



STATION SQUARE HARROGATE CIRCA 1950's

STATION GATEWAY PROJECT

A VISION FOR HARROGATE – AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

THOUGHTS ON THE NYCC PROPOSALS 2023 WRONG SCHEME WRONG TIME

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FORWARD

Everyone and particularly NYC appears to have forgotten that the Gateway Project was born out of the politically manipulated 2019 Congestion Study. Results can be deceptive and wording of surveys steered you in a particular direction. This was clearly demonstrated in consultations at the time, which effectively and quite wrongly misinformed and manoeuvred the people of Harrogate to kill off the idea of a Northern Relief road. NYCC as it was at the time were then able to say “the only other option is the Gateway Project”.

A Vision for Harrogate, an alternative approach to the Gateway Project has been developed in response to a challenge from Karl Battersby – Corporate Director Environment during late October 2022. This followed extensive communications between Barry Adams, Karl Battersby and Councillor Keane Duncan, Executive Member for Highways on the proposals put forward initially by NYC.

In May 2023 a document setting out an “Alternative Approach to a Vision for Harrogate” was made available for discussion. This was the result following months of work between Harrogate Residents Association_1,000+ members, Granville Road Resident’s Group _ 300+ members and Independent Harrogate_156+ experienced local business members that includes key landowners who have a considerable stake in the town. It set out thoughts on the NYC proposals on the basis of the “Wrong Scheme, Wrong Time”. It is considered that this vision should be a document for discussion and form the basis of an updated Masterplan for Harrogate.

A VISION FOR HARROGATE – AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

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A VISION FOR HARROGATE – AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

Most people and businesses in Harrogate are not against change. However, there is little point in all the public realm expenditure if it doesn't amount to real improvements and could potentially result in untold damage to businesses in town. Don't deliver a scheme just because you have funding for a particular part. It is the **WRONG SCHEME** at the **WRONG TIME**.

Local people who have lived in Harrogate for a considerable time, many of them all their lives, along with the business community with all their knowledge, vast expertise and experience of the town, have all tried unsuccessfully to encourage a more open debate on what will be a highly important decision for this town for at least the next 50 years.

The Gateway Project is unfortunately a Highway Engineer's solution to a problem with a "hint" of Urban Design as the current proposals demonstrate in an attempt to reduce congestion. Overall then, a very much blinkered vision to date.

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals as currently presented to the people of Harrogate are capable of addressing the problem of congestion or celebrating this as an exemplary and attractive Gateway to the town. It will be no more of a focal point or Gateway than it is now.

2.00 FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

There are 4 key or fundamental issues that have to be addressed if ANY vision for Harrogate or Gateway type project stands any chance of being successful. These are:

1. A rethink on a bypass

The ongoing and ever increasing level of congestion caused by through traffic needs to be dealt with in a bold and positive approach. The Gateway Project fails to tackle this issue at source. All it is doing is brushing the problem to one side - a distraction to avoid dealing with the main problem. Despite previous so called consultations as recently as 2019, the problem of congestion will not be addressed until a bypass is considered to the west and north of the town linking up at both ends with the existing bypass. It requires "joined up writing" and has to be in conjunction with other considerations such as Park and Ride.

2. The introduction Park and Ride

The ever increasing problem of congestion caused by traffic in and out of the centre of Harrogate should be addressed by the introduction of a Park and Ride system whether it be for business or pleasure or indeed any other reason for visiting the town. This idea should have been introduced many years ago. York has successfully operated a system for over 30 years but for Harrogate the idea always appeared to be brushed aside and stalled for various reasons by Don Mackenzie when he was Cabinet Member for Highways. A high quality sustainable transport system using electric powered buses is a key element to deal with congestion. It is an inclusive vision that would appeal to more people and not discriminate against the majority who cannot or who do not wish to cycle or walk.

3. The appearance of Harrogate

Harrogate looks scruffy let alone capable of reclaiming its place as a jewel in Yorkshire's crown. It needs looking after properly and returned to the glory it was some 10 years ago or more - make sure everywhere looks clean, tidy and cared for in the first instance. Paving and other hard landscaped areas must be properly maintained, road signs clean and of a consistent appearance. Understand and appreciate the floral reputation of the town and the contribution this makes to its reputation and visitor numbers.



