



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL Cabinet Highways Report

11

Report of: Executive Director, Place

Date: 14th July 2011

Subject: THE WICKER/ DEREK DOOLEY WAY JUNCTION AND BUS GATE

Author of Report: Dick Skelton – 0114 273 4479

Summary:

The report is to inform Members of the current situation in the Wicker area following the report to Cabinet Highways Committee on 9 June 2011.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- 6.1 Notwithstanding the continued recession, there appear to have been few material changes to local businesses over the last year.
- 6.2 The traffic situation also appears to be similar to thirteen months ago, whilst the trend in the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued to motorists continues to decline.

Recommendations:

- 7.1 No changes be made to the hours of operation of the Wicker bus gate.
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Background Papers: Reports to:

- Cabinet Highways Committee, 17 June 2010 entitled “Alterations at the Wicker/ Derek Dooley Way Junction and Associated Works”.
 - City Centre South & East Planning & Highways area Board, 6 March 2009 entitled “Wicker Bus Gates”.
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Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
NO Cleared by: Catherine Rodgers
Legal Implications
NO Cleared by: Julian Ward
Equality of Opportunity Implications
NO Cleared by: Ian Oldershaw
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
NO
Human rights Implications
NO:
Environmental and Sustainability implications
NO
Economic impact
NO
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
NO
Area(s) affected
CENTRAL
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader
Leigh Bramall
Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in
Culture, Economy and Sustainability
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
NO
Press release
NO

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report is to inform Members of the current situation in the Wicker area following the report to the Cabinet Highways Committee on 17 June 2010 and its resolution to defer making a decision until after a site visit, at its meeting on 9 June 2011.
- 1.2 Both the traffic and business situations appear to be little changed since the last report. However, one take-away has closed whilst another appears to be being refurbished. Balancing this, a further restaurant has expanded and two others have been granted planning permission. Both of the latter premises have been unused for a number of years. The office block, on the corner of the Wicker and Blonk Street, has also recently been sold and the new owners are confident of letting more floor space.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE

- 2.1 The works that have been put in place, since the construction of the Inner Relief Road, meet "City of Opportunity" priorities to empower local people by incorporating their aspirations in the design of their streets. The report contributes to "Putting the Customer First" by responding to people who have expressed various views about the initial arrangements at the Wicker/ Derek Dooley Way and local signage issues, whilst reviewing the cost and benefits of addressing those issues.
- 2.2 The works also contribute to the "Protecting and Enhancing the Environment" objective of the Council's Corporate Plan "A City of Opportunity", particularly the "Reducing Congestion" priority. The changes implemented have also helped to better manage traffic flows and inform drivers, both on the Ring Road and on local streets, in and around the Wicker area.
- 2.3 The works undertaken are also in line with the recent Sheffield Transport Vision which was adopted by Cabinet in December 2010. The objectives of the Vision are to create increased opportunities, a better environment, a healthier population, a competitive low carbon economy and a culture where the car is not always the first choice.

3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 3.1 The main outcomes have been:
 - Improved signage.
 - Improvements to junction arrangements.

- Fewer Penalty Charge Notices issued for bus gate contraventions at the Wicker bus gates.
- 3.2 Improving junctions and signing appears to have helped to reduce driver confusion and therefore, journey time delays for this through traffic. In turn, this means less traffic on local access roads which aids local access traffic, cyclists, pedestrians, taxis, public transport and service vehicles. The reduced congestion also helps the quality of the local environment, most importantly in the Wicker shopping area.

4.0 REPORT

Background

- 4.1 Requests from some traders had been received for the hours of operation of the Wicker bus gates to be amended from 24 hours to 12, (that is from 7am – 7pm) and not to be operated on Sundays and Bank Holidays, as a way of assisting their businesses by allowing free access to the area for all traffic in the evenings, etc. A report on this issue was submitted to the meeting of the City Centre, South and East Planning and Highways Area Board on 15 December 2008. Following representations from local traders, Board agreed to defer the item and undertake an evening site visit to the Wicker and the surrounding streets. This site visit took place on 14 January 2009.
- 4.2 Following the site visit a further report, including consideration of a petition collected by some 30 businesses in the Wicker area, containing over 2,000 signatures, was considered by the Area Board on the 16th February 2009, requesting that the hours of operation of the Wicker bus gates be amended from 24 hours to 12, (that is from 7am – 7pm).
- 4.3 The meeting resolved that the hours of operation of the Wicker bus gate be amended to 7.00am-7.00pm, seven days a week for a one year trial period and the Director of Development Services be requested to submit a report, within a month of the Board, outlining the work required to allow for the safe operation of the new hours.
- 4.4 A further petition containing 88 signatures was presented to full Council on 4 March 2009 by the Wicker businesses, calling for the authority to urgently implement the decisions made by the Area Planning and Highways Board on 16 February “in the light of the deteriorating economic climate.”
- 4.5 A further report was presented to the Board on 16 March 2009, as requested at the 16 February Board. This report highlighted the outcome of subsequent site investigation work and the issuing of the full Stage 3 Road Safety Audit Draft Report for the Northern Inner Relief Road (NIRR), including the Wicker, along with the interim findings of the Stage 4 Road Safety Audit. It

