

Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme: Amendment to New Briggate Element of the Headrow Gateway Scheme

Date: 05 October 2021

Report of: Team Leader Transport Planning (Projects)

Report to: Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation)

Will the decision be open for call in? ☐Yes ☒No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐Yes ☒No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The opportunity to amend the layout of the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street, and reduce Merrion Street to one lane on the approach to the junction, has been generated by the recent changes to the operation of New Briggate and Vicar Lane by the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme (LPTIP). The movement of northbound buses from New Briggate to Vicar Lane and the pedestrianisation of the lower section of New Briggate means that more green time can be allocated to the Merrion Street arm of the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street. As a consequence, the amendment described in this report will not cause delays to buses or general traffic.
- This report therefore seeks approval for an amendment to the New Briggate element of the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme. This design change to the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street enhances the quality of walking and cycling infrastructure in the city centre and ensures the scheme ties in with a forthcoming highway scheme.
- By improving walking and cycling infrastructure thereby making walking and cycling safer and more attractive, this amendment will contribute to the council's ambitions on inclusive growth, health and wellbeing, sustainable infrastructure and the climate emergency. The change also ensures that public funds are spent efficiently by avoiding abortive work and minimises disruption on the highway.
- In terms of cycling connectivity, this change will make an important contribution to the creation of a protected cycling route through Leeds City Centre, which avoids key bus and motor vehicle routes. In doing so, the proposal helps to deliver the headline goals of the draft Leeds Transport Strategy for a city where people do not need to own a car and everyone has access to an affordable, zero carbon transport provision.
- The amendment will have a significant positive impact on pedestrians, cycle users and road safety. Due to the recently delivered changes to the highway network and bus routing on

Vicar Lane and the lower end of New Briggate, this amendment will not have an adverse impact on general traffic or bus journey times. The amendment removes one stretch of existing kerbside loading in the area, but this is mitigated through the provision of a new loading area with no time restrictions.

- The impact of this change on highway resilience will be monitored and mitigation measures will be developed, if necessary, to address any congestion issues.

Recommendations

- a) Approve the amendment to the New Briggate element of the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme as set out in the drawings in Appendix B;
- b) Request the City Solicitor to advertise the draft Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) as shown in Appendix C, and if no valid objections are received, to make, seal and implement the TROs as advertised;
- c) Approve, with reference to the powers contained in Section 64(2) and Section 66(4) of the Highways Act 1980, the conversion (from footway to cycle track) of the lengths of existing footway shown as proposed cycle track in the drawings see (Appendix A) and that cycle tracks for use by pedal cyclists are constructed on the parts of the highway shown as cycle track in the drawings under the powers contained in Section 65(1) of the Highways Act 1980 on (see Appendix A).

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 On 30th July 2019, a report to the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) was approved, which approved the preliminary design for the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme (see Appendix A) and enabled detailed design and construction to progress. On 1st September 2020, a further report to the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation) was approved, enabling the Traffic Regulation Orders for the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme to be advertised and implemented.
- 2 The detailed design phase for the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme commenced in 2019 after initial approval was granted. Due to a delay caused by a third-party scheme on New Briggate, the delivery of the New Briggate element of the LPTIP scheme had to be delayed by around one year. The detailed design work was therefore paused in late 2019, recommencing in late 2020 and continuing into 2021. This delay created an opportunity to amend the design for the junction of Merrion Street and New Briggate in order to respond to changes in national policy and the development of wider proposals for improving cycling connectivity in the city centre. Furthermore, the pedestrianisation of the lower section of New Briggate and the relocation of northbound buses to Vicar Lane created additional capacity at the junction, which prompted an exploration of how road space might be reallocated to active modes.
- 3 During the detailed design phase, the Department for Transport issued Local Transport Note 1/20 'Cycling Infrastructure Design' (LTN 1/20). One of the key principles in LTN 1/20 is that cycles should be treated as vehicles; therefore, on urban streets, cycle routes should be physically separated from pedestrian routes. Cycle users and pedestrians should not be required to share space, including at crossings and junctions. This principle is particularly important in areas of high pedestrian and cycle flows. The approved design for the scheme required cycle users to utilise shared-use footways and toucan crossings at the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street to transition between two sections of cycleway. Given the high existing levels of pedestrian flow and the high expected levels of cycle flow in this

area, the approved design would not have been consistent with LTN 1/20 as it would have caused conflicts between pedestrians and cycle users.

