

SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF TRAFFIC IN FLEETGATE, BARTON-UPON-HUMBER: A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

We, in the Barton Civic Society, have for some time been concerned at the run-down condition of Fleetgate. We feel that, in its present state, it is neither a pleasant place in which to live nor a good advertisement for Barton.

Owing to the development of the northern part of Barton, the area comprising Fleetgate is fast becoming an important part of town. It is also one of the first seen by visitors, whether they are arriving by bus or train, or are walkers or cyclists coming from the Humber Bridge.

Fleetgate itself is potentially a most attractive street. It contains many fine Georgian and Victorian buildings, as well as the oldest and historically most important house in Barton - No. 51, a timber-frame building dating from the 14th Century.

It would therefore benefit both the residents of Fleetgate and the town generally if the condition of the street were improved - and this could also provide a welcome fillip to tourism.

The present poor state of Fleetgate has a number of interacting causes, of which its current use by traffic is one of the most pressing. Tackling this would bring about a marked improvement in itself and also help reverse the decline of the street in other ways, for instance, by encouraging civic pride and greater care for properties

The crux of the matter, as we see it, is that Fleetgate has to serve two incompatible functions: it is a narrow residential street which has also to do duty as the main thoroughfare for traffic from the north of the town accessing the A1077. For those leaving Barton by bus or car, the street is merely a quick exit route - to the detriment of the street and those who live in it.

In this document, we seek to identify specific problems and propose what we believe to be realistic solutions.

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1. In a traffic survey of Fleetgate conducted in 2005, the average speed of traffic was found to be quite moderate. Averages, however, are deceptive, as the survey also found. Some car-drivers and motorcyclists race up the street, sometimes exceeding 60 mph., causing both danger and excessive noise, this occurring particularly in the evenings and at weekends. Speeding vehicles also cause dust to swirl up into open windows and mud to be splashed against the walls of houses in wet weather.

Because of the narrowness of the street and its pavements, we feel that even the present speed-limit is too high and should be lowered to 20 mph. This measure would help reduce speeds, despite difficulties of enforcement.

2. The volume of traffic using the street is unacceptably high. This has increased with the recent arrival of Tesco in town and will increase further with the new housing developments in Waterside Road and Ramblers` Edge.

Traffic volume would be greatly reduced if the eastern part of West Acridge were made two-way. At the moment, drivers of vehicles have to go down Castledyke West and then up Fleetgate, if they wish to access the A1077. As well as putting undue strain on Fleetgate, this creates a needlessly large carbon footprint at a time when authorities are being urged to demonstrate their concern for the environment.

3. We feel that Fleetgate is particularly unsuited to large vehicles. We therefore favour a ban on all such vehicles, including buses and coaches. There should be clear signage to this effect at the entrance to the street.

We note the following specific problems: (i) the pavement on the east side of the street is only just over three foot wide, making the average adult walking in the middle of the pavement only about a foot away from passing vehicles; (ii) the wing-mirrors of buses jut out into the pavement area, creating a potential hazard; (iii) sometimes, because of the poor parking of cars, buses and lorries have to mount the kerb to pass; (iv) people cycling up Fleetgate often find the presence of buses behind them intimidating, so causing them to dismount and walk with their cycle on the pavement; (v) the draught generated by large vehicles in a confined space can be destabilizing for frail people.

We believe that the proper route for buses using the interchange is orbital: that they should enter the interchange via Castledyke West and leave it by Butts Road. These roads are clearly more suitable for large vehicles.

Rerouting the 350 would incur no great trouble or cost. There would be no difference in mileage or journey time. Bus-users would experience minimal inconvenience; those wishing to board the Hull-bound bus in the vicinity of Fleetgate Hardware would simply do so on the other side of the road from the existing stop. The route of the 350 Scunthorpe-bound bus would remain unchanged.

There would be further advantages in this arrangement. The 350 to Hull would no longer have to enter the interchange from Butts Road by executing an awkward U-turn as at present. Nor, leaving the interchange, would it have to enter the central section of Fleetgate, which is a congested and dangerous junction. It is, we fear, only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed here.

Other services, such as the 250 Grimsby-Barton bus, the 250 Barton-Goxhill and the 253 Barton-East Halton, could be similarly rerouted.

However, the 260 Villager and the 254 Barton Town services are clearly a different matter. These are 'hail and ride' services which need the full run of Holydyke and Market Place in both directions if they are to do their job. We therefore have no objection to their using Fleetgate, particularly as they use smaller vehicles.

4. The above measures are quite straightforward and could be undertaken quickly. However, they are merely interim measures to alleviate rather than solve the Fleetgate's traffic problems.

In the long term, the only satisfactory solution is to pedestrianize Fleetgate and make Castledyke West two-way, something that would involve some civil engineering work. In order to accommodate the increased volume of traffic at the northern end of the street, the give-way point for vehicles exiting West Acridge would have to be taken back to its original line and the chicane here removed. The width of the pavement opposite adjacent to the car-park would probably also need to be reduced.

The chicanes further down the street on the west side would have also to be removed. This would leave Castledyke School without a bus bay and mean reduced parking for some residents on a small stretch of the street to the north of Council Terrace.

At the northern end, some space on one or both sides of the street would have to be made over to traffic to facilitate the movement of south-bound vehicles negotiating the corner just beyond the electricity sub-station.

Even given these changes, the street would still be unsuitable for large articulated lorries, so a 7.5 weight limit on HGVs would have to be imposed.

We naturally realize that the work involved here would be considerable and that some loss of amenity to residents of Castledyke West would result. It seems to us that what is involved is a weighing of the advantages accruing to Fleetgate against the disadvantages that would be incurred here. Overall, we feel that Castledyke West is better able than Fleetgate to take the rapidly increasing volume of southbound traffic resulting from the extensive residential, recreational and retail development in the northern part of the town.

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