also set out the road safety and legal implications of implementing the 16 February 2009 resolution of the Board. In particular, it is considered to be worth highlighting paragraph 5.1 of the Legal Implications section of the March 2009 report, which states:

“Case law makes it clear that whilst a Highway Authority is not normally liable for breach of the duty to promote road safety in Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, it will be liable if it creates a known danger to highway users which cannot be designed or mitigated away. In the light of the comments in sections 3 and 4 of this report it is the view of the Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Governance that there is a very strong probability that the Council would be liable if a pedestrian or other road user was killed or injured at this junction following the relaxation of the restrictions. In addition the Council might be in a difficult position were there to be a Coroner’s inquest into a fatality” Section 3 dealt with road safety issues and Section 4 alternative design solutions, should the bus gate be opened up to general traffic.

4.6 This latter report raised a number of issues/ questions from the Members of the Board. In order to answer some of the points raised by Members, a more demonstrable understanding of why some drivers were both entering the bus gate and then compounding this action by also turning left onto the NIRR was needed. This latter illegal manoeuvre is of particular concern, as it brings these vehicles into conflict with pedestrians legitimately crossing the NIRR on a ‘green man’, at a busy pedestrian crossing. This better understanding was achieved by taking the registration numbers of those drivers entering the bus gate and then turning left. Questionnaires were then sent to the vehicle owners. A traffic count was also undertaken at the same time. Comparison was also made with the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued before and after the highway works outlined in section 4.7 below.

4.7 A number of improvements were made to junctions and signing in the area, as follows:

- A new traffic island and improved/ additional signs and road markings were installed at and in advance of, the outbound Wicker bus gate (completed early September 2009).
- A package of local access signs, both to and from the Wicker and improved parking signs, have been implemented. These measures were agreed beforehand with representatives of the local traders.
- The strategic signs, approaching the NIRR on Sheffield Parkway and on Sheaf Street, were improved taking better account of the new traffic patterns established following completion of the Relief Road.

- Further measures at Park Square roundabout on the Exchange Place approach to the Wicker area, have reinforced the local nature of these roads now that the NIRR is the preferred route for through traffic (works completed 27 November 2009).
- Short stay parking charges at council car parks in the Wicker area were reduced to 20p per hour for the first two hours, in order to assist local businesses. These have since been raised to 40p per hour in line with permit parking zone increases across the city. The affected car parks are Wicker Lane and Willey Street as well as Stanley Lane, which will be operational as a short stay pay and display car park later in the year.

4.8 Following the above works and surveys, a report was presented to the Cabinet Highways Committee on 17 June 2010. The findings from the number plate survey, of vehicles undertaking illegal manoeuvres, were:

- 90% were not Sheffield residents.
- 41% were following their Satellite Navigation Devices.
- 41%, rather worryingly, saw the signs but said that they did not understand them.
- 40% did not see the signs and
- 7% were following the car in front.

4.9 A traffic count was carried out at the same time as the survey (3 June 2009). This count was repeated on 17 March 2010 after the works outlined in paragraph 4.7 above had been carried out. These counts are attached at Appendix A. The headline results from these traffic counts show:

- The number of vehicles travelling illegally outbound through the bus gate reduced by 69%.
- The number of vehicles travelling illegally outbound through the bus gate and then turning left into the pedestrian crossing reduced by 82%.

4.10 A comparison of the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued over two similar periods (February to April and October to December, 2009) were made and the number of PCNs issued showed a 55% reduction. Again, this comparison was made largely either side of the works outlined in paragraph 4.7.

4.11 From the information obtained from the surveys, outlined in paragraphs 4.8 to 4.10, it was possible to answer the Member concerns raised as a result of the report to Area Board on 16 March 2009.

4.12 Following the 17 June 2010 report Members of the Cabinet Highways Committee resolved that, "...a further report be submitted to this Committee in 12 months time outlining the

impact of the reaffirming of the hours of operation of the Wicker bus gate on traffic and local businesses in the area.”

- 4.13 At its 9 June 2011 meeting, Cabinet Highways Committee resolved to defer a decision pending a site visit.

