

Horsham District Cycling Forum: Comments on the West of Horsham Transport Package

Summary

We do not support this package without significant improvement to the provision for cycling.

1) This is a resilience package

Although this is a bid for both sustainability (£2m) and resilience (£1.1m) funds, the measures in the package are almost entirely for resilience: enlarging and reconfiguring four major roundabouts to increase capacity on the A264/A24 and traffic calming to prevent a consequent increase in use of the more direct routes through the village and lanes.

2) Wider opportunities to improve sustainable transport have not been considered

The large-scale civil engineering work involved offers the chance to create continuous, safe, attractive and useful cycle routes between key destinations by linking up and improving existing paths and roads and by providing genuinely safe crossings of these major junctions. Doing this would meet NPPF requirements and accepted guidance and be in line with current government policy (Ambition for Cycling). It would have a real effect in raising levels of cycling.

3) The business case is too narrow

Cycling has not been prioritised or seriously considered as a valid form of transport. The modelling used has not considered cycling and the business case does not take account of the financial benefits (health, congestion, economic growth) of including proper provision for cycling. The reasons for the disproportionately high rate of RTAs involving cycles along the bypass have not been recognised or addressed.

4) The sustainability elements are very minor and almost entirely incidental to the resilience works.

They consist of:

- installing toucan crossings (rather than just the standard lights which are due to be installed anyway¹),
- some minor changes to the footways at Farthings Hill (which fall below accepted standards for cycling-specific infrastructure),
- some additional footway provision at Five Oaks (again, this is not designed with cycling in mind and there are no signals or priority crossing measures)
- some traffic calming measures (which are necessary to prevent a major rise in the number of vehicles using the shorter routes through the village and lanes instead of the longer route via the new road)

The specific additional work being planned to assist cycling and walking is trivial in the context of the work as a whole. The 'resilience' schemes in the package fail to consider cycling at all.

¹ "Signalisation of this roundabout is proposed as part of the mitigation measures associated with the West Horsham committed scheme." CD/IN/01Horsham Transport and Development Study & Addendum - See more at: <http://www.horsham.gov.uk/planningpolicy/planning-policy/horsham-district-planning-framework-examination/background-documents-and-supporting-evidence#sthash.6wYmqezo.dpuf>

5) The proposed sustainability measures will fail to significantly increase cycling and walking levels

Although there are some benefits for cycling, which are welcome, there will still be significant severance at Farthings Hill and Five Oaks because

- they will not form part of continuous, safe and direct cycle routes along the adjacent roads
- the junctions will still be a major deterrent for those cycling on the road
- the poor off-road provision will make crossing inconvenient and slow for those cycling
- the junctions will still present a high accident risk to NMUs –especially to those cycling and to the young and more vulnerable pedestrians
- some of the changes will have a negative effect on cycling (for example widening and straightening of the carriageway at Farthings Hill, diverting cyclists round a long ‘swan’s neck’ and adding a chicane at Five Oaks)

It is not yet clear how effective the traffic calming will be in reducing the volumes and speed of traffic, but it is clear that there was inadequate consideration of the needs of cyclists. A more detailed assessment is needed.

The Supporting Document implicitly recognises that the cycling and walking benefits of its proposals are limited since they are not quantified.

6) There will be some adverse effects on cycling which have not been recognised or mitigated

Increased traffic volumes and larger roads will make conditions worse for cycling. The Great Daux and Robin Hood schemes have no mitigation measures at all.

Questions asked by C2C

Would the proposed scheme effectively tackle existing or future transport problems?

No.

Although the scheme is designed to increase capacity and reduce congestion, the sustainability elements of the scheme are not effective. The failure to enable modal shift from cars to cycling and walking will mean that more people will drive which will add to traffic, both here and in Horsham, Broadbridge Heath and on the rural roads. In turn this will further reduce levels of cycling and walking.

Severance will still be a significant problem at Farthings Hill (although toucan crossings will make crossing Farthings Hill easier, the junction itself will still cause significant severance, as will the lack of safe, direct routes linking to destinations on either side).

The Five Oaks roundabout will still be hostile for cycling with a number of new features (a chicane, the deflection opposite Shelley Drive, and the ‘swan’s neck’ diversion) that hinder cycling and no provision of adequate off-road alternatives.

Enlarging the Robin Hood and Great Daux roundabouts, higher volumes of traffic and road widening and some of the traffic calming measures will make the roads more hostile to cycling.

The scheme fails to make use of this one-off opportunity to cost-effectively improve the local cycling network at the same time as the major civil works.

Do you think that the scheme will contribute to economic growth, including providing new homes, jobs and employment floor space?

