

York Civic Trust Planning Committee
Transforming the front of York Railway Station
Comments on transport implications
Tony May
5th July 2018

This note provides my input on transport aspects to the Civic Trust's response to the Station proposals, which John Ives is preparing for submission by 9th July.

Overview

We welcome the general thrust of the proposals, which will simplify pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movements; remove vehicles from the Porte Cochere, which is one of the most polluted locations in York; transform Tea Room Square into a public space, thus removing the single largest source of delays and conflicts on the site; and provide the potential for an effective bus-rail and bus-bus interchange. We comment below on the implications for each mode. In doing so we refer to the detailed plans presented in the public exhibition; we have been unable to find this level of detail in the web-based consultation.

Pedestrians

In general terms the pedestrian routes offered are appropriate, and we assume will be designed to provide the necessary width for high pedestrian flows. Considering in turn the routes which do not use Queen St/Station Rd:

- there is a strong case for improving the route from Lowther Terrace and hence Holgate Rd to provide pedestrians with a more direct route;
- there is similarly a case for providing a more direct route to Scarborough Bridge, which we assume will be included once the new cycle bridge is installed;
- no route is offered between Queen St and York Central other than via the station footbridge and the Marble Arch tunnel; while a new route across the station would be expensive, thought should be given now as to how it might be provided, on the basis that it might be funded through developer contributions in due course;
- the new public routes through the Hudson House site to Station Rise and Toft Green are to be welcomed; the latter should be designed to be as direct as possible.

We welcome the provision of two new pedestrian crossings of Queen St/Station Rd. It is important that both are designed as "super crossings" similar to that in Sheaf Square in Sheffield, and as planned for Fishergate in the Castle Gateway masterplan.

It will be important to design all larger pedestrian areas, and particular those on both sides of Station Rd and in Tea Room Square, following best practice in the design of urban public realm, with any space required for vehicle access and unloading and for cycle paths clearly demarcated bearing in mind the needs of those with movement disabilities, and with ample seating to allow people to dwell in these areas.

Cyclists

While we welcome the provision proposed for cycle routes, we have a number of suggestions for further improvement:

- while the Queen St/Blossom St junction provides for cyclists, it will be preferable to provide alternatives to allow cyclists to avoid this busy junction with its awkward approach gradients;
- bearing that in mind, the route from Lowther Terrace and hence Holgate Rd should be further upgraded, to allow the gradient to be negotiated on a more direct route;
- ideally there should be a direct route for cyclists between Queen St and York Central, which might in due course share the new pedestrian route proposed above; in the meantime clear and safe access is needed to the proposed new cycle route through Leeman Rd tunnel;
- we welcome the proposed provision of segregated cycle tracks parallel with Station Rd, and recommend that steps be taken to identify a continuous segregated track NE-bound on the NW side of the road;
- it will be important that a segregated route is provided through Tea Room Square and the current short stay car park leading to Scarborough Bridge; otherwise the interaction between cyclists and pedestrians in this busy and constrained area will be unsafe;
- we welcome the provision of a new shared route through the Hudson House site to Station Rise;
- when we were consulted on the Hudson House development, we strongly recommended the provision of a direct cycle route through the site to Toft Green, so that cyclists from Terry Avenue and Bishophill can access the station without having to traverse the Queen St/Blossom St junction; we reiterate that recommendation here, and suggest that ways are sought of providing a direct route which negotiates the change in elevation across the site;
- in the plans, no provision is shown for cyclists to cross Station Rd, other than by dismounting and using what are shown as pedestrian crossings; as argued above, both crossings should be “super crossings” and should allow for cyclists to cross without dismounting.

Taxis

We accept the proposals for relocation of taxi pick up and drop off areas, but strongly recommend that passenger waiting areas and walking routes to and from the station are covered. We are less convinced that adequate space has been provided for taxis to queue to pick up; this needs to be designed to minimise disruption to other users of the area, and so that drivers can turn their engines off until called.

Buses

While we welcome the provision of a bus layover and turn around facility, and the relocation and regrouping of bus stops, we consider that this is the weakest part of the

proposal in transport terms. The new turn around facility offers the potential for all but two of York's bus routes (the 6 and 25) to serve the station (with Boroughbridge Rd and Shipton Rd services doing so from the York Central side of the station). This would mean that York would for the first time have an effective bus-rail and bus-bus interchange. However, it is essential that the bus facilities are designed to accommodate the resulting growth in bus flows, as well as any newly planned services, such as a mobility access bus serving the footstreets. The current services stopping on Station Rd amount to around 50 buses/h each way, for which the current bus stop provision is often inadequate. Our vision for a bus interchange used by all routes except those mentioned above would increase this to around 70, of which 35 would use the turn around facility. To accommodate these flows, there is a need for up to six bus stops in each direction, of which some could potentially be provided in the layover and turn around area. The layover area also needs to be designed for at least three buses to be laying over at any time.

Bus users will be expected to use bus stops on both sides of Station Rd, in the layover area and on the York Central side of the station. An effective information system will be needed to tell passengers where to find their buses, and to provide real time information on bus departures centrally in the station, centrally on each side of Station Rd and locally at each stop. The bus information point in the station will need to be upgraded rather than threatened with closure as in the VEC planning application which is still under consideration.

All bus waiting areas must be covered, and with adequate seating. Action should be taken to provide a covered route between the station and the stops on both sides of Station Rd and in the layover area.

Parking

We welcome the proposals for short stay parking, which should provide sufficient capacity much more efficiently than at present. We agree that in due course a parking structure might be provided for long stay parking, but we are concerned to hear that consultants envisage the need for a substantial increase in long stay parking to reflect the predicted growth in rail patronage. Such traffic adds significantly to congestion and pollution in York while not contributing at all to its economy. We strongly recommend that the Council investigate ways in which alternative access can be provided from the outer ring road to the station. Our proposal above for all six park and ride services to serve the station should contribute to this.

Rail passengers

The proposals say nothing directly about provision for rail passengers once in the station. We are strongly of the view that the enhancements proposed for the approaches to the station should be matched by improvements to the facilities within the station which enable passengers to continue their journeys. Like the station approaches, these need to be designed to reflect the predicted 40% increase in passenger numbers. While the Council has been promoting enhancements on both sides of the station, VEC's planning application of early 2018 (which has still to be determined) envisaged a 60% reduction in the ticket office space and the apparent removal of the bus information point, purely in the interests of commercial gain. We very much hope that that application will be rejected, and we urge

the Council and the new operator to work together to decide how best to enhance facilities for information and ticket sales.

Tony May,
5 July 2018