Address these problems in a simple but considered way as part of a long term vision and Harrogate, along with a distinctive retail environment, will sell itself. No fancy gimmicks are needed. Harrogate is Harrogate. It has a unique character and ambience of its own.

4. Update the Masterplan

The current Masterplan dates back to 2016, its time has expired and is not up-to-date. What is required is an holistic Masterplan for Harrogate that looks at ALL factors and influences which could then form a solid basis for future co-ordinated projects rather than 'Pocket Planning' which the Gateway Project is. This should be influenced not only by appropriate professionals who have a thorough knowledge and understanding of Harrogate but also other towns with a similar demographic to Harrogate. Input is essential from the business community with all their knowledge, vast expertise and experience of the town. We may then have some joined up writing when addressing issues and when funding becomes available for identified projects.

3.00 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- No so called Gateway Project or indeed any such vision will attempt to be successful unless the ever increasing and apparently forgotten problem of traffic congestion is dealt with. A problem generated by levels of traffic in and out of as well as through the town. No tinkering at the edges as the Gateway Project proposes. All this is doing is brushing the problem to one side, redirecting traffic to adjacent streets - a distraction or an illusion to a void dealing with the main problem.
- The Gateway Project will not resolve the noticeable and constant problem of queuing traffic on Wetherby Road in particular, Skipton Road and other main arterial routes in to out of or through the town. In plain simple language the Gateway Project is the WRONG SCHEME at the WRONG TIME.



Traffic congestion Wetherby Road

- There is no evidence to suggest that the proposals as currently presented to the people of Harrogate are capable of celebrating this as an exemplary and attractive Gateway to the town.
- How can this ever be perceived as such with a black tarmac road, cycle lanes and all the associated paraphernalia cutting straight through the "Station Square"? It will be no more of a focal point or Gateway than it is now.
- As clearly stated many times before, it is purely a Highway Engineer's solution to the problem – one which is focussed on cycling walking and public transport in an apparent attempt to reduce congestion.
- This shows in the plethora of contrived and confusing lanes proposed in the area of Station Parade for pedestrians, cyclists, bus lanes and other traffic in the town centre. There is concern that the design of some of the traffic junctions are poor and will create dangerous conditions as part of Highways attempt to segregate and control pedestrians, cyclists, buses and other traffic. The terms "monkey puzzle or crazy golf" solution have been used for a similar project in town.
- Unless the problem of through traffic flows can be substantially reduced there is also no chance of successfully linking the Gateway with the Montpellier District without pedestrians crossing the very busy A61 northbound. Montpellier is a key and distinctive "quarter" in the commercial heart of Harrogate.

- NYCC claim that the TCF scheme (Gateway Project) is part of a wider vision in relation to active travel. It is not an inclusive solution. Where are the high quality sustainable public transport links NYCC claim have been created during the Project development over the last three years? No mention of Park and Ride facilities or much improved local bus or rail services that could maximise the appeal for people to travel into Harrogate. Only recently has a study been announced by NYCC into this aspect of public transport. Surely this should be an integral part of any Gateway Project – make it accessible to all.
- The cost of the proposals will without doubt continue to increase as they have already done at this relatively early stage of the Project thanks to inflation and other factors. Those living and working in Harrogate are concerned how the impact of this will be addressed by NYCC if and when the Project develops and is delivered. As happens with so many similar projects the quality of materials, street furniture and all other fittings or the like must not be reduced. This will have a long term detrimental effect on the town and especially the Conservation area it sits in. There is concern history will repeat itself when you look at the dowdy appearance of the pedestrian areas forming Cambridge and Oxford Streets. Neither street has any feeling or character and is not particularly conducive to attracting shoppers or visitors.
- Harrogate does not currently present the image of a well-cared for and respected town any more. It has not been maintained to its historic high standards. It is absolutely essential that ongoing cleaning and maintenance programme of street furniture, road signs, planted areas and street surfaces is instituted. First impressions count. It must therefore have an immediate but lasting appeal to visitors.