By failing to provide for cycling, the scheme does not maximise the opportunities to contribute to economic growth:

- The lack of good provision for cycling will encourage more car use and prevent modal shift towards cycling; this will add to congestion costs both at the junctions and in Horsham, Broadbridge Heath and on the rural roads.
- Access to work, leisure opportunities and shops will be restricted for people who do not have the use of a car
- The potential health benefits of increased cycling will be lost, reducing productivity and increasing health costs
- It will lead to higher levels of air pollution leading to increased health costs and reduced productivity
- Higher numbers of vehicles will increase collision costs compared with enabling cycling on protected cycling infrastructure

It fails to offer people the lifestyle they seek with a real choice of transport and easy access to the countryside for leisure cycling. This makes living in the area less attractive and will hinder economic growth.

Is the scheme good value for money?

No.

The sustainability bid is for £2m but the benefits of the scheme are trivial, incidental, totally inadequate and are outweighed by the overall negative impact on cycling.

The scheme totally fails to use the planned major civil engineering work as an opportunity to incorporate significant, high-quality cycling infrastructure into resilience schemes, even though doing so at the same time as such major civil works would be the most cost-effective way to do this and would provide good value for money.

The business case is superficial and fails to recognise the benefits of proper provision for cycling: reduction in delays, reduction in accident costs, health improvements, reduced air pollution and lower associated health costs, improved access to work (especially for the young, disadvantaged, and those who cannot drive for health reasons), a more attractive lifestyle (with a real choice to use active transport, easy access to the countryside for leisure cycling, easy access to local shops and leisure opportunities) making the areas more attractive to businesses, workers and visitors.

Detailed Comments

Farthings Hill

This is described as a 'connectivity scheme'. The benefits are claimed to be for walking and cycling, but the bid is unable to quantify this benefit. Severance will remain high, cycling rates will remain low and accident rates will remain high.

Most of the work is for resilience

The work is being undertaken as a long-agreed mitigation measure to improve capacity for the West of Horsham housing development. Signalisation of the junction was planned to improve capacity. Carriageway widening is planned in 5 places; it will straighten the line through the roundabout and increase speeds. Lay-bys for service vehicles are also resilience rather than sustainability measures.

The sustainability element

A by-product of the signalisation will be a very limited improvement for walking and cycling by providing an opportunity to cross while the traffic is stopped at the lights. The only cycle-specific costs are to provide toucan crossings instead of standard lights and a small amount of footway widening (some of which will not reach the guideline minimum of 3m). Although cycling will be permitted on these shared-use paths, they are clearly footways rather than cycleways since they have sharp bends, sudden transitions and many separate crossing stages. To cross from the Guildford Rd to the Old Guildford Rd will require four separate crossing stages, each with a wait for the lights to change.

Severance will remain –the number of people walking and cycling will stay low and collision rates to those cycling will stay high

As noted in the bid, severance is high so few cyclists and pedestrians currently cross here. The changes are unlikely to make a significant difference. Tellingly, the bid document does not even attempt to forecast how many more crossings the changes will facilitate.

The document suggests that improvements will “alleviate the perception of the junction as unsafe to cycle on”. However, this is not merely a ‘perception’: despite the low level of cycling at this junction, 6 out of 30 collisions were to people cycling –a shockingly high number given the very low levels of cycling here.

Improvements certainly are needed to make the junction objectively safer. However, the bid document implicitly recognises that the safety benefits of its proposals are limited and speculative when it states: “It has not, however, been possible to quantify these benefits”. If there is an increase in cycling across the roundabout, there is likely to be an increase in the number of collisions and the severity of these is likely to remain high.

For those who choose to cycle on the road, the roundabout will remain very hostile. On parts of the junction there will be increased traffic volumes, and higher speeds due to wider and straighter lanes – these will have a negative effect on cycling.

For those who choose to use the off-road paths, the crossings will be slow, noisy and inconvenient. They will also continue to be dangerous, especially for more vulnerable groups. Nationally, collisions due to motorists hitting cyclists who enter the road from the footway are very common; this kind of collision is highly likely here. Despite a speed limit reduction to 40mph, traffic will still be fast, heavy and dangerous. Motorists will be concentrating on the roundabout ahead rather than the footway. Other factors will be darkness, fog, ice, and off-peak speeding. Motorists who cross on red or who ‘amber gamble’ are likely to fail to spot cyclists and to underestimate their speed. Cyclists (and pedestrians) fed up with waiting at multiple stages will cross against the lights and may misjudge the gap.

The proposed shared-use footways are exactly that –‘footways’. They do not have smooth or protected transitions on and off the roads and they have tight bends which are not well-suited for cycling. The footway is less than 3m on the northbound approach from Guildford Rd, despite there being two lanes provided for motorised vehicles.

