



York Civic Trust

A Strategy for Managing York's Road Network
Summary Paper
April 2021

This is a summary of our report, *A Strategy for Managing York's Road Network*. It is one of a set of seven modal strategy documents, written in the context of our earlier report *Towards a Transport Strategy for York*, and prepared as input to York's new Local Transport Plan, LTP4. We consider the need for changes in the ways in which the road network is managed and modified.

York's road network is essential in providing access for the full range of activities which take place in the city, and hence in supporting its economy and quality of life. But the way in which the road network is used can contribute to carbon emissions, congestion, pollution and danger. Streets are also places where activities occur, including shopping, social contact and leisure.

The network combines the characteristics of a medieval city core and 19th and 20th Century suburban development. With the exception of the Outer Ring Road, few roads are purpose-built. There is little room for radical alteration of the road network, so any improvements will involve changing the way in which the network is used.

We propose a set of policy objectives in our report *Towards a Transport Strategy for York*. While the road network is essential to our objective of improving access, modifications to the ways in which it is used can achieve improved efficiency, reductions in air pollution and carbon emissions, and enhanced public health, road safety and liveability. Reallocation of road space can also enhance public realm, heritage and the economy.

For residents, commuters and visitors alike, the three most serious problems with the road network are congestion, pollution and the impacts on climate change. To address these, we propose a series of targets. In the light of the Council's commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030, the strategy should achieve a 35% reduction in traffic carbon emissions by 2027 and 70% by 2037. For air quality, it should seek a 25% reduction in NO₂ by 2027 and 50% by 2037 at the Council's measurement sites. The Council should aim to reduce road casualties by 20% by 2027 and 40% by 2037 against 2019 levels. We also propose targets for reducing congestion and increasing bus reliability.

In seeking to achieve these targets, we consider 14 different policy measures; other relevant policies are addressed in our companion report on *Managing Car Use*. These measures

involve a range of regulatory, physical and incentive measures, and are designed to direct traffic to more appropriate routes, influence the way in which drivers use those routes, and reallocate road space in favour of more sustainable means of travel.

We recommend a network-wide review of which roads are appropriately used for through traffic, and which should be protected in the interests of residents, the environment and active travel. Signing and street design should help discourage use of less suitable routes. The traffic control system should be used to moderate flows, manage queues, address disruptions, and protect buses and cyclists from congestion. New digital communications technology should be employed to provide real time information on the state of traffic on the road network, sources of disruption and alternative routes, parking availability and alternatives to car-based travel in the city. All changes to the road network should reflect the Council's own hierarchy of users, with pedestrians as the priority and journeys by private vehicle as the least important.

Within the city centre we propose specific measures to remove through traffic extend the footstreets and provide bus priority routes. We would like to see the inner ring road reclassified as a local access road, with through traffic directed away from the centre, a 20mph speed limit, and all junctions simplified to permit enhanced direct crossings by pedestrians and cyclists. The opportunity should be taken to remove traffic from Gillygate.

We advocate a queue management strategy on all radial roads to limit the flow of traffic into the city centre, discourage through traffic in inner York, and give greater priority to buses and cyclists. Secondary distributor roads should be managed to provide local access rather than through traffic, and more low traffic neighbourhoods and home zones should be introduced.

The planned upgrade of the outer ring road offers a major opportunity to reduce traffic flows within the city, and the measures which we propose above should be implemented in conjunction with it. To ensure that it remains effective in reducing traffic in York, the upgraded outer ring road should be managed to have little or no congestion.

Measures which reallocate or restrict road space can be unpopular, and politicians may be reluctant to implement them. It is thus essential that the need for them is made clear, by stressing the objectives which they are designed to achieve. In doing so the Council should build on recent trends in public opinion, which now favour reducing traffic in cities. The Council needs to specify and support a revenue budget sufficient to enable this programme of network operations and maintenance to be funded, and to work with the police to ensure that traffic management measures are effectively enforced.

We see management of the road network as central to our overall strategy. It can be reinforced by our proposals for reducing travel and for managing car use. It needs to support the strategies for public transport, cycling and walking by reducing congestion and improving access and perceptions of safety, and to be planned synergistically with the strategy for freight and logistics.