

Gloucestershire Spine Link. Section 2, Phase 1 - A435 Cycleway.

Cheltenham Racecourse GWSR Bridge to Bishop's Cleeve Roundabout

(Cheltenham Racecourse roundabout to GWSR Bridge Section 2 Phase 2, not yet published)

Objection - Not Beneficial for Walkers, the Countryside and Cyclists - 26 Feb 2024

- 1. The scheme brings cyclists into conflict with walkers**
- 2. Severe impact on the countryside belt between Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve**
- 3. The scheme doesn't give cyclists a conflict free route between the settlements.**

Context

The Google image below, shows the A435 Evesham Road heading north to Bishop's Cleeve from Cheltenham. The road is within open landscape. There is, in effect, a valuable green belt.



The footway along the left west side of the road, is used by pedestrians and joggers. There doesn't seem to be an overarching concern about traffic using the adjoining carriageway.

Ramblers' Aims

Whilst welcoming walking and cycling improvement plans, Ramblers resists any proposals of detriment to walkers. Ramblers strives to defend footpaths and protect the countryside.

Detriments

The proposal is to take out the hedge and trees along the right east side of the carriageway. A bidirectional green rubber surfaced cycle track will be installed in its place. The current left footway will be removed and relocated to the far right side of the cycle track. Overall the scheme is likely to appear as a number of traffic lanes- a very wide road.

There will also be zones bringing walkers and cyclists into new conflict, of benefit to neither. Installation of street lights has been suggested, contrary to aims of night-time dark skies. A 40mph speed limit is proposed, compounding signage clutter within the verdant landscape.

Gear Change: a bold vision for Cycling and Walking

The scheme claims to meet the Government Guidance document 'Gear Change' which says:

1. There needs to be a step change in walking and cycling.
2. Cyclists must be separated from motor traffic
3. Cyclists must be treated as vehicles and separated from pedestrians
4. Purely cosmetic alterations and isolated good stretches should be avoided
5. Barriers should be minimised and routes should take account of how users actually behave.
6. Perhaps due to segregation, there is no mention of street lighting nor speed limits

Scheme Revision

The scheme should be urgently revised to include all of the above, to minimise conflict and save this important green heritage countryside between Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve.

Options for Scheme Improvement along the A435

1. Retain the hedgerow and trees.

This should save some cost for better use elsewhere in the scheme, benefit the landscape and avoid giving the impression of a very wide road in otherwise unspoilt countryside.

2. Install the new cycleway inside the field to the east of the hedgerow.

The hedge will give some separation between cyclists and motor vehicles. It will also achieve segregation of cyclists from pedestrians. Cyclists should have a clear through route.

3. Retain the footway along the left west side of the road.

The footway is grade (height) segregated from motor traffic. The few cyclists that currently use the pavement should migrate to the new cycleway.

(it may be useful to change the side of the road of the footway or perhaps use both - see later)

Hyde Brook Bridge.

A bridge parapet wall is to the left west side of the pavement between the Southam and Garden centre signs. The other parapet wall is apparent to the right of the right east verge. The raised kerbs help protect pedestrians and the parapets from motor traffic.



The proposal is to remove the pavement on the left, move the carriageway left and and try to squeeze in a shared use cycleway between the relocated carriageway and the right parapet. The risk of collisions, between cyclists and walkers, can be increased by shared use and which already appears high considering the number of miles of shared use.

Gear Change instead favours segregation to avoid conflict.

Suitable options might include:

- A footbridge over the Brook to the left of the parapet. The fence is on highway space.
- A precast concrete box culvert dropped into the Brook to the right of the right parapet to carry the cycleway. This could save costs by avoiding the need for realignment of the footway and carriageway.

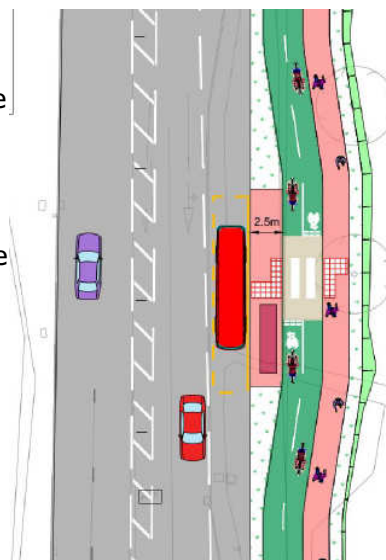
Bus Stops and Pedestrian Access

Bus stops have been proposed for the east side of the A435 where there is a verge, a fence and some space to a sports area.

There is already a footway and suitable bus stopping points to the west (left) of the carriageway.

If a footway is required to the east side, the cycleway between the bus stop and the footway can create conflict between cyclists wanting to make progress and pedestrians needing the bus.

An obvious option is to swap the footway and cycleway so that pedestrians are positioned nearest the bus stop. The fence could be retained between the footway and cycleway for segregation. A gap or gate could be provided, if required, for a cyclist to reach the bus.



GWSR A435 Railway Bridge

This Google image again shows the A435 Evesham Road heading north towards Bishops Cleeve. The road width is constrained by the steam railway bridge parapets.



The footway to the left (west) is used by walkers and joggers. The footway to the right (east) can be used by train spotters. Walkers are segregated from other traffic including cyclists.

It is proposed to remove the left footway, and realign the carriageway so that a wider footway to the right becomes a relatively compressed shared space for both pedestrians and cyclists.

This space would bring cyclists and pedestrians into conflict, something that is avoided currently and that 'Gear Change' is also keen to avoid.

Options for Segregation

- a) Railway bridges sometimes have a footway secured to the side outside the parapet. A footway on the left of the parapet would allow road space for a cycleway to the right .
- b) Similarly a cycleway could be attached to the outside of the right parapet. There would be no need to realign the roadscape.
- c) The proposals contain a note on the financial contract which says that the bridge 'requires significant repair work'.
It would seem an ideal opportunity to work with GWSR to improve the bridge in some form so that it includes a segregated footway and cycleway as per the Gear Change document.

Summary

Trying to implement a supposedly green transport scheme may not have a very green impact on the countryside and could easily not provide the benefits intended.

The project should be reviewed so as to better meet segregation required within Gear Change. Cyclists, probably more than any other user group, have a need to maintain momentum. Infrastructure should be designed to keep other users including walkers safely separated.

It would not be good for walkers to move from the current arrangement where they are segregated from vehicles including cycles, to an arrangement where conflict is inherent within the proposals. Cycle / pedestrian collision rates should not be considered minimal.

A revised scheme incorporating greater segregation could save cost both monetarily and environmentally by retaining hedges, trees, fences and road layout.

As cycling grows in popularity and requires improved facilities it is important that the interests of walkers are protected too.

Spine Link Survey

As a sub note it's worth raising that the survey questions sometimes group walking and cycling together when they are two separate issues. Ideally the questions should be segregated in much the same way as walking and cycling itself.