4.00 DISCUSSION 1

A vision for Harrogate is:

- One that is an inclusive vision and fully understands and embraces all factors that make a town successful. Not just a Highway Engineer's solution to their vision.
- One that is based on and recognises the unique quality of Town. For this reason Harrogate has been proudly referred to as the "Jewel in the Crown" for Yorkshire – a reputation for quality, excellence and smart appearance. People shouldn't be envious of this reputation - that is their problem. It is one of the key drivers that has made Harrogate so successful in the past and attracted so many visitors who then go on to spend money in the town.
- One that sets a standard for Harrogate that is of a level with similar towns that are currently doing things better. Visit these towns to understand the aesthetics of "destination towns".
- One that says we are uniquely Harrogate, not Leeds or York – the DNA of each of these towns is so different. Harrogate has an identity of its own. There is no reason to dumb down the town to shoe it into the "one size fits all" pattern.
- One that takes reference from and clearly understands all other reasons why Harrogate has been so successful in the past. If you do, then Harrogate will sell itself. Harrogate is known for its small individual shops that you cannot find in other towns. This should be encouraged as part of a marketing strategy.

- One that considers extending the concept of “Quarters” to other parts of the town centre.



Montpellier Quarter



Montpellier Hill

As mentioned earlier, Montpellier is a key and distinctive quarter in the commercial heart of Harrogate. The idea was considered a few years ago when Harrogate Civic Society suggested creating a Culture Quarter in the area around Crescent Gardens. For example, you could have West Park Quarter, Prospect Quarter or Princess Quarter for the main shopping areas. It creates a unique identity to the town and provides the opportunity for appropriate signs to be carefully installed in town to announce each quarter (as already exists for Montpellier Quarter).

- One that recognises Harrogate already has a magnificent and unique Gateway or “Sense of Arrival” into the town from most directions in the form of The Stray which bleeds into the town centre. No other



town has a setting such as this. In turn the Stray offers huge opportunities for walking, recreation and many health benefits free from cars. But it does need looking after properly and returned to the glory it was some 10 years ago.



West Park Stray – Montpellier Hill

- One that understands and appreciates the floral reputation of and the contribution this makes to its reputation and visitor numbers.
- One that understands and takes reference from the creation and development of Harrogate as a spa town. For example Bath recognised the value of updating its spa heritage a number of years ago. It would create the opportunity to bring these ideas into the 21st century.
- One that recognises, respects and is a good neighbour to the historic buildings and the



contribution these make to the urban environment. The Gateway Project should be more supportive of the largely cohesive Conservation Area it sits in. It should take reference from the historic character of Harrogate and its buildings to inform a modern and relevant interpretation.

Historic Character Station Parade

- One that builds on the town’s cultural heritage and the opportunities it could offer. Consider better use of an upgraded auditorium at the Convention Centre to stage music that caters for all audiences and run it in partnership with Royal Hall so both venues complement each other.

5.00 DISCUSSION 2

In addition to the points set out in Discussion 1, the scheme could be amended to better fit with the special character of Harrogate by:

- Ensuring there is an urgent rethink on a bypass - one with a much broader and open remit than was presented previously. One to the West and North of Harrogate that links with the existing bypass at Thistle Hill near Pannal through to Knaresborough to encircle both towns. Although this issue was considered as part of a previous consultation on a bypass prior to the emergence of a Gateway project, survey questions can easily be skewed to achieve the results wanted. Hence, why we appear to have ended up or more than likely were steered in the direction of the so called Gateway Project.
- Ensuring that Park and Ride is a key element in achieving the main objective of the scheme i.e. to deliver high quality sustainable transport along with improved rail services that are fit for purpose. This would appeal to more people and not discriminate against the majority who cannot or who do not wish to cycle, cater for all groups, ages, abilities and disabilities, serve all types of users both social and business, commuters and visitors and therefore encourage a much wider sector of the community to leave their cars at home.
- We must remember travel diversity though and recognise as well the increasing number of electric vehicles on our roads. All very green, pollution free and improving the air quality without being to the detriment of our economy, our businesses, our visitors and our town as a whole.
- There was a recent announcement from NYCC that a Park and Ride study is being undertaken. Surely this should be completed and implemented before the Gateway proposals are developed any further.



Park and Ride York

It may not have an immediate effect on traffic congestion as it will take some time to educate and use this form of sustainable transport. It is not meant to be an express bus service into town so dedicated bus lanes are not required as have been purported by certain Councillors. For example most Park and Ride routes in York do not have dedicated lanes and travel on normal roads through quite restricted residential areas at times. It could easily work as it does in many towns smaller than Harrogate. York has had a Park and Ride system for over 30 years. It is interesting to note HBC Transport Plans dating back to 2001 highlighted at the time the need for Park and Ride facilities.

