

Cycling Infrastructure in the A40 Improvement Scheme Phase 1

While Phase 1 is primarily a bus lane scheme, the cycle path on the north side of the A40 will be modified and reconstructed. It therefore presents an opportunity to make sure that what is built is an excellent example of cycling infrastructure and complies with current best practice. It also, of course, gives an early opportunity for the County to demonstrate its commitment to the spirit of the policy it recently adopted¹ accepting the need for first-rate cycling infrastructure as set out in the Gilligan Report² and elsewhere.

It is therefore disappointing to see that the treatment of several of the junctions with minor roads on the north side do not comply with best practice in that they do not give continuous priority to the cycle path. This was queried with one of the engineers at the public exhibition; his reply, in a nutshell, was “it would be dangerous because motorists wouldn’t be expecting it”.

It’s hard to know where to start in the face of such attitudes. One could show endless pictures from Holland, Belgium, Germany, Denmark and more but these risk being sidestepped as being “not appropriate for British conditions”. So sticking to the UK, one can point to Waltham Forest’s Little Holland. One can point to the County’s own Cycling Design Standards booklet³ – this picture from page 11 of the booklet shows a road not unlike the A40.



We can cite Gilligan’s report about how important continuity is for cycle paths. We can point to plenty of junctions which are now part of Access to Headington, with more being built, where the cycle track has priority. For more detail we can direct the engineers to a report from the Cycling Embassy of GB⁴,

which sets out in detail how such junctions can be laid out and be fully compliant with UK regulations.

If this scheme is to contravene the Council’s policies and go against all this experience it should only be because there is overwhelming evidence that to comply would be too

¹ <https://www.oxfordfutures.org.uk/2018/11/new-hope-for-cycling-in-oxford/>

² Gilligan, A; “Running Out of Road”; prepared for the National Infrastructure Commission
<https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Running-out-of-Road-June-2018.pdf>

³ <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/roadsandtransport/transportoliciesandplans/newdevelopments/CyclingStandards.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/blog/2013/07/26/a-view-from-the-drawing-board-cycle-track-priority-across-side-roads>

dangerous. The engineers could not say they had such evidence. Expense cannot be an issue as the work involved would be minimal given that the cycle track is effectively being rebuilt anyway and the modifications would be trivial.

There are seven junctions for motor vehicles on the north side of the A40 from the new P&R to Dukes Cut, not counting the P&R itself. Not all these are problematic. The Cassington Lights crossing is acceptable as it is at least for the time being. Horsemere Lane is to be closed to vehicular traffic and the cycle track will not be interrupted. The Eynsham roundabout presents particular problems which are discussed below.

Which leaves Cuckoo Lane, the petrol station entrance and exit, and the very minor Worton Park access road. Why should these should not be made continuous? The engineers should be asked what evidence they have to support their statement that it wouldn't be safe. If their position is based on nothing more than judgement then the commendable aspirations of the County's policies for encouraging healthy travel options must take precedence. It is being done in plenty of other places so why not here?

Eynsham roundabout is a different matter. The current design is not safe for people using the cycle path, but it is unlikely to be re-engineered during Phase 1. The numbers using it and therefore putting themselves at risk is only going to increase as the P&R and Eynsham Garden Village developments go ahead. A light-controlled crossing to protect people using the footpath/cycleway would be an interim measure and should not be too expensive. In the longer term the roundabout should be replaced with a 'compact' design, specified in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) as particularly suitable for locations with cyclists and pedestrians.