- 4 The cycling infrastructure on New Briggate was always envisaged as forming part of a wider east-west protected cycle route on the north side of the city centre, allowing cycle users to by-pass Eastgate and the Headrow, but during the original design phase, it was not known when the later phases of this route would be constructed. During the detailed design phase for the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme, feasibility designs for the next phase of this protected cycleway, which will run along Merrion Street and Great George Street, were developed. Due to the availability of a new funding source, the Merrion Street cycleway scheme is earmarked for delivery in 2022/23, the financial year after the completion of the LPTIP scheme at New Briggate. The approved LPTIP scheme for the New Briggate and Merrion Street junction did not tie-in with the Merrion Street cycleway, which would mean that, if the approved LPTIP scheme was delivered, this junction would need to be reconfigured again, less than a year after the completion of the LPTIP scheme. Costly and disruptive changes to kerbs and signal equipment would need to be made. This would represent an inefficient use of public funds and cause more disturbance to the public.
- 5 During the detailed design phase, a road safety issue was identified with the approved design for the scheme at the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street (shown in Appendix A). Vehicle tracking indicated that it was not possible for one larger vehicle (such as a bus, coach or articulated vehicle) to make the left turn from Merrion Street to New Briggate at the same time as another vehicle was making the turn in the adjacent lane. This was due to changes in kerblines at the junction, related to the provision of the cycleway on the east side of New Briggate, which reduced the amount of carriageway space in the junction for vehicles to make the manoeuvre. As a result, the retention of two lanes on the Merrion Street arm of the junction could lead to collisions between larger vehicle and other vehicles.
- 6 In response to the policy changes and network ambitions describe above, this amendment to the design for the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street (see Appendix B) includes the following key features:
 - The replacement of shared-use footways and toucan crossings with continuous sections of cycleways on all three arms of the junction of Merrion Street and New Briggate, with separate signalised cycle movements through the junction.
 - The provision of a short section of kerb-protected cycleway on the Merrion Street arm of the junction, which will form the eastern-most section of the Merrion Street cycleway, the remainder of which will be delivered by a follow-on scheme in 2022/32. The Merrion Street cycleway will link up with the cycleways on New Briggate under signal control. This requires the removal of the existing far-side lane on Merrion Street at its junction with New Briggate.
 - The existing three lanes on Merrion Street west of Wade Lane will be retained, but the lane designations and road signage will be amended on Merrion Street between Wade Lane and Woodhouse Lane to reflect the removal of one lane east of Wade Lane.
 - The scope of the lining and signage changes on the network will include Woodhouse Lane and Great George Street to prepare road users for the new lane designations on Merrion Street to reduce the risk of dangerous lane change movements. Road users heading to Merrion Street from Woodhouse Lane and Great George Street will be asked to enter the correct lane for their onward journey *before* they cross the junction of Merrion Street and Woodhouse Lane, so that they do not change lane on Merrion Street itself.

- The prohibition of loading at any time on certain sections of Merrion Street where it was previously permitted outside the peak periods, including on the south side of Merrion Street between New Briggate and the standalone pedestrian crossing on Merrion Street (see Appendix C).
- As mitigation for these loading restrictions, loading will be permitted on a length of the north side of Merrion Street between the hackney carriage rank and the pedestrian crossing over Merrion Street at the New Briggate junction (see Appendix C).

7 The amendment to the scheme will thus improve the scheme as follows:

- It will enhance the quality and legibility of cycling and walking infrastructure in the scheme, reducing conflicts between pedestrians and cycle users and ensuring the scheme is consistent with the principles of LTN 1/20.
- It will future proof the junction for the forthcoming Merrion Street cycleway scheme, removing the need for costly changes to kerbs and signal equipment in the year after the completion of the LPTIP scheme. This will ensure public funds are used efficiently and disruption on the highway is minimised. In doing so, the amendment will contribute to the creation of a protected cycling network in Leeds city centre, which allows cycle users to avoid bus and general traffic routes.
- It will ensure that turning movements at the junction of New Briggate and Merrion Street are safe for road users on the carriageway: because only one vehicle will make the left turn from Merrion Street to New Briggate at a time.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: Little London and Woodhouse

Have ward members been consulted?

