

Witham Cycling Campaign

Planning Dept.
Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Braintree



27th November 2000

Objection to planning application
No 2000/1764/out
800 houses Maltings lane

Insufficient and inappropriate facilities for cycling... ...traffic reduction is essential if this is to be sustainable.

There are three very important background points against which the nature of our objections must be seen:

- 1 This is a large development which will generate about 6500 journeys each day. It cannot be said to be self sufficient in providing facilities and, in addition, the commercial elements will attract further vehicular traffic.
- 2 It occupies land needed if there is to be a strategic, high speed, commuter cycle track from Witham to the South West forming a route between Hatfield Peverel, the town centre and the East-side industrial areas.
- 3 Traffic calmed cycle routes to the town are non-existent.

The planning authorities have to pick out of this mish-mash a way of encouraging cycling.

The first impression is the plans is that some reference has been made to the needs of cyclists, but on further inspection it is not possible to say how these will encourage cycling as they appear to be cheap gestures and not based on the real needs of cyclists and pedestrians.

However, small adaptations to the proposed layout plan can be devised which would result in major improvements.. It appears that opportunities have been missed which can easily be put right to great and strategic benefit.

There is no alternative to doing everything possible to reduce car use.

Otherwise the impact will be completely unsustainable.

Token gestures are not enough.

- Local authorities urgently need to address non-car links BEFORE development proceeds
- The design of the development itself needs to reflect a transport hierarchy with cars at the bottom.

(A) Linking Hatfield Peverel and Witham

Problem

The outline for the SW strategic route is to follow the NW side of Hatfield Rd (to avoid two busy roundabouts) then cross to the SE side via a (probably controlled) crossing about half way between 'Lynfield Motors' and the Jack and Jenny. This then gives access to the SE edge of the town. This development blocks this route which appears to be the only possible way of avoiding Hatfield Rd. and Bridge street. *ECC have commended WCC for putting forward this strategic route as part of the Witham Cycle Network Review and ECC are going to host further discussions with all parties including the Highways agency and BDC.*

Solution

Extend the spur road shown at the NW corner of the community facilities area with a dedicated cycle track to Hatfield Road. This will then be the point at which a crossing is made.

From the N corner of the community facilities area implement a full cycle only path (perhaps pedestrians will want their own facility but shared use is not an option) in an ENE direction to join with the "type 3 road" sticking in from the east and thence to roundabout B. This should be designed for non-stop 20mph cycling.

This has the added benefit of providing proper and direct access to the community facilities for residents. It is essential that short car journeys are reduced to the minimum. This is one way to do it.

Recommendation

- 1** The plan not be accepted without the commitment to a high quality ENE route from Hatfield road.

(B) North-South journeys

Problem

- The explosion of car journeys can be blunted if cycling is encouraged. To pretend that traffic on the two roads into Witham from the south will be tolerable without serious measures to reduce demand is a fantasy.
- The roundabout at the NE corner of the layout needs proper investigation for cycle friendliness. This is bound to be a busy node for cars, lorries and bikes. A recipe for disaster. *See next page*

Solution

A North-South path is shown on the plan. This should be properly constructed for non-stop cycling.

There is a small circular road which this path crosses towards the northern edge running south of Jackson's farm. We suggest that this route is severed so that the cycle path has complete right of way. This would then form (the southern part of) a major radial route.

Recommendation

- 2 The plan not be accepted without the main N-S route being non-vehicular and with right-of-way through the development.
- 3 County highways report on the comparative benefits of a roundabout and a non-cross roads layout..

Suggestion for improving the overall layout of the road network

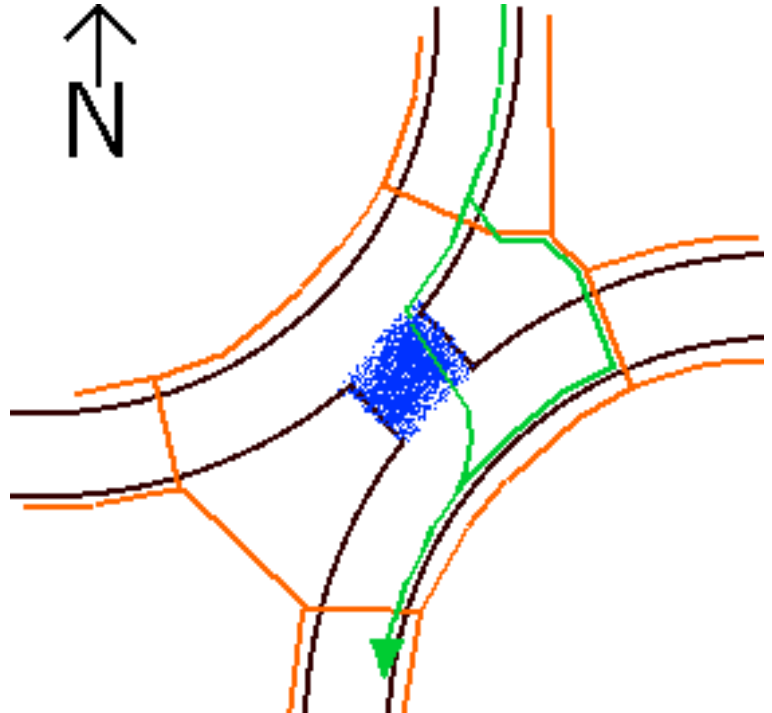
The roundabout at the NE corner doesn't need to be a roundabout. It would be better if the West end of Maltings lane was connected to Howbridge Road and the East end of Maltings Lane was connected to the new circuit road. There would be a public vehicle and bicycle cut-through.