The Current Situation

- 4.14 In terms of the traffic situation, a further traffic count was undertaken at the junction of the Wicker and Derek Dooley Way on 16 March 2011. This count is attached at Appendix B and shows no change in the total numbers of vehicles illegally using the bus gate, compared to last year. However, the number of illegal left turning vehicles has reduced slightly from 14 to 8 (over the 12 hour count period) and those illegally travelling ahead have increased slightly from 108 to 114.
- 4.15 The number of PCNs issued continues to show a gradual decline (see Appendix C). It is suggested that this decline is due to a number of factors including the improvements made to the local highway network as outlined in paragraph 4.7 above and satellite navigation devices becoming ever-more up to date.
- 4.16 Since the last report there appears to have been little change to the business situation on the Wicker. One take-away has closed and another is apparently being refurbished. Imran’s restaurant has expanded into the first floor of their premises and planning permission has been granted for a change of use to a restaurant (food and drink) at Woodside Travel, which has not been in use for many years. Planning permission has also recently been sought for works to the Halal Fried Chicken Restaurant at the junction of Derek Dooley Way and the Wicker.
- 4.17 The North Bank office block, which has frontage access to the Wicker, has recently been sold. The new owners are moving forward with a large marketing exercise and are confident of letting more space.
- 4.18 There have been recent press reports comparing the Wicker/ NIRR junction to a similar road layout on the new Derby ring road. The report states that Derby Council has resolved the issue of vehicles turning illegally left and into conflict with pedestrians legitimately crossing a pedestrian crossing. The local press report stated:
- “A neighbouring council has solved the same safety concerns at an identical junction by erecting signs and building kerbs which make it difficult for drivers to turn and local traders want Sheffield to consider doing the same.”
- 4.19 The kerb layout and permanent signs, in both Sheffield and Derby, are essentially the same. However, as Derby Ring Road (RR) has only recently opened there is an additional, temporary sign warning of pedestrians crossing on the adjacent pedestrian

facility.

- 4.20 The major difference between the two road layouts is that the Derby RR is only one lane wide (at the junction in question), whereas the NIRR is a dual carriageway and two lanes wide. As the ring road in Sheffield is twice the width of Derby's, this makes it very much easier for vehicles in Sheffield to make the illegal left turn manoeuvre and at a higher speed. This fact alone makes the two situations considerably different and makes it much easier for vehicles in Sheffield to carry out this clearly illegal and dangerous manoeuvre.
- 4.21 It is perhaps also worth noting that whilst the junction in Derby does not have an associated bus gate, there is one shortly before the junction. This bus gate serves the same function in Derby as the Wicker bus gate in Sheffield - it enforces the local access loop system and prevents through traffic from entering the city. As in Sheffield, Derby has had considerable problems in enforcing this bus gate and a concerted Police effort has been necessary. Due to resourcing implications, this level of enforcement cannot continue. Therefore, should the situation not improve, Derby will consider the introduction of bus gate cameras at this location, as we have done in Sheffield.
- 4.22 Local Councillors have been asked for their views and observations with regard to any changes to local businesses on the Wicker within the last 12 months. Two Burngreave councillors are in favour of reducing the bus gate hours and one Central councillor, on balance, considers that the bus gate should remain as it now is. Any further comments will be reported verbally at the Committee meeting.
- 4.23 As with previous practice, local business feedback has been sought through the Wicker Community Forum. Again, any comments received will be reported verbally at Committee.

Relevant Implications

- 4.24 There are no legal or financial implications arising from this report. The measures that have been taken are intended to improve the overall accessibility and choice for all Sheffield residents. The equality impact is, therefore, considered to be positive. Improving accessibility and road safety are contained in the overall priorities of the Local Transport Plan. Schemes funded through these programmes are expected to address this whenever appropriate and are, therefore, judged not to materially impact on community safety.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 No new alternatives have been considered for this report back. However, a number of alternatives were considered in the earlier reports.

6.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Notwithstanding the continued recession, there appear to have been few material changes to local businesses over the last year.
- 6.2 The traffic situation also appears to be similar to thirteen months ago, whilst the trend in the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued to motorists continues to decline.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 No changes be made to the hours of operation of the Wicker bus gate.