☒ Yes

☐ No

- 8 The proposal will have significant benefits for cycle users and pedestrians, providing a higher quality of cycling and walking infrastructure compared to the previous scheme. Conflicts between pedestrians and cycle users will be minimised as they will not share space, either on the cycleway or at the junction. This will be of particular value to pedestrians, including disabled users, who do not feel comfortable using shared-use footways in busy areas. The amended layout is also more legible for cycle users who will be clear what route they need to take to move between the different sections of cycleway.
- 9 The proposals will have a significant benefit for the public finances since it will avoid the need for abortive work at the New Briggate and Merrion Street junction and reduce the amount of work that will be required for the future cycleway scheme on Merrion Street.
- 10 The pedestrianisation of the lower section of New Briggate and the relocation of northbound bus services from New Briggate to Vicar Lane has significantly reduced the demand for the New Briggate arm of the New Briggate and Merrion Street junction. This allows more green time to be allocated to the Merrion Street arm of the junction, which means that it is possible to remove a traffic lane on Merrion Street without causing delays to traffic on Merrion Street. Nevertheless, the scheme designers have still investigated the effect of the scheme on bus services and general traffic for the following reasons:
- Merrion Street is on the route of the First Leeds number 51/52 services, which have a combined frequency of up to eight buses per hour and form part of the Core Bus Network.

- Merrion Street carries a significant volume of general traffic on the City Centre Loop Road and, while the function of the Loop will change after the delivery of the City Square Scheme, Merrion Street will continue to accommodate traffic egressing from several multi-storey car parks and loading areas.
- Merrion Street performs an important role as an exit route from the car parks that serve the Arena and it is used as a diversion route of the Headrow when events or demonstrations lead to the closure of the Headrow.

Detailed traffic modelling was therefore undertaken using the Leeds City Centre AIMSUN model to investigate the impact of the amendment to the scheme on general traffic and bus services, including during Arena events (see Appendix D). The modelling work shows that the reduction of Merrion Street to one lane between Wade Lane and New Briggate will not cause delays to either buses or to general traffic, either in the peak hours or after Arena events. A number of scenarios were tested in the model to ensure the scheme will not cause significant delays to buses or general traffic in the short or long term, or at particular times. The modelling indicated that the proposal does not cause delays to buses or general traffic in the following scenarios:

- Under normal weekday conditions, before the delivery of the City Centre Package schemes in both peak hours;
- Under normal weekday conditions, after the delivery of the City Centre Package schemes, in both peak hours;
- During the evening, after the PM peak, in the 60 minutes after a night-time event at Leeds Arena finishes when vehicles are leaving car parks near the Arena; and
- During a Saturday afternoon in the 60 minutes after an afternoon event at Leeds Arena finishes when vehicles are leaving car parks near the Arena.

- 11 This design change will impact the availability of kerbside loading areas for businesses on the south side of the eastern end of Merrion Street. As explained in point 17 below, this will only impact two food takeaway businesses, which will no longer be able to receive deliveries in the off-peak periods on the kerbside on the south side of Merrion Street. However, a length of kerbside will be available for loading on the north side of Merrion Street, which is located directly opposite these businesses (see Appendices B and C). There will be further opportunities for loading nearby at the northern end of New Briggate.
- 12 The design has ensured that the resilience of the highway network is maintained in this area, despite the conversion of Merrion Street to one traffic lane. Since Merrion Street is part of a route for abnormal load vehicles, the design has maintained sufficient width for abnormal load vehicles to pass at the narrowest point. Except for a very short length on the final approach to the junction, the design has maintained sufficient width on Merrion Street (between Wade Lane and New Briggate) for a vehicle to pass a stationary vehicle, such as a broken-down bus. This has been achieved partly through the retention of the lay-by on the north side.
- 13 To avoid adverse impacts on general traffic or buses, resources will be allocated to the LCC UTM team to ensure they can monitor signal plans in the area, as appropriate.
- 14 The impact of the scheme on highway network resilience will be closely monitored. Should it prove necessary, it will be possible to remove part of the cycleway infrastructure at the eastern end of Merrion Street to restore two-lane running on this section, prior to the delivery of a permanent cycleway on Merrion Street and Great George Street.
- 15 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) Screening form has been prepared for this Report (see Appendix E). In summary, the screening found that the proposal

