

Prince of Wales Road Norwich



Guard railing was removed at several locations and public art and seating introduced.

Basics

- Prince of Wales Road (POWR) is a major transportation route within Norwich city centre, just outside the principal shopping and commercial zone.
- With a total length of 500 metres, most of which is one way, it is an important link in the central one-way system introduced in the 1960s.
- POWR is mainly fronted by nightclubs, restaurants, pubs, and food takeaway units, together with secondary retailing and office premises - with its concentration of leisure activities, at night it is the busiest street in the city.
- The POWR improvement scheme formed one of the 10 Mixed Priority Route (MPR) demonstration projects, sponsored by the Department of Transport. Such schemes were targeted at busy shopping/leisure streets that were used by general traffic, buses, cyclists and pedestrians and often have serious accident problems that are difficult to treat by conventional methods.
- Builds on nearby homezone streets of Morice Town.
- The MPR projects sought to improve road safety by developing inclusive, high quality designs that respected the public realm and commercial functions of the streets.
- The project team consisted of technical staff from Norwich City Council, Norfolk County Council and consultant Mott Macdonald.

Particular features of the development

As part of improvements to link the railway station to and across the city centre, the scheme seeks to help an area with a very high pedestrian casualty rate and lack of pedestrian crossing facilities. The area also features high traffic flows (14,000 vehicles per day in the two-way section) which could not be reduced. A large number of bus movements at the western end because of the one-way system (1,000 per day) and high levels of pedestrian activity during the evening and early morning, coinciding with train arrivals. There are also a large number of cyclists (700 per day) and a lack of cycle facilities, along with high levels of crime and disorder, particularly after dark.



The POWR scheme includes widened, repaved footways, with continuous paving across side roads.

Objectives and guiding principles of the scheme

Stated aims included plans to: reduce the number of casualties by 56 per cent; reduce traffic speeds, particularly over the night-time period; assist in the reduction of levels of crime and disorder on POWR and surrounding streets; help the delivery of the Norwich area transportation strategy, and promote townscape, public domain and public health objectives.

Outcomes

The scheme included widened, repaved footways, with continuous paving across side roads. The build-out of kerbs at crossings reduced the width for pedestrians and enhanced visibility. Guard railing was removed at several locations and public art and seating introduced. Tree planting was used to narrow the optical width of the carriageway. The central reservation was removed on the one-way section; additional signal-controlled pedestrian crossings were provided which used 'rest on red' timings. Traffic signs mounted at low level reduced visual impact. Lastly, the reduction of the amount of on-street parking at night improved visibility and there were new lighting columns with luminaries for both carriageway and footway.

Process

The project was overseen by a joint officers group of city and county technical officers, chaired by the project manager. This was part of the member board, comprising county and city elected representatives, and senior officers including one from the Norwich Constabulary. The original programme of a single construction phase was split into two, with a long break for the Christmas shopping period. The police were supportive, as the scheme would help them manage high levels of localised crime.

The needs of the disabled were represented by the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind and a specialist officer of Bedfordshire County Council.



Tree planting was introduced to narrow the optical width of the carriageway.

Lessons for elsewhere

- The multi-disciplinary team showed strong project management skills.
- Regular team meetings of staff spread across three offices ensured they all worked together, and were able to appreciate the overall project aims and their interrelationship with that of the rest of the team.
- The involvement of safety team members in the design team kept safety audit issues to a minimum and therefore any modifications to a minimum.
- Early contractor involvement helped with design process, construction programming and minimising traffic disruption.
- The appointment of a contractor used to working under tight and busy city centre conditions was helpful.

Review by Phil Jones Associates.
For inspiration visit:
www.cabe.org.uk/streets

Since the POWR improvement scheme was implemented there has been a 60 per cent reduction in casualties.

- The engagement with groups in the night-time leisure economy by the use of a local community research company proved beneficial.
- Awareness of the different and sometimes simplistic expectations of some of the stakeholders was necessary.
- The use of signal-controlled pedestrian crossings to control vehicle speeds during the day and to rest on red to both traffic and pedestrians during the evening period was successful. An evening rest on green to pedestrians and red to traffic was considered but rejected because it might reduce pedestrian awareness of vehicles.
- Ground penetration radar was extremely useful in minimising utility service diversions and saving a significant amount of time and cost.
- The provision of a new 'butterfly' toilet and reinstatement of an abandoned conventional toilet reduced the fouling of the surrounding residential area. Financial constraints have so far precluded the provision of more toilets.
- Cyclists do not always follow designated cycle routes but prefer to take a more visually direct route along footways.
- Because of the pattern of pedestrian flows on POWR in cohorts coinciding with train arrivals rather than a continuous high flow, the new pattern pedestrian signals (with nearside light only) function well. This is not the case in other parts of the corridor where high continuous pedestrian flows have blocked the view of the signal and meant special warning signs have had to go up.
- There was conflict between protagonists concerned with tree planting (to reinstate the former 'avenue' character of POWR) and those interested in security concerned with visibility from the existing and single new CCTV camera (in the centre of the street). This was resolved by the choice of tree species with a shape and leaf canopy which will not obstruct views as they mature.

