

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CYCLE TRACK ORDER 2022

(DPI/H3700/23/20)

Council's Opening Statement

Introduction

1. This matter relates to the Warwickshire County Council (A429 Coventry Road, Townesend Close, Phillippes Road and Huddisdon Close, Warwick) Cycle Track Order 2022 (“the Order”) which was made by Warwickshire County Council (“the County Council”) – as local highway authority – on 8 December 2022¹ pursuant to its powers under the Cycle Tracks Act 1984 (“the 1984 Act”).
2. Following receipt of objections to the Order from six local residents, the County Council submitted it for confirmation to the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to s.3(1) of the 1984 Act. That is why we find ourselves in this public inquiry.
3. Two preliminary points:
 - a. first, the County Council can confirm that it has complied with the relevant statutory requirements;
 - b. second, contrary to some of the objections, neither the Order nor this inquiry relate to the proposed on-carriageway cycleway on Huddisdon

¹The Inspector may note reference in the correspondence with consultees to a cycle track order made on 29 November 2022. This order included, in error, sections of the cycleway which were covered by sections 65 and 66 of the Highways Act 1980 and so should not have been included in the order. To correct this error, the Order, which includes the correct sections of cycleway which are covered by the Cycle Tracks Act 1984, was subsequently made on 8 December 2022.

Close and Hayle Avenue shown crossed over with blue lines in view 2 of the plan attached to the Order.

The Scheme

4. The proposed A429 Coventry Road cycle scheme (“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 draft 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. 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 (“LTN 1/20”).
5. The Scheme is a 1.15km cycle route, which is focused on providing a safe and direct cycling route between the Spinney Hill roundabout on the outskirts of north Warwick and the St Johns junction. It functions as a gateway into Warwick town centre, provides a connection to Warwick Rail Station, which is located off Coventry Road, and facilitates safe off-road cycling journeys to destinations including Warwick hospital, schools, as well as employment, leisure and retail areas.
6. It will complete a key missing link in the local cycling network as featured in the LCWIP, enabling more people to make more journeys by sustainable forms of transport and consistent with local and national policy goals of improving active travel infrastructure.
7. The proposals involve widening and surfacing an existing urban footpath behind the houses of Townesend Close, Phillippes Road and at the northernmost section of Huddisdon Close to a to a minimum width of 3 metres (consistent with LTN 1/20) to allow conversion to shared use footways/cycle

tracks for use by pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelers (including mobility scooters and pushchairs).

8. This is required because:
 - a. the existing carriageway and footway are too narrow to provide a cycle track of consistent width adjacent to Coventry Road;
 - b. there are no realistic route alternatives to reach the bridge over the Grand Union canal, which itself is a critical barrier to route options.

The Objections

9. Following the County Council's advertisement of making the Order on 29 November 2022, the County Council received objections from six residents who live on Townsend Close, Hayle Avenue and Huddisdon Close. The six objections relate to:
 - a. ownership of the land;
 - b. compliance with the local plan;
 - c. the ecological and environmental impacts of the scheme;
 - d. the impact on the carriageway;
 - e. footway and parking;
 - f. the consideration of alternatives; and
 - g. the effect on property owners accessing their driveways.
10. Although the County Council organised a residents' meeting on 13 March 2023 between the Team Leader for the County Council's Minor Works Team (responsible for producing the traffic orders and notices for the scheme), the County Council's Lead Design Engineer for the Scheme and three District

Councillors to provide some additional information, none of the objections have been formally withdrawn.

11. In the circumstances, the County Council will present evidence from Daniel Morris – Principal Transport Planner responsible for delivery the County Council’s active travel strategy – in response to all of these objections.

Conclusion

12. The context here is highly relevant:
 - a. the Order simply seeks to formalise a path that is already well used. None of the objections put this point in doubt;
 - b. the County Council fully supports the Order;
 - c. the proposals are consistent with policy and guidance around the conversion of footpaths to cycle tracks where the goal is to improve safety for all users by constructing a walking, cycling, and wheeling track that is separated from carriageway and able to connect into the wider cycling network.
13. Given the importance of the Scheme and the fact the County Council’s evidence will demonstrate that the objections are either not valid or are objections where adaptations to the proposals can be made, the County Council invites the Inspector to recommend that the Secretary of State confirm the Order.

Dated: 11 January 2024

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