John Bann
Head of Transport & Highways

20 June 2011

WICKER STRAIGHT AHEAD and left 030609.xls

WEDNESDAY JUNE 3rd 2009

0700-1900hrs	0700-0800hrs	0800-0900hrs	0900-1000hrs	1000-1100hrs	1100-1200hrs	1200-1300hrs	1300-1400hrs	1400-1500hrs	1500-1600hrs	1600-1700hrs	1700hrs-1800hrs	1800-1900hrs	
PEDAL CYCLE	26	22	5	5	1	4	3	6	7	4	12	3	98
MOTORCYCLE	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	7
CAR	3	20	19	28	29	28	23	30	30	18	11	21	260
PRIVATE HIRE	11	20	30	20	18	12	28	34	35	32	22	19	281
BLACK CAB	2	9	20	21	17	27	26	16	34	18	26	21	237
LIGHT GOODS VEHICLE	3	3	4	5	8	6	7	3	3	7	7	1	57
MEDIUM GOODS VEHICLE	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	0	1	0	13
HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	2	1	3	3	0	1	0	0	1	0	11
BUS\COACH	64	72	102	93	88	92	73	89	99	100	104	75	1051
	110	147	185	174	166	174	162	181	211	180	185	140	2015
Total illegal vehicles ahead	7	24	28	35	42	39	32	36	36	26	21	22	348
No. illegal of left turners	2	9	0	9	13	12	14	2	3	4	7	4	79

Appendix A

2010 125 SUMMARY 17Mar2010.xls

C1 (left turn)
0700-1900hrs

	0700-0800hrs	0800-0900hrs	0900-1000hrs	1000-1100hrs	1100-1200hrs	1200-1300hrs	1300-1400hrs	1400-1500hrs	1500-1600hrs	1600-1700hrs	1700hrs-1800hrs	1800-1900hrs	
PEDAL CYCLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
MOTORCYCLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CAR	1	1	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
PRIVATE HIRE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
BLACK CAB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LIGHT GOODS VEHICLE	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
MEDIUM GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BUS/COACH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AMBULANCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	2	4	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	14

C2 (ahead)
0700-1900hrs

	0700-0800hrs	0800-0900hrs	0900-1000hrs	1000-1100hrs	1100-1200hrs	1200-1300hrs	1300-1400hrs	1400-1500hrs	1500-1600hrs	1600-1700hrs	1700hrs-1800hrs	1800-1900hrs	
PEDAL CYCLE	23	20	4	2	4	4	11	6	1	6	15	8	104
MOTORCYCLE	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
CAR	1	2	12	4	9	9	6	6	11	8	3	2	73
PRIVATE HIRE	10	27	34	35	30	28	23	34	29	25	24	20	319
BLACK CAB	8	15	26	24	17	33	28	32	21	19	13	20	256
LIGHT GOODS VEHICLE	1	2	6	4	1	1	1	1	3	2	0	0	22
MEDIUM GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	5
HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	6
BUS/COACH	64	73	99	75	79	80	83	80	83	85	80	82	963
AMBULANCE					2	2	1	2	3	0	2	0	12
	107	140	182	144	145	158	157	161	153	145	138	132	1762

Illegal left turners = 14

Illegal ahead = 108

Wicker Bus Gate
16 March 2011

C1 - Left Turn

0700-1900hrs	0700-0800hrs	0800-0900hrs	0900-1000hrs	1000-1100hrs	1100-1200hrs	1200-1300hrs	1300-1400hrs	1400-1500hrs	1500-1600hrs	1600-1700hrs	1700hrs-1800hrs	1800-1900hrs	Total
PEDAL CYCLE	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
MOTORCYCLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CAR	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	5
PRIVATE HIRE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BLACK CAB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LIGHT GOODS VEHICLE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
MEDIUM GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
BUS\COACH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	8

C2 - Ahead

0700-1900hrs	0700-0800hrs	0800-0900hrs	0900-1000hrs	1000-1100hrs	1100-1200hrs	1200-1300hrs	1300-1400hrs	1400-1500hrs	1500-1600hrs	1600-1700hrs	1700hrs-1800hrs	1800-1900hrs	Total
PEDAL CYCLE	28	24	6	4	2	7	6	2	2	7	6	5	99
MOTORCYCLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
CAR	1	5	6	6	10	9	11	6	6	9	6	6	81
PRIVATE HIRE	12	25	26	22	31	25	37	33	23	24	21	28	307
BLACK CAB	4	13	16	10	21	27	31	17	17	22	20	6	204
LIGHT GOODS VEHICLE	1	1	3	3	4	0	3	2	3	0	1	0	21
MEDIUM GOODS VEHICLE	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	7
HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
BUS\COACH	64	74	101	65	79	77	83	77	88	78	77	66	929
	110	143	159	111	147	148	172	137	141	140	132	113	1653

Number of Illegal Left Turns: 8

Number of Illegal Ahead Movements: 114

Appendix C

Wicker Bus Gate Contraventions

Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) Issued

	1 February to 16 April 2009	1 October to 18 Dec 2009	1 February to 16 April 2010	1 October to 18 Dec 2010	1 February to 16 April 2011
Average Per Day	124.8	58.7	54.7	45.2	41.5