

A429 Coventry Road Cycle Track Order

Warwickshire County Council Statement

December 2023

I am Dan Morris and I hold the post of Principal Transport Planner within the Transport Planning Group at Warwickshire County Council (WCC).

Objections to the Warwickshire County Council (A429 Coventry Road, Townesend Close, Phillippes Road and Huddisdon Close, Warwick) Cycle Track Order (“the Order”) have previously been forwarded to the Secretary of State. Warwickshire County Council (WCC) requests that the Secretary of State confirms the Order based on the importance of the scheme and reasons that are outlined in this statement, which summarises the detailed information in the accompanying Proof of Evidence.

The A429 Coventry Road cycling scheme (the Scheme) in Warwick is a 1.15km cycle route focussed on providing a safe and direct cycling route between the Spinney Hill roundabout on the outskirts of north Warwick and the St Johns junction which functions as a gateway into Warwick town centre. The proposed Scheme will complete a key missing link in the local cycling network, enabling more people to make more journeys by sustainable forms of transport. The route will connect to National Cycle Network route 52 to the north, facilitating cycling journeys from nearby Leek Wootton and Kenilworth areas and providing new cycling infrastructure to access Warwick rail station and Warwick Hospital. The Scheme was identified as a high priority by the 2018 WCC member-led Task and Finish Group on cycling infrastructure and is now a programmed route within Warwickshire’s Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) because of its importance to Warwick’s cycling network and the funding that has been secured to deliver it.

Warwickshire’s LCWIP presents a long-term, county-wide plan for investment in walking, wheeling, cycling routes and Active Travel Zones. It is a key delivery plan for the recently adopted Sustainable Futures Strategy and Warwickshire’s Local Transport Plan, which aims to adapt to and mitigate climate change and meet Net Zero targets. The demand for building a cycle route along the Coventry Road is in line with the Government’s Gear Change policy, a bold vision for walking and cycling that sets out proposals to tackle issues well known to developing active travel infrastructure in the UK.

The Coventry Road scheme has been developed over several years, having originally been allocated funding in 2018/19 from the WCC’s Casualty Reduction fund to take steps to make the road corridor safer for cycling. The Scheme has evolved in response to a series of design reviews, feedback from stakeholders, increased funding opportunities and the publication of LTN 1/20: Cycle infrastructure design.

The Order, once confirmed, will provide the northern section of the overall scheme, requiring approximately 222 metres of new cycle track to be built within green open space. Whilst objections to the tracks have been received and remain unresolved at this time, the rest of the scheme towards Warwick town centre will go ahead following approval of the scheme's traffic regulation orders by the Portfolio Holder in May 2023.

The cycle tracks within the Order are required because there are no realistic alternatives for creating a safe cycling route alongside the Coventry Road and over the Grand Union canal, which itself is a critical barrier to route options. The Order to be confirmed has been designed to provide a safe and attractive walking, cycling and wheeling route using highway land away from the A429 Coventry Road that experiences high volumes of traffic, congestion and features a busy petrol station.

The proposed cycle tracks have been designed in accordance with national guidance on cycling infrastructure (Local Transport Note 1/20) creating a surfaced route along two existing informal desire lines that have been developed by pedestrians and cyclists over several years, demonstrating the demand for this alignment. WCC is seeking to formalise this route with a weatherproof surface and lighting to ensure the route is safe for all users, all year round.

Following WCC's advertisement of making the Order on 29th November 2022 (using its powers under section 3 of the Cycle Tracks Act 1984 and pursuant to the Cycle Track Regulations 1984) WCC received objections from 6 residents who live on Townesend Close, Hayle Avenue and Huddisdon Close.

Following a review of the objections received by local residents, a Woodloes residents meeting was organised for 13th March 2023 (see invite letter, Appendix 7) to discuss the concerns and issues raised by those who objected to the Order. The meeting was attended by the Team Leader for WCC's Minor Works Team (responsible for producing the traffic orders and notices for the scheme) and WCC's Lead Design Engineer for the scheme, to provide information about the cycle track and how it would be constructed. The meeting was also attended by the three District Councillors for the area, who were supportive of the scheme.

In response to residents' suggestions to design an alternative route adjacent to the Coventry Road, WCC officers explained that by converting and widening the existing footway along Coventry Road to a shared use footway/cycleway, it would have a significant impact on scheme cost, deliverability, ecology, perceived safety, and overall attractiveness of the route. At the residents meeting, it was reiterated that the proposed cycle tracks across the two areas of open space would formalise an existing, well-used route that has connections to an existing cycle route to the west, and the canal network. The residents who attended the meeting were a pleasure to engage with and whilst the sharing of information may have eased some of the residents' concerns, WCC received no formal withdrawal of objections.

In response to the objection themes outlined below, WCC would like to confirm:

Land ownership

The scheme uses land that has been confirmed as highway maintainable at public expense, which was dedicated to WCC when it became the Highway Authority (see Highway Extent Plans in Appendix 2a and 2b). As the land is part of the highway, any person has a right of free passage over it and because of this, no planning permission is needed and therefore not a contravention to any Local Plan policies.

Ecological and environmental Impacts

To reduce the risk of conflict between users, improve visibility and to maintain a constant width of the tarmacked surface, two trees have been marked for removal. These trees have been assessed by WCC's forestry team who have no objections to their removal on the condition that WCC replant 2 trees for 1 tree removed. The existing treeline between along the Coventry Road will remain and continue to provide a buffer from vehicle noise, light and pollution, which were also raised as objections. Concerns about flooding caused by laying a tarmacked surface, should be alleviated by the way the track will be designed to allow any water runoff to drain into the adjacent ditching.

Where there are objections to the cycle route based on perceived issues relating to vandalism, littering and hooliganism, the route proposes a betterment of the area, with increased opportunity for natural surveillance, reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviours.

Streetlighting columns are required on all adopted cycleways, to ensure they provide a safe facility for all users. WCC will ensure the columns are positioned in such a way that their light splays focus on the cycle track and do not spill into residential properties.

Impact on carriageway, footway, and parking

The proposed scheme will not make any changes to the carriageway on Huddisdon Close other than apply painted bicycle symbols on the carriageway lanes to raise awareness of cyclists using the carriageway between the two sections of cycle track.

Primrose Hill to Huddisdon Close Cycle Track

The proposed cycle track alignment between Primrose Hill and Huddisdon Close raised objections from residents who live at the end of the cul-de-sac on Huddisdon Close, stating that the cycle track would increase the risk of collisions between cyclists and those residents needing to access and egress their driveways. WCC engineers physically marked out the proposed route so that residents could see exactly where the track would be located (see image1 in Appendix 3), showing that the proposed alignment connects highway to highway, with minimal impact on

residents. Residents looking to access/egress their driveways must currently give-way to pedestrians, wheelers, and runners on the footway directly adjacent to their properties, so the practise of looking for vulnerable road users already exists. Post scheme monitoring will assess whether access controls (in the form of bollards), at the point where the track joins Primrose Hill, are required to reduce cycle speeds and thereby minimise any potential for conflict at this location. However, the bollards must benefit and not hinder, users. This is supported by Local Transport Note 1/20 (Cycle Infrastructure Design).

Conclusion

The sections of highway subject to the Order are part of an important active travel route through Warwick, providing local residents with a safe and direct route that has the potential to increase local journeys by sustainable modes of transport.

WCC therefore invites the Inspector to recommend that the Order be confirmed.