

Executive Summary

Developing a new Local Transport Plan for York

The City of York Council decided in January 2021 to update its Local Transport Plan to reflect changes in transport over the last decade, and to respond to the new challenges of carbon reduction and future development. It invited York Civic Trust, through its Transport Advisory Group, to assist.

This report summarises our proposals. Figure A illustrates our approach. We ask what we want York to be like in fifteen years, and what objectives might be set for transport. We review the data available and propose targets. We consider seven different aspects of transport policy and the linkages between them, addressing the needs of all parts of the city and all users. We then summarise the requirements for implementation.

What do people want York to be like?

Our Citizens' Transport Forum addressed this question. Forum members want York to be a city which benefits from improvements to its environment, celebrates its heritage, ensures that all its citizens enjoy a healthy, rewarding lifestyle and achieves the economic vitality necessary to support all of these. But how transport can contribute to this vision?

We argue that the most important objectives are to reduce carbon emissions, traffic congestion and pollution and to protect the environment. But transport must also contribute to public health, safety and security. It needs to reduce inequality in all its forms, particularly in meeting the needs of children, disabled people and low-income households. It must support the economy and liveability and protect the city's heritage and public realm.

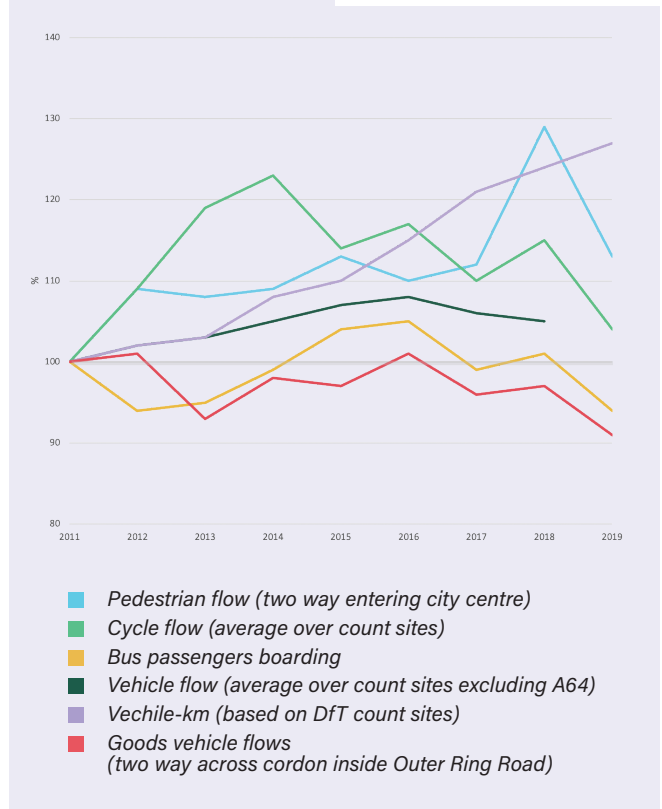
What is known about current conditions?

Figure B shows travel trends to 2019. Vehicle flows have increased by a quarter since 2011. Bus usage has fallen since 2017 and cycling since 2014.

The need for action

The Council asked residents how serious they considered a series of problems to be. The results confirm our view that tackling carbon emissions, traffic congestion and air pollution are the most important objectives for the new Local Transport Plan.

Figure B - Traffic trends in York



A 70% reduction in carbon emissions from transport will be needed if the Council's goal of being carbon neutral by 2030 is to be met. There is limited evidence on current congestion levels, but the Council predicts that delays will increase by two thirds by 2037 if nothing is done. Nitrogen dioxide levels in the inner city have fallen by around 20% since 2015. But they are still well above the World Health Organisation's new guidelines.


