

Rachel Tibbetts

From: Paul Troop [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 August 2023 15:27
To: Planning; Suzanne Taylor; White, Joy - Oxfordshire County Council
Cc: chair@bicesterbug.org
Subject: 21/04275/OUT Further Comments from Bicester Bike Users' Group

Importance: High

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Council. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is commendable that the applicant has to some extent taken into account OCC's policies on active travel, in particular the 'decide and provide' approach that emphasises securing active travel movement over motor vehicle movement, the transport hierarchy with pedestrians and cyclists at the apex, and the commitment to reducing future motor vehicle movements. However, the exception to this is the approach taken by the applicant to the Howes Lane interim scheme (see s.2 below), which does not comply with policy and still needs to be revised before it is acceptable.

The applicant also has not considered or correctly applied the current (2023) Bicester Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), in particular relating to BR6, the proposed link to the town centre parallel to the railway.

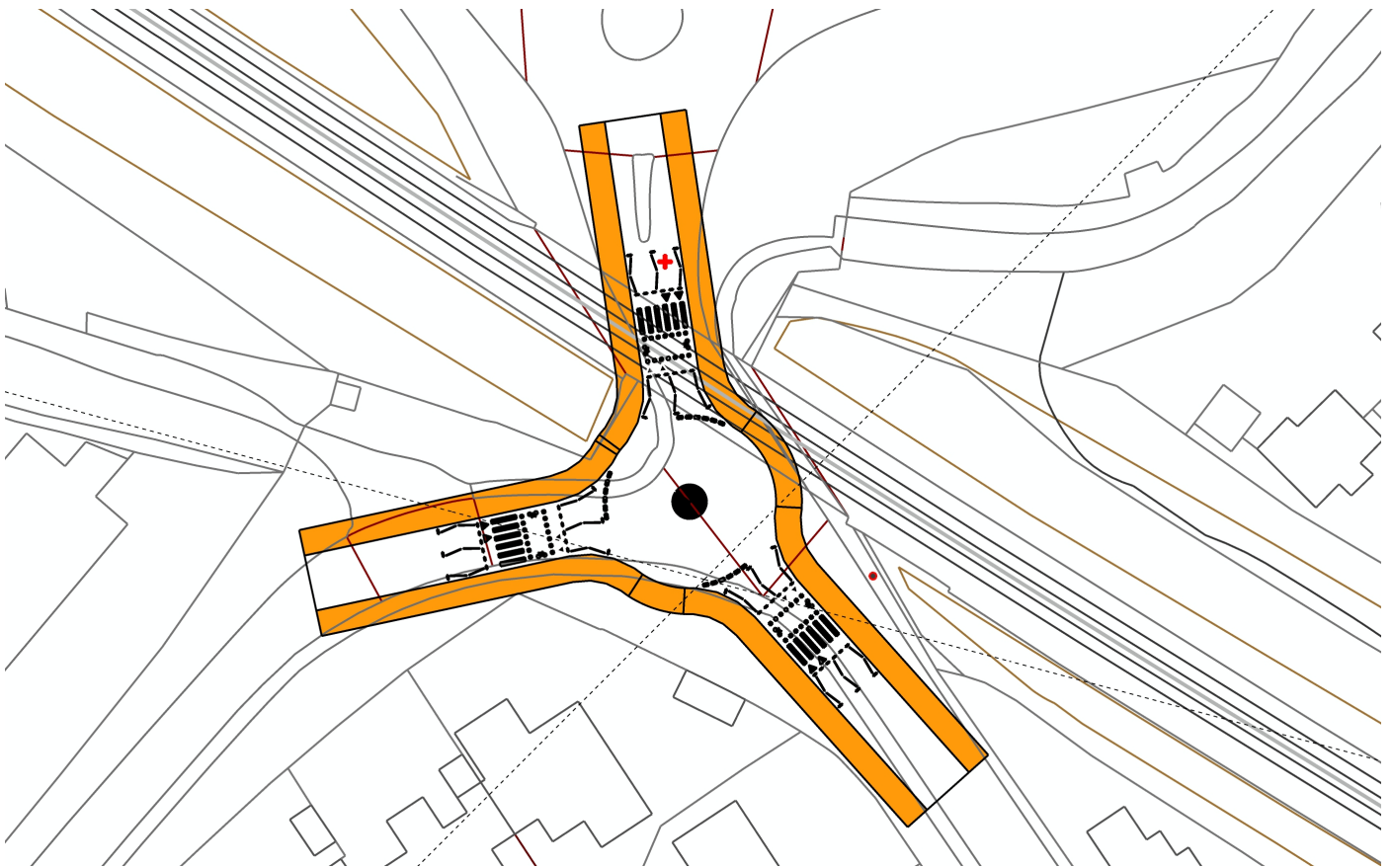
2. INTERIM SCHEME (APPENDIX P, P.356)