- Questioning why route for the cycleway takes it along Station Parade which requires the plethora of contrived, confusing and potentially dangerous lanes traffic and junctions designed for pedestrians, cyclists, bus lanes and other traffic in the town centre. There are alternatives to be considered.



- Ensure alternative solutions that were put forward in a “BID” response dated March 2021 to the first consultation on the Gateway Project are considered and reviewed as an alternative. At the time BID on behalf of all business groups had a number of comments and observations they believed would enhance the proposals, and maximise the benefits accruing from the investment.

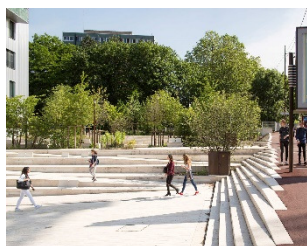
Whilst not all of these may now be appropriate at least they could form a "Basis for Discussion" with informed people to demonstrate we are NOT against cycling. Unfortunately it is understood, NYCC never acknowledged or responded to BID's letter.

- The most interesting point that comes out of BID's letter is the comment that they believe an East Parade cycle route can form the backbone of a more ambitious cycling network rather than along Station Parade. They consider East Parade cycle lanes can connect to the railway station adjacent to Victoria Car Park and provide secure undercover cycle storage in the car park with existing pedestrian links available to connect to the town centre and the bus and rail stations.
- Ensuring there is a transport infrastructure Masterplan that looks at the bigger picture as Active Travel England has suggested. Encourage people to walk and cycle more, is a great for mental wellbeing and is a greener form of transport. Many local residents already walk into and around Harrogate. They take advantage of the numerous opportunities the town offers.
- Ensuring the town is not presented as a centre for street entertainment with dedicated outdoor performance spaces. This is not Harrogate. History informs us that this has not worked in the past.
- Ensuring the quality of the Christmas celebrations are unique to Harrogate. Return to a more traditional offering that reflects the one that was held on Montpellier Stray until 2 years ago. This offered Yorkshire made products, not cheap products you can buy anywhere.
- Taking reference from schemes especially in other historic towns and sensitive locations to see what can be achieved. An interesting and what appears to be a much more considered and disciplined scheme albeit on a much larger scale has just been announced for George Street in Edinburgh.



<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/georgestreet>

- Taking reference from similar projects in European towns particularly Holland where the integration of cars, public transport, cycles and other forms of traffic have been successfully achieved using a limited and well controlled palette of paving materials in historic settings.



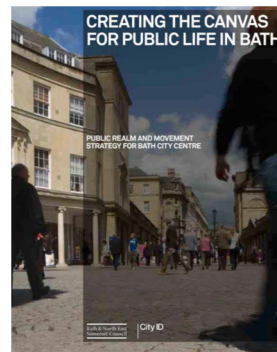
- Not allowing for the felling of one single tree as part of the project. Harrogate is well known for its Avenues of trees. Most of these have been growing for decades but sadly only take a few minutes to destroy. The loss of any tree would be detrimental to the urban street scene. Their ability to absorb polluting gases along with the unique Stray

provide Harrogate with a unique lung or health benefit. A good Urban Designer would be capable of dealing with this challenge but sadly Highway Engineers appear to be lacking in concern. Yes, allow for additional structured tree planting.

- Insisting on the retention of the Tempietto. This is the approach an experienced Urban Design Team would call for using their design skill to successfully integrate this historic structure into the proposal. For example, the Tempietto could be centred on the exit from the station to create a desire line or focal point. The Tempietto could incorporate panels relating to its history and the significance of the wells and water to Harrogate. Again sadly, its removal is typical of a Highway Engineer's approach to the design proposals for the Gateway Project.



- Taking reference from the historic character of Harrogate and its buildings to inform a modern and relevant interpretation. An Urban Design Team which includes an experienced Conservation Architect would be more supportive than a Highway Engineer of the largely cohesive and sensitive Conservation Area the Gateway Project sits in. For instance, refer back to the historic layout of the Station Square shown on the cover to this document. This appears to provide a much more disciplined design solution than proposed by NYCC.
- Creating a bolder "Sense of Arrival" at the railway station by introducing for example a well design lightweight free-standing glazed canopy which celebrates the entrance. The same principle could apply to the entrance to the Victoria Shopping Centre – take reference from the traditional glazed canopies found in Harrogate.
- Taking reference from an excellent guide "Streets for All" produced by Historic England. It gives sound advice for Highways and Public Realm Works in historic places in sensitive locations. Another equally good publication is "Creating the Canvas for Public Life in Bath". This is a very interesting in-depth study for a public realm and movement strategy for Bath City Centre.