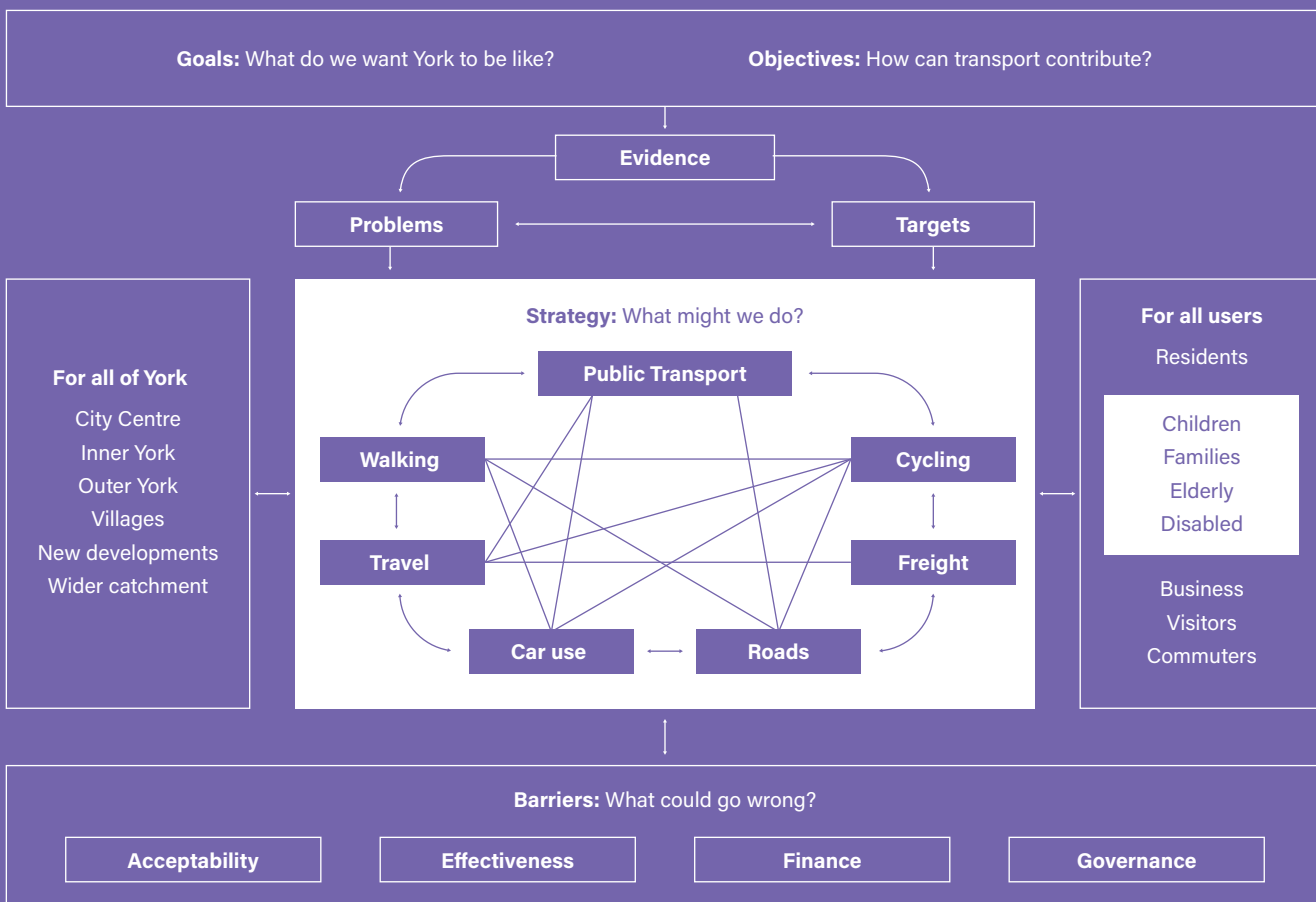
70%  **reduction needed in carbon emissions from transport by 2030.**



Figure A - Our approach



What targets should be set?

Targets allow everyone to understand what might be achieved, and how travel patterns need to change. The Council's carbon target is the most critical. Evidence suggests that no more than half of the target can be achieved by switching to electric vehicles. The rest will need to come from behavioural change. We suggest that this will require a 20% reduction in travel by car. This will result in growth in other travel modes. These changes will bring about major improvements in traffic congestion, air pollution, safety, public health and liveability.

What can we learn from other cities?

We selected nine cities which share some common characteristics with York: Bath, Cambridge, Chester, Norwich, and Oxford; Delft, Dijon, Freiburg and Ghent. All have similar aspirations to York, but already have updated transport plans in place. Their plans reflect an agreed vision and a limited number of clearly stated objectives. They integrate all modes of transport, together with land use. Such plans require a longer-term perspective, a willingness to take challenging decisions and clear political and professional leadership.