promotes positive impacts for people with equality characteristics (including disabled users) by reducing conflicts between pedestrians and cycle users and creating safe, legible cycle routes. Negative impacts have been avoided by ensuring the buses are not delayed and pick-up and drop-off opportunities are maintained.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 16 The Ward Members were advised of this amendment to the scheme and invited to make comments on 23rd July 2021. No comments or objections from Ward Members have been received to date.
- 17 The Executive Member was briefed on this amendment to the scheme on 12th August 2021. The Executive Member is supportive of the proposal.
- 18 Detailed internal engagement has taken place on all aspects of the proposal with officers from Transport Policy, Traffic Engineering, UTMCI, Highways Asset Management and City Centre Management.
- 19 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and the bus operators (including First Leeds) were consulted on 27th July 2021 at a meeting in which the plans for the scheme were presented and explained. No objections were received from WYCA or the bus operators.
- 20 The Council's Cycling Champion was also briefed on the proposal on 12th August 2021. The Cycling Champion is supportive of the proposal.
- 21 The Leeds Cycle Forum Sub-Group was consulted on the proposal on 21st July 2021. The Sub-Group is supportive of the proposal.
- 22 Engagement with local businesses with frontages on the south side of the eastern end of Merrion Street has taken place to determine the impact of the proposal on their operations.
 - The two bar/pub businesses receive their deliveries via New Briggate Yard, at the rear of their premises. The scheme does not affect access to New Briggate Yard and no changes to the loading or waiting restrictions on New Briggate Yard are proposed as part of the scheme; therefore, these businesses will not be impacted by the proposal.
 - The two food takeaway businesses currently receive their deliveries on the south side of Merrion Street by van. This will no longer be possible as a result of this proposal as loading on south side of Merrion Street will be prohibited at all times. However, loading will be permitted throughout the day on a length of kerbside on the north side of Merrion Street, located directly opposite these businesses and an additional loading bay will also be available on New Briggate, near the Grand Arcade (see Appendices B and C). Consequently, these businesses will have adequate opportunities to load, given the nature and frequency of their loading requirements.
- 23 All affected businesses on the south side of Merrion Street have been provided with details of the proposals to revise loading restrictions in this area.
- 24 This proposal does not impact stakeholders on New Briggate.

What are the resource implications?

- 25 This amendment to the scheme will be fully funded by the New Briggate element of the LPTIP. The proposed amendment to the New Briggate scheme has already been included in the budget, so it will make no further calls on the LPTIP.

What are the legal implications?

- 26 Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders are subject to The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. They are established using the powers contained within the Highways Act 1980, the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, and the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 (in relation to Hackney Carriages).
- 27 Cycle tracks within the public highway are created by a Highway Authority under section 65 of the Highways Act 1980. This scheme includes cycle tracks on the following streets (as shown in the drawings in Appendix B):
- New Briggate; and
 - Merrion Street.
- 28 This report is not classified as a key decision and is not eligible for call-in.
- 29 There is no exempt or confidential information contained within this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 30 The scheme is subject to regular risk management meetings at which the key risks are identified and monitored, and mitigation measures for each risk are devised.
- 31 The top five scheme risks in the risk register at the time of writing are: site instructed changes while the work is in progress resulting from errors in design; extreme weather delaying the work; poor performance by contractors; theft, intrusion or vandalism at work sites; and an unplanned need for more night-shift work. There are mitigation plans for these risks.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

☒ Inclusive Growth

☒ Health and Wellbeing

☒ Climate Emergency

- 32 *Inclusive Growth.* The proposal will promote inclusive growth, firstly, by making walking and cycling safer and more convenient in Leeds city centre. This will assist people who do not have access to a car, including young people, to access jobs and services in the city centre, which has a high concentration of jobs and services. Secondly, the proposal has been designed to meet the needs of local businesses, which will support their growth and vitality.
- 33 *Health and Wellbeing.* The proposal will support health and wellbeing by making walking and cycling safer and more convenient in Leeds city centre. This will encourage more people to walk and cycle in the city centre and derive the associated physical and mental health benefits of doing so.
- 34 *Climate Emergency.* The proposal will support efforts to address the climate emergency by making walking and cycling more attractive, which will encourage more people to use these zero carbon transport modes for journeys to and through the city centre, rather than choosing transport modes that generate carbon emissions, such as driving.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