- Good design doesn't require a faithful copy of details but one that is informed by its historic setting and is a good neighbour. Above all let's celebrate 21st century design and add another exemplary chapter to the ongoing history of Harrogate. Well planned schemes enhance public areas.
- Taking reference from business groups with their vast expertise and experience of Harrogate and fully understand the economic consequences of any action both during construction works and on completion of any project.
- Above all, considering a design approach which involves ALL stakeholders and interests alike - not just the interest of fractional groups. Listen to business groups with their vast expertise and experience of Harrogate, along with local people who have all have knowledge of the town and how it works.

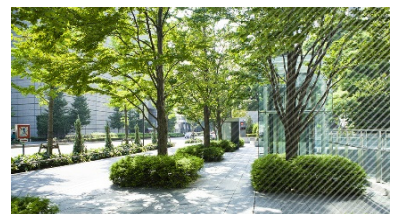
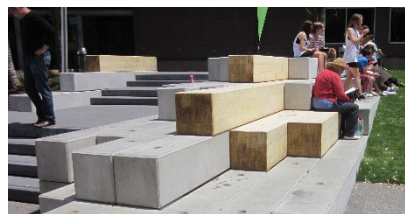
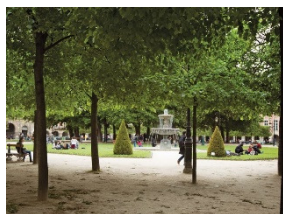
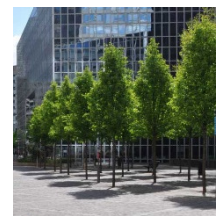
6.00 CONCLUSION

NYCC say that "the Transforming Cities programme is predicated around changing travel patterns and behaviours, and they are restricted on how you spend this money". NYCC go on to say "what they have tried to do is lever in as much money as they can to improve the public realm in a key gateway to the town, whilst also improving facilities for walking, cycling and public transport". Cycling is the dominant feature and the project doesn't amount to real improvements apart from creating cycle-ways which in no way address the major problem of congestion. Having said this, we are not against cycling but it must form part of a "joined up" solution. No mention of Park and Ride. When it comes to walking, Harrogate is already served by an extensive network of infrastructure of footpaths, wider than normal thanks to our Victorian heritage albeit poorly maintained.

This clearly indicates it is not inclusive but purely a Highway Engineer's solution with a "tinkering" of Urban Design as the current proposals demonstrate. One that is obsessed with the business of "changing travel patterns and behaviours" to the detriment of much broader concerns such as the visual appeal in the public realm.

As a result of this lack of design control, we are getting nothing more than a "desktop" design, from Consultants with little or no understanding of Harrogate. It is so evident that in order to address these concerns an essential element and core to its success is an experienced Design Team which can engage in more original, imaginative and lateral thinking. It should be a people and place design solution led by a highly qualified and experienced Urban Designer with an appreciation and understanding of ALL the issues and professional disciplines involved on such a project.

Above all, it must celebrate 21st century design and only then as history has shown, Harrogate can add another exemplary chapter to its ongoing history.



The Gateway Project is not money well spent. There seems little point in all the public realm expenditure if it doesn't amount to real improvements and could permanently damage the town. How can retail businesses cope with twelve months interruption to trade during the major disturbance caused by the works in order to achieve the Gateway Project - it is not a supportive shopping environment. It will seriously discourage a critical mass of people and hence the town's commercial viability ensuring profitability

of the town suffers. This is on top of the affects resulting from the Covid pandemic, Brexit and the worldwide economic fallout from the war in Ukraine. The retail environment is having more than its fair share of decline and some that have survived are struggling to recover without the additional fallout compounded by the delivery of the Gateway Project.

Will the Gateway Project be a success? There is no guarantee. Just look at the Otley Road Cycleway Project – now cancelled.

It definitely is the WRONG SCHEME at the WRONG TIME.

