup> January 2012. The formal objection period was extended from 21 to 28 days due to the Christmas period.

4.2 Washington Hackney Operators Association (WAOA) was sent a copy of the notice by the Head of Law and Governance in response to their comments received previously and as part of the publication of proposals process.

4.3 To date one formal objection has been received following the publication of proposals and this came from WAOA. It should be noted that WAOA also made comment on a number of other issues not relevant to the scheme in question, which will be dealt with as a separate matter.

#### **5.0 CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTION**

5.1 The following table details the objections received and the reasons given as to why this objection should not be upheld:-

Table 5.1 – objection and response

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
<p>Did not receive a response to previous e-mail of 25 July 2011.</p>	<p>The previous email received from WHOA was in response to the initial consultations. The issues raised were considered in association with other comments received and the delegated decision of 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011 did not uphold the objections. The council recommended that the scheme be implemented as proposed, subject to a positive response to the publication of proposals. WHOA has been a contributor to the statutory consultee process and has been formally included within the ongoing democratic process.</p>
<p>Taxis are not given priority, which is in conflict with National Guidance.</p>	<p>The Council has to achieve the best balance between national guidance and local concerns. It is not considered appropriate to give taxis blanket access to all restricted locations across the City. Each location must be considered on individual merit.</p>
<p>Barmston Village Centre has moved, the old one is to be demolished and only the NE38 Sports Bar remains.</p>	<p>Barmston Village Centre is currently subject to significant redevelopment. Some premises have been relocated within the village centre area, but these are still within 50m of the bus link. The proposed bus link improvement scheme is still considered appropriate to prevent through traffic using the village centre.</p>
<p>Marlborough Road is isolated, the school is quite a distance away and the shops are on another road.</p>	<p>Marlborough Road provides vehicle access to Usworth Grange Primary School, within 100m of the bus link. The bus link segregates Marlborough Road from Manor Road. The local shops and Usworth Colliery Primary School are located in Manor Road within 50m and 200m of the bus link respectively. Whilst pedestrian access is obtained from adjacent</p>

<p>Newstead Court has a school close by, has no village centre and is on a blind bend, which is a danger to pedestrians.</p> <p>Sycamore Drive near Wear Industrial Estate is fully supported by WHOA.</p> <p>Washington Area Committee has a deciding vote and has funded schemes without public consultation, such as the Brandy Lane Road Closure.</p>	<p>roads / footpaths, Marlborough Road clearly serves as a route to schools and shops.</p> <p>The curvature of Newstead Court is considered acceptable as traffic flow is relatively low due to the existence of the bus link. In Newstead Court there have been no personal injury accidents reported by Northumbria Police in the last three year period to September 2011. Newstead Court is in close proximity to the Galleries and would become a very popular alternative access road if the bus link were to be removed; this could be to the detriment of road safety. The village centre has been demolished, but there are plans to redevelop the area in future.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> <p>The Council followed statutory consultation procedures to close the bus link in Brandy Lane. When the scheme was published in the public domain, formal objections were received including an objection from WHOA. The formal objections were considered by the Planning and Highways Committee of the Council before a delegated decision to implement the scheme was made by the Executive Director of City Services. The same process is being followed for the current bus link improvement schemes.</p>
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## 6.0 ISSUES DISCUSSED BY COMMITTEE

- 6.1 The previous Planning and Highways Committee of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2012 debated a number of issues in respect to the content of the proposals and the objection from WHOA. These issues have been summarised below.

Issue	Comment
<p>Barmston Village Centre has changed whilst the scheme has been developed. Shops had been relocated and housing was to be demolished. Could the Barmston element of the project be deferred pending further consideration?</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would not be suitable for the area once the re-development of Barmston is complete. The impact of any further changes would be considered by the Council if problems become evident in future.</p>
<p>Taxis always had been allowed to use the links as they are considered public service vehicles. If they were not permitted to use the bus links it would result in long detours.</p>	<p>Taxis are currently prohibited from using the bus links and the current proposals do not extinguish any current rights.</p>
<p>Taxis are the only form of public transport which operated 24/7 they should be allowed to use the links. and felt that allowing taxis to use the links would help reduce CO2 omissions</p>	<p>It should be noted that taxi trips are only sustainable in one direction normally and whilst it will provide a public service, it will also increase traffic flows in the village centre.</p>
<p>Had any complaints had been made from the public in the area on this issue as these would need to be taken into consideration.</p>	<p>The Area Committee had acted upon public concern over the use of the bus links and has already considered the implications of amending the use of the links.</p>
<p>Historically the links were actually pedestrian areas which the buses were allowed to use. They are a different concept to the bus routes such as on the A690.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Abuse of bus links was usually by cars and had nothing to do with taxis.</p>	<p>There is evidence to suggest that taxis are currently utilising the bus links as well as the general public. It is considered that allowing taxi access in this situation will reduce the compliance by the general public.</p>
<p>22 favourable responses out of 85 properties consulted was not an overwhelming endorsement of the scheme.</p>	<p>Response rates for public consultation events generally range between 20 and 30 %. This response rate is considered acceptable.</p>

7.23 Committee then RESOLVED that the item be deferred pending further discussions, consideration and possible consultation.

## 8.0 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for the Attractive and Inclusive City, the Chair of Area Committee and the Head of Law and Governance have been consulted for advice.
- 8.2 Extensive consultations were carried out during the development of the nine Bus Link Improvement Schemes. The nine schemes received the support of Washington Area Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011. Implementation of the nine schemes was approved in the Delegated Decision of 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011, subject to a positive response to the publication of proposals.
- 8.3 Many of the issues discussed at Committee have been considered during the development of the scheme. The proposals have been generated through consideration of the competing demands at each location. It is clear that limiting vehicular movement through the bus links has gained public support and any subsequent increase may influence road safety concerns due to the proximity of schools and village centres.
- 8.4 The objections are not considered to be significant as the proposals do not extinguish any existing right for taxis to use the bus links, therefore the objection should not be upheld.
- 8.5 Therefore, Committee is requested to consider the formal objection about taxi access through the approved Bus Link Improvement Scheme and confirm its support, or otherwise, to the recommendations of this report.

## 9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:-
- (i) The formal objection received during the publication of proposals opposing the proposed bus link improvement schemes should not be upheld.
  - (ii) The Executive Director of City Services be requested to instruct the Head of Law and Government to confirm the making of the proposed orders.
  - (iii) The objector is informed of the decision and any items not considered relevant to this objection will be given a formal response.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **PROPOSED LAYOUT DRAWINGS**

**APPENDIX B**

OBJECTION RECEIVED