

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES****WASHINGTON BUS LINK IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES – FORMAL OBJECTION.****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Planning & Highways Committee of a formal objection received to the proposed bus link improvement schemes at nine bus links in Washington.

**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 A programme of improvements involving a range of treatments was developed for the nine bus links during 2010, which received the support of Washington Area Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010.

**3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The proposed scheme of measures involves the introduction of a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and associated signing that prohibits motor vehicles except buses and creates a route for buses and pedal cycles only that is 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 2011/12 Public Transport element of the Local Transport Plan grant.

#### **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 (WHOA) 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 WHOA. It should be noted that WHOA also made comment on a number of other issues not relevant to the scheme in question, which will be dealt with at a later date.

#### **5.0 OBJECTION RECEIVED**

- 5.1 The objection received and the reasons given as to why this objection should not be upheld is given below:-

Table 5.1 – objection and response

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
Did not receive a response to previous e-mail of 25 July 2011.	The previous email received from WHOA was in response to the initial consultations. The issues raised were considered in the delegated decision of 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2011. The council did not support the issues raised and recommended that the scheme be implemented as proposed, subject to a positive response to the publication of proposals. A copy of the delegated decision was not sent to WHOA in response to their initial comments. As a statutory consultee, WHOA were issued with a copy of the notice for the following publication of proposals. The notice provided WHOA with confirmation that the Council was proposing to progress the original scheme. The notice also provided an opportunity to object formally. WHOA have objected and the objection is the subject of this report.

<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, such as the bus links. Each location must be considered on individual merit.</p> <p>For the bus link improvement schemes, relaxing the traffic order to allow access to an extra class of vehicle, such as taxis, would be detrimental to compliance. Taxis are more likely to be followed through the links by the general motorist as the vehicles are similar. Access to the bus links should be restricted to an absolute minimum for ease of understanding and enforcement. It should be noted that the existing order prohibits taxis using the links.</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 roads / footpaths, Marlborough Road clearly serves as a route to schools and shops.</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>The curvature of Newstead Court in the vicinity of the bus link is considered acceptable as traffic flow is relatively low due to the existence of the bus link. In Newstead Court there have been no accidents involving personal injury reported by Northumbria Police in the last three year period to September 2011. It is considered that pedestrians can cross safely using appropriate care. Newstead Court is in close proximity to the Galleries and would become a very popular alternative access road if the bus link was removed. The village centre has been demolished, but there are plans to redevelop the area in future.</p>
<p>Sycamore Drive near Wear Industrial Estate is fully supported by WHOA.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</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>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>

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The proposed bus link improvements have been designed to be more robust and enforceable creating a route for buses and pedal cycles only.
- 6.2 The objections received during the consultation process have been investigated and discussed in the section above.
- 6.3 The objections are not considered to be significant and should not be upheld.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 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