



Creating a Cycling Culture in Wolverhampton



A Cycling Campaign affiliated to the CTC, CCN and Living Streets

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Roads Changes and Access Consultation for the i54 development

Dear Mr Hanick

Wolves on Wheels Cycle Campaign welcomes this opportunity to comment on the highway schemes and access plans for the i54 development. Thank you for sending the pedestrian and cycling access plans and directing us to the highway plans at http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/business/economic_development/regeneration/i54/highway/download.htm

The i54 represents a major shift in traffic patterns in Fordhouses and Coven Heath that are both a threat and opportunity to sustainable modes of transport in which we are most interested – walking and cycling.

A major point with all the junction designs and highway layouts is a **complete absence of on-carriageway provision for vehicular cycling**. If we split cyclists into two broad categories :-

1. new, nervous, unskilled or very young riders or simply people who ride on footways to keep away from motor traffic and
2. vehicular cyclists – the skilled and experienced riders (including the cycle commuters that a vibrant 21st century development like i54 should be attracting) riding as traffic in the manner described in *Cyclecraft* by John Franklin and to National Cycle Training Standard Level 3 (as taught e.g. by Wolverhampton City Council cycling instructors)

This means that all arms of traffic light junctions should be provided with **advanced stop lines and filter lanes**¹ – predominately to assist riders to get into a position in front of motor traffic in order to turn right more safely.

¹ Section 6.4 [page 122 onwards]] of *Lancashire – a Cyclists County*.

The other feature on dual carriageway sections such as the Wobaston Road major scheme that is desirable is the provision of a **wide nearside lane**². Wide nearside (left-hand) lanes offer considerable benefits in terms of cyclists' comfort and safety. They are particularly helpful where there are significant numbers of HGVs or buses. They help avoid problems that can arise with cycle lanes, particularly obstruction by parked vehicles and poor road positioning by cyclists on the approach to junctions.

To assist cyclists, nearside lanes should be 4.25m wide. This is a crucial dimension; if wider, traffic will tend to double up and create two substandard lanes.

<http://www.warringtoncyclecampaign.co.uk/> good practice section shows some examples. Wolves on Wheels never advocates on-highway cycle lanes on plain road sections as these are always installed too narrow and drastically alter driver behaviour for the worse. Also a cyclist alters their road position as circumstances dictate but a cycle lane never changes its width !

Given the imperative to reduce traffic growth by promoting cycling and walking the omission of Advanced Stop Lines is grievous. However we have been advised at Wolverhampton City Cycle Forum by the head of Urban Traffic Control that ASL's are not installed when roads junctions are running at full capacity. So which is it to be? Provision for vehicular cycling or admission of the fact that these new roads are going to be completely congested ?

Lancashire – a Cyclists County is the current best UK design guidelines for cycling provision on and off-highway. Reference will be made to it in order to illustrate good examples. It is available free of charge as a pdf download from Lancashire County Council's website.

A449 junctions

It is clear that the Highways Agency has exerted considerable pressure on the developers to make them remodel the two junctions on the A449 that the Agency has not yet completed. We are dismayed that the 1930's vintage cycle lanes on the footway beside the A449 are not receiving much needed maintenance and upgrade. They are almost lost to vegetation and have many missing dropped kerbs at side road intersections. They are popular (in spite of their condition) especially on the Coven Heath sections because of the "dead ground" that creates cyclist-hiding blind spots.

We welcome the change of the A449 / Brewood Road junction to traffic lights and require the provision of ASL's on all arms of the junctions.

However we note that your scheme is more concerned for the changing of field access than including and altering the existing cycle lanes! We ask for the pedestrian crossings to be installed as TOUCAN crossings in order for riders on the cycle tracks to get from one side to the other. Everyone deserves to be able to cycle from one half of Brewood Road to the other either on carriageway or via the crossings.

² Figure 4.1.4 [page 68] of *Lancashire – a Cyclists County*. Current best UK design guidelines for cycling provision.

The uncontrolled pedestrian crossings are in fact interruptions to the cycle lanes on either side. The design should be altered to show cycle lanes crossing the mouth of junctions per section 6.2 of Lancashire – a Cyclists County.

At Gailey A5 / A449 junction we require consideration for cyclists travelling between Penkridge and Coven / Wolverhampton. For the less experienced rider or those who choose the cycle lanes, pedestrian crossings to be installed as TOUCANS on all arms. This will help to connect across this busy junction.

M54 Junction 2 interchange and main site north access.

We welcome the upgrade of the Cycle Lanes on the footway at the Junction 2 Gyrotory and look for Toucan crossings to be integrated with the signalised slip road arms. Any motorway gyrotory is a no-go zone for 90% of cyclists, making the cycle lanes very important.

We ask that the cycle lane is extended on the west side of the A449 onto the Boundary industrial estate service road i.e. into Wolverhampton. This needs to be made contra-flow on its one way section. Together with altering the footway past Goodrich and Brammer BSL to shared use, this would provide a continuous shared-use cycle lane from Gailey to Pendeford Business Park and Bilbrook. Moreover this would legalise the common practice of many cyclists who choose not to ride on the road on this section of route.

We trust that you will choose low speed limits on your access and exit roads. The roundabouts either side of the new overbridge make a natural place to bring speeds from motorway regulations to 40mph or better still 30 mph.

We welcome shared-use facilities on the footway so long as these are wide enough for safe passing and give a feeling of safety from the draught of passing large vehicles. We recommend detailing be based on sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.4 of Lancashire – the cyclists' county [pages 75 to 79]. These shared-use facilities will attract new and returning cyclists in riding to work at i54.