- 35 In addition to the preferred option, which is described in this report and set out in Appendix B, the following options were also considered but rejected for the reasons set out below:

- Retain two lanes on Merrion Street and keep the hackney carriage ranks and loading area.* This option would retain the existing level of carriageway capacity up to the stopline on Merrion Street. However, this option was rejected for two reasons. Firstly, it would not resolve the safety issue identified with the two-lane option: a large vehicle would not be able to make the left turn from Merrion Street alongside another vehicle, safely. This would mean that, in practice, the capacity of the junction would not be retained as there would not be two operational lanes through the junction. Secondly, this option would not future proof the proposed cycling scheme on Merrion Street, requiring the layout of the junction to be amended again in the near future when the Merrion Street cycleway scheme is constructed; this would involve costly alterations to kerbs and signal equipment, which would not represent an efficient use of public funds. On balance, benefit of maintaining the capacity of the Merrion Street arm of the junction (which offers only marginal gains for general traffic and buses) was not judged to be sufficiently large to outweigh these disbenefits.
- Retain two lanes on Merrion Street by removing the hackney carriage rank and loading area.* This option would retain the existing level of carriageway capacity up to the stopline on Merrion Street by converting the loading bay and hackney carriage rank into a traffic lane, allowing for the retention of two traffic lanes when the current far-side lane is converted into a cycleway. However, it was rejected for two reasons. Firstly, it would not resolve the safety issue identified with the two-lane option: a large vehicle would not be able to make the left turn from Merrion Street alongside another vehicle, safely. Secondly, this option would result in the loss of a valuable hackney carriage rank and a vital loading bay for nearby businesses. On balance, benefit of maintaining the capacity of the Merrion Street arm of the junction (which offers only marginal gains for general traffic and buses) was not judged to be sufficiently large to outweigh these disbenefits.
- Retain two lanes on Merrion Street by removing the cycle infrastructure on the east side of New Briggate.* This option would retain the existing level of carriageway capacity up to the stopline on Merrion Street and through the Merrion Street/New Briggate junction. It would also resolve the safety issue by allowing a large vehicle to turn alongside another vehicle, safely. However, this option was rejected for two reasons. Firstly, it would have removed a key link in the city centre protected network which was approved as part of the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme. There is no other route for the east-west cycling link that is provided by the segment of cycleway on the east side of New Briggate. Secondly, it would not be compatible with LTN 1/20 because the removal of the separate cycleway on the east side of New Briggate would mean cycle users would have to share space with pedestrians on this section of the route. On balance, the benefit of maintaining the capacity of the Merrion Street arm of the junction were not judged to be sufficiently large to outweigh these disbenefits.
- Bus gate on New Briggate.* This option was investigated to determine whether a peak periods bus gate on New Briggate restricting the right turn from New Briggate to Vicar Lane would reduce the risk of delays to buses as a result of the amendment to the scheme. The modelling undertaken to analyse this option indicated that this bus gate did not have any significant positive effect on bus journey times. This option was therefore discarded as the bus gate did not outweigh the disbenefits of removing one of the two unrestricted accesses for general traffic to Vicar Lane North, Harrison Street, Mark Lane and New Briggate. This option could be revisited if required without the need for any kerblines or signalling changes.

b) How will success be measured?

- 36 A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan will be used to measure the impact of the LPTIP Headrow Gateway scheme, which will include an assessment of the safety benefits and cycling connectivity benefits of this change to the New Briggate element of the scheme, as well as its impact on the performance of the wider highway network and bus reliability.
- 37 There will be the opportunity to restore two-lane running on Merrion Street should this prove necessary following monitoring and evaluation work, prior to the delivery of the permanent cycleway scheme on Merrion Street and Great George Street. The costs and benefits of doing so would, of course, need to be assessed.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 38 Should the recommendations in this report be approved, the scheme will be delivered between Autumn 2021 and March 2022.

Appendices

- 39 Appendix A – General Arrangement drawing showing the original approved scheme
- 40 Appendix B – General Arrangement drawings showing proposed amendments to the scheme
- 41 Appendix C – Outline Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) Plan
- 42 Appendix D – New Briggate Modelling Note
- 43 Appendix E – Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) Screening document

Background papers

- 44 None