This is illustrated diagrammatically on the right. The blue area is no private motorised vehicles. Orange lines are pedestrian routes. The green line shows the options for a cyclist travelling south. They have the option of using the crossing or making a right turn by staying on the road.

One of the implications of this scheme is that Howbridge road should be quiet enough for cycling on the road without the need for a verge route. Keeping cyclists on the road is a worthwhile objective.

This scheme puts both the schools on a single road which can be 20 MPHed throughout.

It should be no great loss to block access to Howbridge road from the new development as it only leads to two other estate roads. Through traffic will be concentrated on the circuit road and Maltings lane East. This should see a reduction in traffic on Howbridge Road (both parts) and Laurence Avenue rather than an increase which would otherwise be inevitable.



This layout and network would be safer than a roundabout for vulnerable road users.

(C) Nature of paths

Problem

Section 2.16 of the written statement that accompanies the plan indicated that cycle paths will be shared with pedestrians. This is

- Not acceptable to cyclists
- Not acceptable to pedestrians
- Not county council policy (Shared use is a last resort)

In short, a cheap and nasty solution that fails to provide proper facilities.

As there is no evidence of any alternatives having been considered we cannot accept that shared paths are appropriate. There is a desperate need to reduce car

traffic, this is not the way to do it. The developers do not appear to have designed around a hierarchy of transport modes which puts the car at the bottom. Carrying on like this will produce a development that will have a car dominated built environment and inevitably lead to a car-clogged Witham.

Solution

Good quality facilities encourage cyclists (and pedestrians.). The main routes listed above in (A) and (B) should have dedicated cycle facilities.

Attention is also drawn to the Essex planners guide which states that cycle routes through built-up areas should be overlooked by the front of dwellings. This reduces dark-alley problems.

We feel there are more opportunities to front dwellings onto non-vehicular routes which have been missed from the plans (as far as it possible to tell from the details in them).

Recommendation

- 4** The plan is rejected unless all cycle paths are to be segregated unless explicitly agreed with the Highway authority after the developer has demonstrated no alternatives exist.
- 5** The plans should be rejected until the developer can show that design has proceeded using a hierarchy of transport modes driven by the need for sustainability and benefits to residents of a less-motorised environment.
- 6** The details of the development be scrutinised in the light of the Essex planners guide with the object of developing a non-vehicular environment where possible. In particular developers should be asked to justify dwellings facing a road when alternatives are available.

(D) South access

Problem

The A12 is a complete barrier to the countryside and villages to the south. The current layout would require people to either follow the road past 'Lynfield Motors' to get to Footpath 29 or trek (adding a about mile) along Maltings lane and Maldon Road. This barrier to the countryside is bad for all the reasons that encouraging people to get out and use it are good reasons.

Solution

There should be a bridleway (ie pedestrians, cyclists and horses) crossing of the A12 from the South East corner of the development to connect with Howbridge Hall Road on the south of the A 12. Howbridge Hall Rd. is already a public highway.

This route is a much more direct route to the leisure opportunities of the Blackwater valley than FP 29 as well as being a good route for many cyclists commuting to Maldon.

Recommendation

- 7** The necessary paths, crossings and junctions to accommodate a bridleway across the A12 connecting to Howbridge Hall Road should be incorporated into the layout. These should be
- child-safe within the layout area
 - easily accessible the North and West.

(E) Northerly cycle routes at the boundary

Problem

THERE ARE NO PLANNED CYCLE ROUTES FROM THE NORTH EDGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE TOWN. The layout implies that there will be continuations of the cycle paths across Maltings lane towards town. In this respect it is VERY MISLEADING.

It is essential that good routes are provided to the town for cyclists and pedestrians if car journeys are to be kept within sustainable limits. Already Maldon Road and Bridge Street are difficult to cross and have cycle hazards enough without the extra traffic generated by 800 homes (Roughly 6500 journeys every day.) In short that number of journeys is not sustainable and so good alternative modes of transport are essential...

...But not provided for beyond the boundary.

Section 5.361 of the Essex Local Transport plan includes the statement: "The transportation strategies for target towns work with proposed development changes to ensure that links to and facilities at interchanges are improved when sizeable developments take place." In this case no links whatsoever are being improved to the Railway Station.

There are many other parts of the LTP as well as national and regional planning guidance which point directly to the need to provide sustainable transport infrastructure. In this case it appears to be missing and not even on the agenda.

Discussion

A route through Townfield End Field has been suggested. This is inadequate, indirect, difficult to engineer and isn't particularly useful as a through route at the north end.

The verge of Howbridge Road (running north from the NE roundabout on the layout) is wide and could accommodate a dedicated cycle track. This route will be essential and very highly used. However it would be better to keep cycles on the road if possible. This route can then be extended across the river to give a fast route direct to town avoiding Bridge Street and Maldon Road. This should be the preferred route for anyone who doesn't need to get to the Bridge Hospital traffic lights.

For people who are aiming towards the North West (Hatfield road estate for example) there is a feature which is worth examining which could be used to develop an off-road route for cyclists and pedestrians.. The West boundary of the grounds of the schools on the north of Maltings lane runs NW in a very useful direction towards Wickham Rd.. If a strip could be stolen from these playing

fields a valuable corridor would be provided. As well as providing new development access to the North west it would be an ideal route to school for children who live to the west of the Maltings Lane schools.

Recommendation

- 8** The County council investigate the benefits of a bridleway along the West boundary of the schools on the north of Maltings lane.
- 9** The layout plan be amended to provide a reserved corridor to the east of the school so that in the event of a NW path being implemented it can be continued into the development.
- 10** A proper plan to handle additional journeys is prepared and made available for public consultation by the county and district authorities. This blueprint then to be implemented at the same time as or before construction.

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