It is not clear whether the footways will be fully resurfaced with a high quality smooth finish or simply be widened by adding an extra strip alongside the existing uneven and worn path.

There is no analysis of waiting times for cyclists and pedestrians.

There is no cycle priority over the side entrance to the petrol station.

There are no measures to improve the cycle route between the roundabout and Horsham –the Guildford Rd arm is fast and hostile. Cycle facilities on the busy A281 into town are sub-standard.

The old A264 is being downgraded as part of this scheme. This provides an opportunity to create a first class protected cycleway using some of the existing carriageway. Amazingly, there is no proposed cycle provision at all despite the vast amounts of space available and the planned 40mph speed limit.

Five Oaks roundabout

This is a fast, busy and hostile roundabout; a large proportion of existing cyclists (let alone potential cyclists) avoid riding on it. It is being extensively remodelled which is an opportunity to 'cycleproof' it, but cyclists are simply being encouraged to get off the road and cross as second class pedestrians.

Cycling is not being given any priority: there are no protected cycle tracks around the roundabout, no smooth transitions on and off the footway, no continental geometry for the roundabout itself to make on-road cycling safer, no cycle bypass on the chicane, no cycle bypass on the constriction at the adjacent mini roundabout and no shortcut through the new swan's neck section of road.

Old Guildford Rd-Billingshurst Rd traffic calming

Traffic calming is necessary to mitigate a worsening in motorised vehicle traffic caused by the changes. Depending on the resulting traffic volumes and speeds and final design details, it may or may not represent a net benefit to cycling.

Traffic through here is presumably forecast to increase from current levels because:

- 1) All the village traffic will have to go along here instead of being split between this road and the old A264 (widening of this road where it joins Farthings Hill roundabout suggest a traffic increase is anticipated)
- 2) There is an increase in housing
- 3) It will not be possible to eliminate all rat-running.

The extent to which the negative effects on cycling will be offset by the various speed control measures is not clear. The proposal for speed activated signs suggests that controlling speeds is expected to be a challenge.

There is no evidence that the traffic calming measures along here have taken into account the traffic calming in the same locations for the LSTF cycle route (the LSTF programme manager said that he was unaware of the West of Horsham Transport Package proposals).

The flared junctions of the Warnham Rd and Old Guildford Rd with the Billingshurst Rd cause potentially hazardous conflicts between motorised vehicles and cycles, it is not clear that the speed reduction alone will address this.

It is not clear that cycle movements have been considered in the shared-space proposal and they need to be assessed for potentially hazardous turning movements and increased footway cycling.

Traffic Calming, Warnham Lanes

The bid includes measures to restrict rat-running through the rural lanes but the plans do not include exemptions to allow cyclists to continue to use the lanes to avoid the busy main road (having raised the matter, we hope that this will now be addressed). The needs of cycling were not adequately considered, let alone prioritised.

Resilience schemes for Great Daux and Robin Hood

These roundabouts will be massively widened and will be extremely hostile for cycling. There is no consideration of cycling along the roads or across the junctions. Significant opportunities to overcome severance and 'cycle proof' these junctions have not been taken.

There are a number of opportunities for example:

- Upgrade and improve signage of the existing A24 golf course underpass route
- Use the old Daux Hill road to create a traffic-free cycleway to Warnham (as proposed by Warnham PC)
- A safe crossing of the A24 to Warnham station.
- Improve public access to the Warnham Rd underpass and traffic-free riverside paths.
- A short cycle link between Rookwood Park and the golf club road to link with the A24 underpass

New A264 dual carriageway

Despite established guidance that a road such as this should have specific provision for cycling and current government policy that all new roads should be cycle proofed, there is no continuous cycle provision along this brand new road. The bid does not include proposals to create a safe cycle route here.

Old A264

There is a real opportunity to provide a continuous, protected cycleway alongside the downgraded road. The bid does not include this.

Accident Rates

The bypass causes major severance: very few people cycle along or across it. Despite this, accident rates are high: around 9% of total injury accidents are to people cycling. Most of these collisions occur at the roundabouts –particularly those where there are relatively high numbers of cyclists crossing the bypass. Any increase in cycling is likely to lead to a disproportionate increase in these cycling injuries. .

Collisions involving cycles typically have different causes from other collisions (eg drivers failing to spot cyclists on the roundabout and collisions when cyclists enter the road from the footway). Even with signalisation, collisions rates and the severity of collisions involving cyclists will remain high. Well-designed grade-separated routes across the bypass could virtually eliminate cycling injuries and enable significantly more people to cycle.