The Droveway junction changes

Revision of the roundabout looks acceptable if use of continental geometry is applied to control vehicle entry and exit speeds. It's a fair roundabout at present for vehicular cyclists though traffic levels at the junction will rise with i54 traffic. There's clearly a lot more land on the i54 estate for footways and shared-use as the widths rise to 3 metres.

Patshull Avenue junction changes

Roads junction arms need ASL's to assist right turn positioning. We like the Toucan crossings but the shared-use on the footway at only 2 metres is extremely narrow and will lead to conflict.

Pendeford Hall Lane junction changes.

Right turn facility and pedestrian refuge at the junction throat look okay. You're welcome to upgrade the Staffs county council cycle tracks and widen the shared use on Pendeford Hill Lane. This cycle track only really works as an uphill route [with flow direction] . As a downhill route it ends badly at the rough entrance to Middle Lane. Wouldn't it be better to encourage users to make a right turn onto the road from the cycle track here in order to put them in a better position?

Pedestrian and cycling links

It is good that the i54 site is highly permeable to non-motorised modes of transport. We trust that the estate will have a blanket 20 mph speed limit from the outset for everyone's safety.

Given the north western corner pedestrian access to Middle Lane, we don't think it is acceptable to leave Middle Lane and Shaw Hall Lane in their present poor state.

We welcome the upgrade of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal towpath from its dark, muddy, unwelcoming, present condition including the elimination of some non-DDA compliant access barriers and the ski-slope steep access at Ball Lane. This is conditional to the developers recognising that this is not the principal route for walking and cycling into the site but a pleasant, daylight only, secondary route that can only handle a few cyclists per hour.

With regard to the proposed new link path from Wobaston Road to the canal (it appears on the plan, just to the east of Plot H), we are concern that this path is shown as a "Footpath" on the plans. We think it is important to provide cycle access to the canal here, not just pedestrian access, so it needs to be a bridleway or cycle path.

We also notice on the plan, numbers 11 and 12 referred to as "footpath links". Once again, We would say consideration (at least) should be given to providing cycle access on these link paths. It's going to happen so you might as well design cycle access in from the outset.

The WCC major scheme features only shared-use cycle lanes on the footway bit on both sides in its cycling corridor proposal. Is this a compromise on widths too far ? As well as the aforementioned on-highway features, wouldn't it be better to make the south side footway just a footway and give the north side the extra width ? The north side shared use will have continuity as far as Joey's Lane, Bilbrook and connect with NCN route 81.

Middle Lane, Lawn Lane and other routes not being considered.

We are disappointed that the i54 scheme does not include some of the adjacent roads especially given that South Staffordshire is a project partner.

Lawn Lane runs from the centre of Coven to join Pendeford Hall Lane. The i54 will alter the traffic levels drastically on Lawn Lane. It is a commuter rat run and, being very narrow, subject to the kind of hair-raising rural driving that has scared off all commuting cycling. The road needs traffic calming through single direction working and alternating priority together with a low speed limit. The road needs serious design consideration towards cycling e.g. bypasses at buildouts. In Germany the highway authority would buy a strip of land over the hedge for a shared-use route – why can't we do that here?

We see little point providing the ancient bridleway of Middle Lane with a shiny new bridge over the motorway if the drainage along its course is not repaired. Much of the year the lane is only fit for bog snorkelling never mind equestrian pursuit, walking or cycling. A new durable, sympathetic surface for the lane would be most welcome.

We've mentioned the need to design cycling into Boundary Industrial Estate service road and the upgrade to the pavement link between Wobaston Road and Winchester Road. Also missing is the upgrade to the path from Patshull Road to Marsh Lane bridge. This is a popular cycling link, as the tyre tracks show, enabling easy connection to the Staffs and Worcs canal towpath, Ryehope Walk and Pendeford housing estates.

It is already very hard for cyclists to cross Wobaston Road at the entrance of Pendeford Lane [access road and bridleway] in order to get to the north side footway which leads onto National Cycle Network Route 81 at Pendeford Mill Lane. Likewise at the Cricket Club. No consideration is given to these issue in the schemes to date.

Wobaston Road Major Scheme

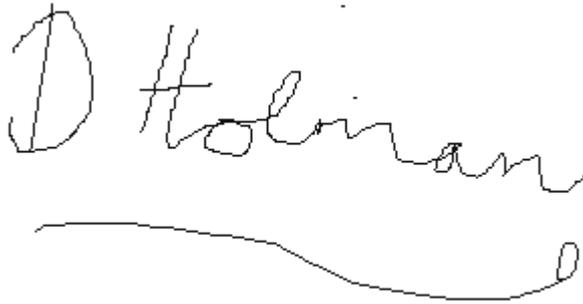
The present Wobaston Road as a single carriageway road is unpleasant for cycling as safe overtaking by cars is seldom possible. Riders are placed under pressure as they make a rolling form of "traffic calming". The Vine island is a very unusual form of roundabout which requires a high level of cycling skill to negotiate. The north side footway is popular with riders.

From memory of the drawings at the exhibition WCC want to change Wobaston Road into a dual carriageway [easier overtaking of cyclists – good], rob land from the verges, change both north and south footways to narrow shared use, provide a separate service road for the shops and change Vine island into Stafford Road / Bee Lane / Wobaston Road traffic light junction.

Our earlier comments at a lack of on-highway provision for cyclists are mainly aimed at this major scheme. Wolves on Wheels need to see future versions of the major scheme with full provision at all junction arms in the form of ASL's and preferably wide nearside lanes. We would like a shared-use link to Winchester Road to formalise current cycling practice of reaching the quieter streets via hopping over the pavement.

I look forward to hearing from you in response to these points.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Holman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

David Holman

**CTC Right to Ride Representatives, Wolverhampton
& on behalf of Wolves on Wheels Cycle Campaign**