The weakest aspect of the application remains the proposed interim scheme for the Howes Lane junction. The current OCC highways policies require the transport hierarchy to be applied, ensuring that active travel movements for people travelling as pedestrians and cyclists are secured first, before moving on to consider next how people moving using motor vehicles are secured. The applicant has skipped the first two steps, proceeding directly to consider motor vehicle movements. This is a legacy approach which is explicitly no longer permitted within Oxfordshire. The result is that there is little or no provision for pedestrians, and no provision for cyclists. The expectation appears to be that vulnerable cyclists should share the carriageway with heavier and faster moving motor vehicles. This approach is no more acceptable for vulnerable cyclists than it is to expect vulnerable pedestrians to share carriageway space. This legacy approach is also surprising given that the current motor vehicle movements at this junction are relatively low and expected to decrease.

There is a modest design limitation in that the distance between the two bridge abutments is said to be 10.9m, but with a standard 6.5m carriageway, this would allow at least 2m shared space either side of the carriageway for active travel, with significantly wider provision outside this single pinch point. 2m is incidentally wider than the provision that the applicant is proposing to offer elsewhere in the junction (1.8m) where there are no restrictions.

Given the modest traffic flows on Howes Lane / A4095 (West), there is a query whether the current eastbound dual stacking space is necessary. Reducing this to a single lane entry would greatly facilitate the delivery of walking and cycling provision.

The applicant might explore more imaginative solutions to this junction, for example a 'Dutch' style mini-roundabout with active travel crossings suggested below. This would also have the benefit of being a design that also works longer term and would not need to be revised in the future. Failing this, the application should be refused on highway grounds.



More minor comments are that the uncontrolled crossing over Howes Lane should be a parallel crossing. This would obviate the need to upgrade this to a parallel crossing later. There should also be pedestrian priority over the entrance to the farm and footpath on the northern side (see LTN1/20 Fig 1.1 and Bicester LCWIP p.30).

3. FINAL SCHEME (FIGURE 1.4, P.25, APPENDIX U, P.531)

The applicant's final scheme similarly fails to adhere to OCC's current highways approach in that the provision for walking and cycling is woeful. Our previous detailed comments have been almost entirely ignored. A crucial crossing at the desire line at the mouth of Howes Lane / A4095 (West) is entirely absent. A more active friendly solution such as a 'Dutch' style mini-roundabout at this point as suggested above would be much more effective in delivering OCC's highway policy objectives.

The applicant's final proposed scheme is hugely idiosyncratic and has little coherence. There are a number of very odd design choices which will make it difficult and peculiar for pedestrians and cycles to navigate, particularly elderly and vulnerable users such as the blind and partially sighted.

In particular, it is widely accepted that cycle paths should be oriented adjacent to the motor vehicle carriageway with pedestrians oriented further away unless imperative reasons justify a departure from this principle. This is so accepted that departure from this is akin to expecting drivers to drive on the right hand side of the road rather than the left. This should be corrected. The designer has attempted to reduce the number of conflict points by departing from the orthodox expectations, but this has not been successful in that there are numerous points where there is no legitimate way for pedestrians/cyclists to access the pedestrian/cycle paths from the shared paths. It is something of a mess, but could be fixed by switching to an orthodox arrangement with shared space at the landing areas of each of the crossings, and for each transition between the shared paths and segregated paths.

Likewise, it is essential that buffers be provided between the active travel paths and the motor vehicle carriageway (see LTN1/20 Table 6-1). This is also essential to provide a waiting area for those waiting to cross at the parallel crossings.