Barry Adams
Harrogate Resident's Association _Member

19 March 2023

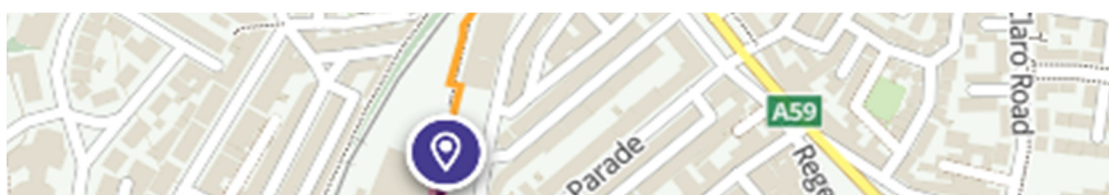
March 29 2023_ Rev A – General update
April 02 2023_ Rev B – General update
April 05 2023_ Rev C – General update
April 11 2023_ Rev D – Appendix A added
April 19 2023_ Rev E – Appendix A updated
October 30 2023_ Rev F – Not issued
November 01 2023_ Rev G – Forward section added

STATION GATEWAY PROJECT

A VISION FOR HARROGATE – AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

7.00 Appendix A

East Parade Cycle Route – A Safer Route



STATION GATEWAY PROJECT A VISION FOR HARROGATE – AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Appendix A East Parade Cycle Route – A Safer Route

Alternative solutions were put forward to NYCC on the Gateway Project in response to the first consultation in March 2021 for consideration and review at the time by Independent Harrogate, the Chamber of Commerce and BID. They had a number of comments and observations they believed would enhance the proposals, and maximise the benefits accruing from the investment.

Whilst not all of these may now be appropriate at least they could form a "Basis for Discussion" with informed people to demonstrate business organisations representing Harrogate are NOT against cycling.

Unfortunately it is understood, NYCC never acknowledged or responded to this letter.

The most interesting point that comes out of this letter is the comment that they believe an East Parade cycle route can form the backbone of a more ambitious cycling network rather than along Station Parade.

The East Parade alternative would offer a much safer route for cyclists and avoid a very busy 'A' road which undoubtedly will be even more congested if reduced to a single lane and potentially more dangerous.

This option connects to the start of the Nidderdale Greenway in or adjacent to the Asda car park and will continue through to Ripley as part of National Cycle Network Route 67. This route leads to Route 636 connecting Bilton with Starbeck and Knaresborough. The eastern half from Knaresborough to Bilton is known as the Beryl Burton Cycleway.

To the south it will connect again with part of National Cycle Network Route 67 and eventually continue through to Wetherby via Oatlands Drive and Hookstone Wood skirting the Great Yorkshire Showground and Rudding Park. In Harrogate Slingsby Walk from Knaresborough Road to Stray Reign safe crossings are proposed on Wetherby Road, Oatlands Drive and Stray Reign to encourage safe cycling linking to the above route.

To the West it will connect to the Otley Road Cycleway Route but the route itself is subject to ongoing reviews by NYC involving local residents now Phase 2 of Otley Road Cycleway and Beech Grove LTN will not proceed. Until new ideas are published for consultation it is not certain if or how this will impact on Beech Grove and Victoria Avenue.

This East Parade Option will require far less Highways disturbance to businesses and visitors to the town centre during construction than the Gateway Project proposed by NYC. Instead of "enhancements" led by Highway's Engineer these can now be focussed on an Urban Design solutions with the opportunity to deliver and celebrate this as an exemplary Gateway Project to the town.

PLAN ILLUSTRATING THIS OPTION SHOWN ON NEXT PAGE

NIDDERDALE GREENWAY National Route 67
Harrogate to Ripley
Harrogate to Bilton, Starbeck and Knaresborough
via Beryl Burton Cycleway

67

Asda

67

Bower Road

Dragon Parade
East Parade

Regent Parade

Station
parade

Park View

High Harrogate

Harrogate

East Parade

Odeon

North Park Road

James Street

Albert Street

Avenue

Queen Parade

Knaresborough Road

Beech Grove & Victoria
Avenue cycleway linking
to Otley Road subject to
review by NYC

Victoria

A61

South Parade Road

York Place

Oatlands Drive

West Park

A61

67

Existing National Cycleway Route 67
south of York Place via Oatlands Drive
to Wetherby subject to ongoing review
by NYC

67

STATION GATEWAY PROJECT
Alternative route for proposed cycle
route via East Parade

Otley Road

St Win