

Blue House and Jesmond Dene Road Working Group

Terms of Reference (Draft)

Background

Newcastle City Council has secured funding to make a series of highway improvements aimed at dealing with traffic flows across the North of Newcastle (focused on a series of junctions). Building on earlier work at Cowgate and Four Lane Ends, the package of measures now proposed covers (from west to east) Cow Hill, Kenton Road / Grandstand Road junction, the Blue House Roundabout, junctions on Jesmond Dene Road at Osborne Road and Moorfield; and the Haddricks Mill roundabouts at South Gosforth.

Blue House Roundabout experiences congestion during the peak hours on all approaches, with extensive queues on the Great North Road and Jesmond Dene Road approaches. The layout of the approach roads to the junction are not aligned and the potential realignment of these is restricted by the presence of a residential property on the north-west side of the junction and the proximity of heavily protected moorland. The approaches are laid out as avenues with trees. The Blue House Roundabout and the junction of Osborne Road and Jesmond Dene Road, in particular, experience substantial numbers of collisions due to the geometry and operating conditions; and these junctions cause acute problems for public transport (delay) and for pedestrians and cyclists (accessibility, safety and security).

Between the 25th July and the 21st August, the public, local businesses and local stakeholders were consulted on initial proposals for these junctions. Taking into account the scale and nature of the responses to the proposals for Blue House and the junction of Jesmond Dene Road with Osborne Road, the Council has decided to work with representatives of local residents' groups and other stakeholders to inform and bring forward a new proposal.

Key Considerations

- Proposals for change must take into account existing issues associated with the junction, including safety, health considerations and congestion.
- In relation to congestion and associated negative impacts, consideration must also be given to current predictions of future traffic growth affecting the study area.
- Proposals must improve road safety at the junctions.
- The completed scheme must be low maintenance.
- Relevant design guidance, standards and regulations should be considered and followed, as appropriate.
- The needs of all user groups should be considered.
- The junctions and local highway network will need to operate satisfactorily during construction.
- Impinging on the adjacent moorland, allotments and their access, and on private property, should be avoided if possible within the wider constraints of the requirement to make improvements.
- The access requirements for events that take place on the Moor, such as the Hoppings and the Mela, should be taken into account.

Remit of the Working Group

The Working Group is tasked with bringing forward ideas for alternative proposals for the study area, taking into account the considerations outlined earlier. Scheme elements under consideration will be:

- Design, size and position of the junction at Blue House
- Design of the junctions on Jesmond Dene Road with Moorfield and Osborne Road
- Position of footpaths and cycling infrastructure
- Materials used for footpaths and cycling infrastructure
- Signage
- The need for and position of bus stops and bus lanes
- Type and positioning of replanting/landscaping
- Need for any street furniture

Participants need to appreciate construction and maintenance budget constraints in this process. The ease of construction and the disruption the works will cause to businesses and residents in the area must be considered.

The group will be facilitated by John Dales (Chair of the national Transport Planning Society, and a Trustee of the national charity to promote everyday walking, Living Streets). John has been commissioned to provide the group with independent advice and support in the design process. Ultimately, John will be asked to make a recommendation to the council, based on the work of the group.

Timeline

The Working Group will meet a maximum of five times for no longer than two hours each time, with sufficient time between meetings to enable the Council is able to respond to comments and requests for information. A general arrangement drawing of the recommended scheme design will be produced before the end of November.

Proposed meeting dates are set out below, along with initial proposals for what each meeting will focus on. All are a 17:30 for a prompt 18:00 start (20:00 finish). The first meeting, on Monday 19th September, will be in the Bewick Dobson room at the Civic Centre. Only invited members of the group will be able to attend.

Monday 19th September. Introduction from NCC (GG), including the nature of the challenge.

Introduction from John Dales, on the opportunity both at Blue House and for what happens there to change Newcastle's future transport strategy. Introductory comments from all participants. Agree/clarify the Working Group's Terms of Reference, including the geographical scope of the study area; future programme; outputs; communications.

Monday 3rd October. Review July consultation scheme option, two others that NCC officers had previously prepared, and possibly another option prepared by JD. Consider pros/cons of each to derive an agreed assessment framework with different criteria (e.g. tree loss, cycle and walking provision, land take, queue lengths, cost...)

Monday 31st October Using the assessment framework previously devised, appraise 2-3 options (some previous, some new/modifications) for different traffic growth scenarios.

Monday 28th November Clarify, as far as possible, a single preferred scheme for the Council to take forward to formal consultation. Also, prepare recommendations to NCC about what else it should

do, covering policy, strategy and design, in order to enable more people-/city-friendly designs to come forward in other places in due course.

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