The ghost islands are not recommended as they have no benefit for traffic movements below 12,000, they make movements from the minor arm more difficult, and they lead to an increase in collisions (Windass, 2015). These should really be removed.

Incidentally, the applicant refers to 'diagonal' crossings, but this terminology is no longer in use. It is assumed that the applicant is referring to 'parallel' crossings.

4. PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE PATHS (APPENDIX B, P.32)

The intersection of the segregated pedestrian and cycle paths is quite odd. The radii seem to be 0, making turning very difficult and collisions quite likely. The radii on the corners need to be increased substantially and the transitions between the segregated paths and the shared intersections need to be increased. LTN1/20 would suggest a corner radius of to 15m or more (Table 5-7).

5. NEW JUNCTIONS (APPENDIX C, P.34)

The new junctions proposed do not comply with either OCC's policies or LTN1/20 in that pedestrians and cyclists are expected to give way at minor junctions. This needs to be corrected. Ideally there would also be a setback so that turning cars can wait without blocking the highway.

The design is also very idiosyncratic in that the buffer is between the pedestrian and cycle paths, rather than between the active travel paths and the motor vehicle carriageway. This should be corrected, with a suitable division between the active travel paths such as a Cambridge kerb.

6. ACTIVE TRAVEL LINK (APPENDIX D, P.36)

This junction is somewhat better, though the buffer to the motor vehicle highway appears rather narrow. A buffer of 1m+ would be preferable. The radii on the corners are also very tight, and should really be 15m+ as per LTN1/20.

7. ACTIVE TRAVEL LINK (APPENDIX E, P.38)

As above, this junction is better, but the buffers are rather narrow, and the corner radii are much too small and should be increased to 15m+.

8. NEW JUNCTION (APPENDIX F, P.40)

This junction provides a 2-way cycle path. As such, the lack of any setback near Hawkwell Farm Coaches is a huge safety risk for cyclists. There needs to be a full setback here.

There are some buffers, but there needs to be buffers in all areas so as to provide waiting areas for users waiting to cross the road.

Corner radii are too small again.

There needs to be a cycle path next to the pedestrian path, otherwise cyclists will simply cycle on the pedestrian path.

9. RAILWAY ACTIVE TRAVEL PATH (APPENDIX H, P.44 et seq)

The Bicester LCWIP specifies that this route (now BR6) is a segregated. A shared path, one of the alternatives as suggested by the applicant, would not be compliant with policy.

10. NEW JUNCTIONS (APPENDIX I, P.48)

The applicant's proposal for Dutch style 'simultaneous green' junctions is commendable. However, there are still some idiosyncrasies with the design.

The applicant could increase motor vehicle capacity at the junction by decoupling the pedestrian and cycle movements by putting in a median island for pedestrians but not for cycles.

The buffers between the pedestrian and cycle paths is again very odd. The buffer should be between the active travel paths and the motor vehicle carriageway as per standard design. This would also provide waiting areas for those waiting to cross.

Segregated paths should be provided on all arms, otherwise cyclists will simply cycle on the pedestrian paths, to the annoyance and risk of pedestrians.

The 2-way priority crossing must have a full setback, or it will be a huge safety risk, particularly in combination with the ghost islands.

The ghost islands should be removed as they provide no real benefit, eat up road space, and increase risk and collisions (Windass, 2015).

Paul Troop
Secretary
Bicester Bike Users' Group

Paul Troop, Barrister
Garden Court Chambers
57-60 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3LJ
DX: 34 London Chancery Lane
Twitter: @GardenCourtLaw @GardenCtPublic @GCC Housing @GCC Civillibs
Switchboard: 020 7993 7600 | Direct Tel: 020 7993 7867
My Profile: <https://www.gardencourtchambers.co.uk/barristers/paul-troop>



Regulated by the Bar Standards Board

This electronic mail message is intended only for the use of the addressee and may contain information which is privileged and confidential. Any disclosure of the same is prohibited by law. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, please note that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error can you please notify the sender immediately. Thank you for your co-operation and please contact us on +44 (0) 20 7993 7600 or email info@gclaw.co.uk