What should our strategy be?

We need where possible to achieve our targets by reducing car-dependency and encouraging change. This suggests a number of approaches:

- 1 Reducing the need to travel, and the distance travelled.** If people can work from home, or reach shops, schools and leisure locally, the transport impacts will be reduced.
- 2 Improving and promoting active travel, both on foot and by cycle.** Doing so will increase accessibility and improve health, as well as providing an alternative to car use.
- 3 Improving and promoting public transport.** Such improvements will improve accessibility, reduce isolation and help to reduce car use.
- 4 Changing the way in which the road network is managed.** Traffic management can be used to encourage use of more suitable routes, support walking, cycling and buses, improve liveability and public realm, and make roads safer and less polluted. At the same time it can help retain access, particularly for disabled people.

- 5 Changing freight operation.** Improving facilities will make freight more efficient, whilst smaller electric vehicles and e-cargo cycles will make it less disruptive and polluting.
- 6 Modifying car use.** In part this will be achieved by the approaches above, and by promoting alternatives such as car-club membership. Any further reductions in car use would require parking controls and charges, and potentially directly charging for road use.

Figure C shows how each contributes to our objectives. Our detailed reports review the wide range of measures available for each of them.

Figure C - Impacts of strategies on objectives

Objective	Strategy					
	Reduce travel	Walking/cycling	Public transport	Road network	Freight	Car use
Congestion	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pollution	●	●	●	●	●	●
Carbon	●	●	●	●	●	●
Health	●	●	●	●	●	●
Safety	●	●	●	●	●	●
Economy		●	●	●	●	
Access	●	●	●			
Liveability	●	●		●	●	●
Public Realm	●	●		●	●	●

● ● ● Contribution to objective (by size of impact)

What could be achieved by the end of 2023?

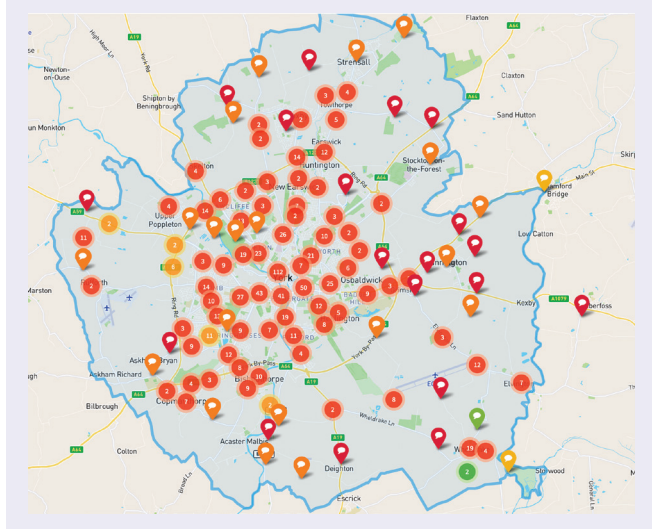
Changes to the way we travel need to start immediately. Detailed programmes of action are needed for walking, cycling, buses, managing the road network and parking, new developments, and alternative funding for transport investment.

These will require full public engagement to command support. In parallel we advocate a hearts and minds campaign to promote the benefits of change. Workplace and school travel plans, and freight delivery and servicing plans should be developed to support that campaign. An interactive map will help residents alert the Council to problems. Figure D shows an example from a York Cycling Campaign initiative in 2020.

The interactive map can be used to help prioritise local improvements for walking, cycling, public transport and traffic management. More will need to be spent on footway and cycle route maintenance. A new simplified fare structure would make buses more affordable and easier to use.

In the city centre we propose reducing traffic through experimental car-free days and bus priorities to restrict through traffic. Access must be improved for disabled people and cargo cycles.

Figure D - Responses to the Safe Streets York map.
Credit: York Cycling Campaign



Elsewhere we propose, as demonstrators, that two radial roads be redesigned with continuous segregated cycle lanes, queue and speed management and bus priorities. Park and ride sites could start to act as hubs for better access for the villages.

