



Friday, 19 March 2021

Dear Sirs,

Whilst Independent Harrogate is broadly supportive of the proposed 'Station Gateway and Sustainable Transport Plans', we do have some serious concerns about the negative impact it could have on the local economy.

The town's hospitality and retail sector is currently in a very fragile and critical state as a result of the impact of online competition, and the catastrophic damage of COVID-19.

Without a comprehensive and fully up to date infrastructure plan that avoids 'pocket planning', how damaging could the 'Station Gateway and Sustainable Transport Plans' be to Harrogate's businesses?

In 2013, Harrogate Borough Council conducted a survey on the state of retail and hospitality in Harrogate, concluding it was healthy. That was then, but we are very different now, and the town is now in a critical place.

Putting it simply, the 2016 Masterplan is out of date! It urgently needs to be revised and, as an organisation representing 187 independent Harrogate businesses, we believe it should include:

- Comprehensive Park and Ride schemes
- Provisions for a large number of electric car charging points,
- Extensive safe cycling routes away from traffic and perhaps linked to low traffic neighbourhoods, thereby reducing congestion - especially school and rush hour traffic - and in turn reducing carbon emissions. This should also allow for good access to the town and to cater for the many visitors that come by car to Harrogate from all over the North of England and beyond.

The Masterplan also fails to address the need for a decent public transport provision for those living in many of Harrogate's outlying villages, where more often than not there is no regular bus service.

And by focusing purely on cycling infrastructure in the centre of town without boosting public transport, both NYCC and HBC are effectively discriminating against village residents, and creating a playground for Harrogate residents only, many of whom will happily get into their cars to drive to work in Leeds and other areas.

I must stress we are not anti-cycling, far from it. One idea that we would wholeheartedly be supportive of is holding a number of 'Cycling Sundays'.

This would work by closing a number of central streets to traffic, accompanied by free parking in HBC's car parks, so that visitors could park up and either walk or cycle around the town. This cautious approach would help gauge the appetite for cycling in Harrogate without too much detrimental economic impact.

Another idea is to emulate a recent initiative in Leeds, where the City Council will reward those with electric vehicles by giving them permits to park for free in all council owned car parks and on the street.

Hospitality and retail rely on the income that visitors bring to the town, which is estimated to be between 60/70 per cent of their turnover.

Visitors arriving by car need easy access to the town and somewhere convenient and close to the shops/cafes/restaurants to park. To ignore the considerable income that visitors bring will be hugely damaging and they should not be excluded from any surveys, which sadly appears to be the case at the moment.

Through our discussions and observations of HBC Councillors' opinions, they seem to be supportive of the following:

- Low traffic neighbourhoods - why then the re-routing of traffic through them?
- Reducing congestion - reducing double to single lanes is proven to increase congestion.
- Reducing carbon emissions - how can carbon emissions come down when more cars are standing still on narrower thoroughways?
- Having good access to the town - we believe this plan will deter some segments of the essential mix of people the town needs to survive.

Here is a link to a study which looks closely at the impact of such plans:

<https://www.visordown.com/news/industry/research-suggests-cycle-lanes-increase-congestion-and-pollution>

We believe in an inclusive mix for everyone, i.e. walkers, bus travellers, cyclists, disabled people, commuters, tourists and general visitors.

We urge HBC and North Yorkshire County Council to implement a well thought out and cautiously phased updated 'Masterplan', one that does not further damage the very fragile state of the local economy, and one that will be designed to avoid any costly mistakes.

We welcome the Station Gateway plans in general, but in the interest of not increasing congestion and carbon emissions, we feel Station Parade should remain two lanes.

Cyclists should be directed on to East Parade with good links to York Place and beyond particularly routed through roads that are low traffic neighbourhoods, allowing for safe cycling in quiet low traffic neighbourhoods. We have discussed these ideas with a few of the major local schools and they too agreed with this approach.

To reduce carbon emissions, direct routes should be preferred rather than re-routing through residential neighbourhoods, or along much longer circular routes through the town centre, which can only create more congestion.

Therefore, in answer to the direct questions of the survey, we are calling for:

- Station Parade to remain as two lanes and the proper synchronisation of traffic lights, Parliament Street, Kings Road, Ripon Road, Cheltenham Parade and Lower Station Parade
- East Parade as the preferred location of the cycling lanes, connecting it to the start of the Nidderdale Greenway in Asda carpark, with secure bike parking facilities in Victoria car park
- James Street remaining open to vehicular access, whilst supporting the narrowing of it at its junction with Station Parade to assist in pedestrian access

Additionally, to ensure as many people as possible in the District know about the proposals, we ask information is included in the Council Tax letters that will be issued shortly.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Ogden  
For and on behalf of Independent Harrogate