Our aspirations for the next fifteen years

By 2027 the north-eastern outer ring road will have been dualled. We should ensure that longer distance traffic uses it in preference to inner city roads. We need to improve conditions for walking, cycling and bus use. This should encourage people to transfer from cars to these alternatives. Each community will have its own dedicated communications and delivery hub, and a local centre with a range of facilities within twenty minutes' walk, to support reductions in travel. By 2037, most developments proposed in the draft Local Plan are expected to be complete. They need to be designed on the same principles.

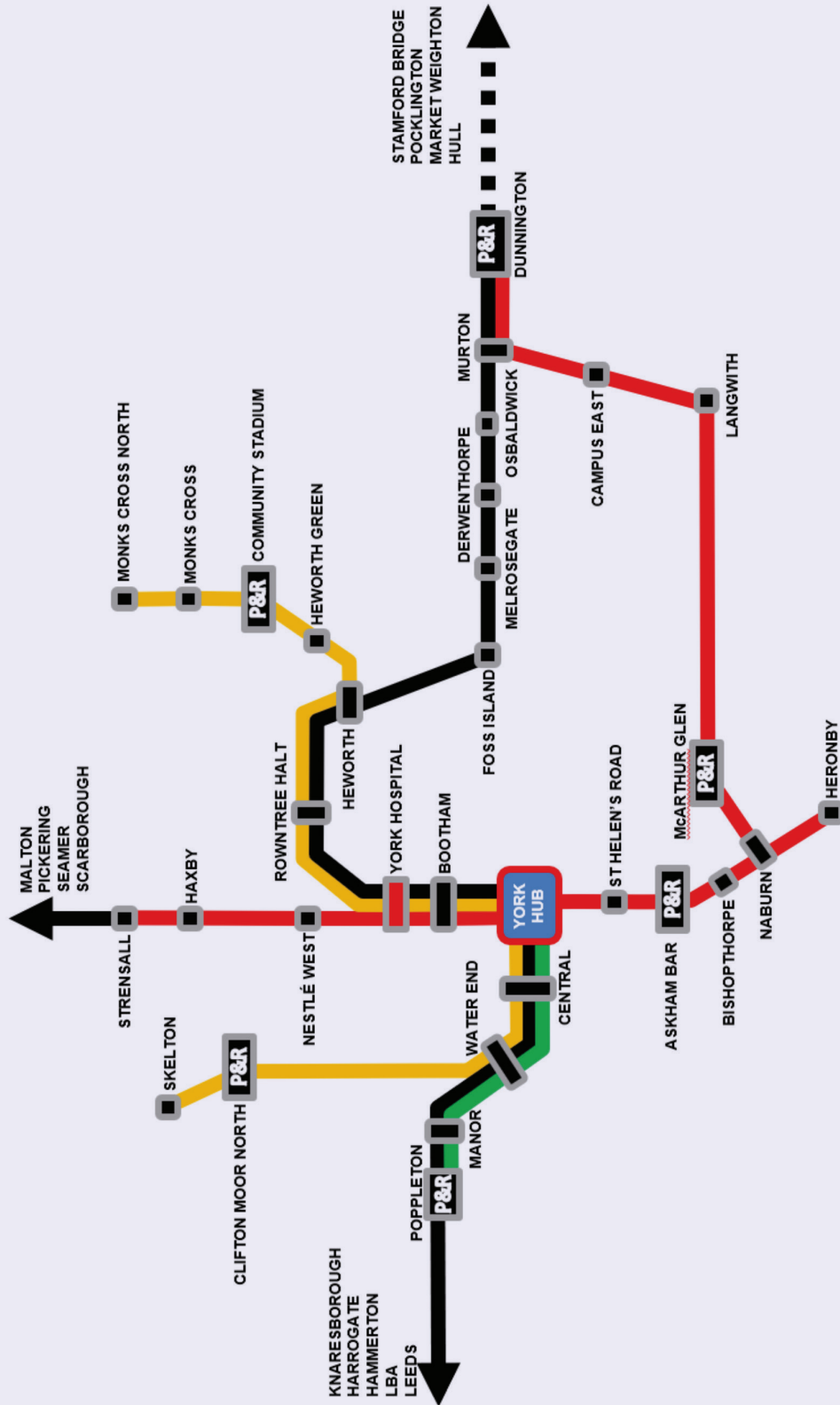
Figure E - The 20 minute city concept. Credit: State of Victoria



Across the city the road network will be managed to reflect the Council's hierarchy of users. Pedestrians and cyclists will experience safer and easier journeys, with better crossings of main roads and side roads. All areas will have direct bus services, using electric buses running at least every twenty minutes during the day and otherwise preferably half-hourly. All local train services will run every twenty minutes. One or more light rail or bus rapid transit lines will be in place to serve new communities and major hubs, as part of a potential wider network (Figure E). Car club provision will be expanded as an alternative to private ownership. We anticipate that finance for new investment will come from workplace parking levies or road pricing. This will in turn encourage further modal change.



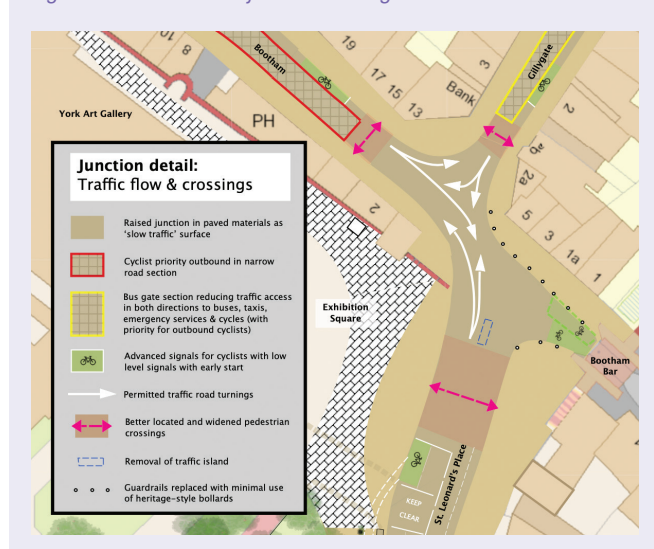
Figure F - An aspirational rapid transit network. Credit: Greg House



In the city centre the footstreets will be repaved and have more frequent seating and an accessible shuttle bus. Cyclists will have protected routes across the centre and improved parking. For freight a 3.5T weight limit will apply, with local transshipment points. All public car parking around the city centre will be priced to manage use and encourage alternatives.

Within the outer ring road all radial roads will have safe, segregated cycle routes, with queue management and bus priority. All residential roads will have a 20mph speed limit, with through traffic discouraged and more orbital walking and cycle routes provided. New bus services will serve York Hospital and outer centres. Through traffic near the city centre will be discouraged (Figure G). Freight vehicles of over 7.5T will be directed to a specified, managed road network. Electric vehicle charging points will be provided on-and off-street.

Figure G - Bootham Bar junction redesigned. Credit: York Civic Trust



All villages will have segregated cycle and bus routes to access the city centre and local centres. Demand-responsive services will link smaller communities to park and ride sites.

New developments must have a community centre and work and delivery hubs, a primary school and appropriate health, leisure and retail services. They will have their own dedicated public transport and cycle routes linking them to the city centre and other local facilities. They will be designed to give priority access for walking and cycling, with limited access for cars and servicing provided on the fringes.

Financing and implementing the strategy

Finance for transport is increasingly constrained. Much has to be bid for competitively. A new Local Transport Plan will help identify priority schemes and demonstrate value for money, thus strengthening the Council's bids. New sources of funding will be needed. Using parking levies and road pricing to finance attractive alternatives to car use will help make such charges more acceptable.

Transport policy is controversial. Any future transport strategy will affect transport choices for everyone. We therefore need to build consensus. We advocate a collaborative approach involving residents, business and civil society. The Council needs to be bold in pursuing its strategy if it is to achieve its carbon reduction targets and ensure that York remains an attractive and vibrant place to live, work in and visit. To this end, York must find a means of achieving political consensus and providing long term political leadership.

We are not attempting in this report to say what must be done. We are offering an approach for what might be done. We hope that, in doing so, we can initiate a debate and encourage consensus on the Council's emerging Local Transport Plan.

