

File note:

Active travel, access and public rights of way workshop

Wednesday 4 December, 9.30am-11.30am, Thrive (The Gate, International Drive, Solihull, B90 4WA)

Present:

- Wendy Bannerman (WB), British Horse Society (BHS)
- Alex Brown (AB), Warwickshire County Council (WCC)
- Sheila Cooper (SC), Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry Local Access Forum (LAF)
- Ian Dickinson (ID), Canal & River Trust (C&RT)
- Aoife O'Toole (AOT), Birmingham City Council (BCC)
- Frank Fitzgerald (FF), IM Properties
- Matthew Fox (MF), IM Properties
- Lewis Payne (LP), IM Properties
- Malcolm Ash (MA), BWB
- Hetty Hopkinson (HH), Camargue

The workshop, focusing on active travel, access, and public rights of way (PRoW), was arranged by IM Properties (IMP) and BWB with key stakeholders (statutory and non-statutory consultees) to update on proposals for Thrive and gain insight and feedback on detailed plans.

This was a follow up session to the workshop held on 14 May, and IMP shared more detailed designs as part of a presentation delivered by LP, MF and MA. This included its emerging masterplan, preliminary designs for primary and secondary transport mitigation schemes, and plans for sustainable travel, diverted Public Rights of Way, and the canal interface.

There were some questions and conversation during the presentation, and attendees then moved into a discussion. Notes from this are below:

- The strategy for **connecting sustainable travel routes to surrounding communities** was discussed, including in relation to the Warwickshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). IMP / BWB confirmed the emphasis on pedestrian and cycle access will be to the south, and they are looking at how Thrive will connect with Peddimore and the Langley Sustainable Urban Extension using cycling. IMP / BWB are also looking to prioritise a connection to Coleshill Parkway over Water Orton.
- Primary and secondary mitigation schemes discussed included the proposed **Curdworth Lane / Bulls Lane pedestrian cycle link**, which would create a pedestrian route connecting the development to Wishaw Lane. This is on the boundary of WCC and BCC.
- Curdworth has been identified as another location for mitigations, and the **Wishaw Lane / Kingsbury Road pedestrian cycle link** and speed limit reduction was discussed. IMP / BWB are proposing a segregated footway and carriageway narrowing across the canal bridge, down to the junction, and signalisation of junction as a whole. Two alternatives were discussed; a full signalised approach incorporating pedestrian/cycle crossings and a version with the crossings only.
- It was noted by attendees that the **Kingsbury Road is a challenging area**, with road users feeling intimidating exiting onto the road from Curdworth. Narrowing of the carriageway starting at the northeast, close to the junction, would encourage slower speeds into Curdworth. This would connect well with BCC speed reductions to the west, facilitating slower speeds through villages.

- WB also suggested a pegasus crossing in the vicinity of the Dunton Lane junction with the A446 to enable equestrians and other vulnerable road users to access to and from byway M450.
- Along with the extension of existing bus routes, IMP / BWB shared that **new bus routes** are being explored with Warwickshire County Council and Transport for the West Midlands. This could include reintroduction of the 115/116 route through Tamworth – and there would be dual benefit for The Belfry which is also trying to secure better provision of bus routes for employees as the resort expands. Bus routes will provide direct links to Water Orton, Minworth, Coleshill, Sutton Coldfield, Kingsbury, and Chelmsley Wood.
- IMP shared detail of its proposals for the **diversion of eight existing PRow**, which will connect with further **permissive paths throughout the site**. Blindpit Lane is used by equestrians so a bridleway will be provided to the northwest of the site, connecting into Church Lane. WB asked if this would be a designated bridleway, which was confirmed by IMP / BWB. Currently, Blindpit Lane is a shared route with road users, and has no further connecting route. WB noted that a circular route for equestrians in the site would be welcomed.
- SC said her main concern was the loss of rural openness. She asked about possible security issues and anti-social behaviour resulting from creation of a network of permissive paths. AB suggested that by **actively encouraging people to come and use routes** through provision of amenities such as trim trails, there would be an element of natural surveillance. IMP confirmed that all roads would be lit and the site would be secured with CCTV.
- IMP shared **examples of existing sites** where there is good usage of routes created. At Blythe Valley Park, created 20 years ago, new walking routes drove usage, and at Peddimore, usage is also steadily increasing with paths often used by dog walkers, cyclists, joggers and horse-riders. AB was positive about paths at Peddimore, noting that these feel like wild tracks rather than paved trails.
- The **segregation and hierarchy of path users** was discussed in detail. All internal highways will have segregated cycleways, in line with LTN 1/20. WB asked if all permissive routes would be multi-user, and it was noted that as PRow can't be used by horse riders or cycle riders, additional work needed to be done to ensure that the bridleway, PRow and permissive paths all connect in a safe and logical manner.
- WB flagged that horse users **prefer to be included in off-road traffic**, but that they are well used to busy environments and good at risk assessing, so segregation from other vulnerable road users isn't something the BHS would advocate. WB requested appropriate signage for path network about sharing with care.
- Regarding **path width**, WB suggested a usable width would be 4-5m to avoid encroachment of verges, and that bollards would need to be 1.5m apart and rounded. Self-binding / hoggin surface tracks would be preferred, and while mounting blocks are useful, they are not essential. Gates would also need to be usable on horseback.
- IMP shared further detail about **emerging designs for the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal interface**, including spaces for recreation (proposed orchard and picnic area), play and education (outdoor classroom). It was noted that as the canal path is on the southern side, a scramble is required to reach the PRow from the canal, and so there is a good opportunity to open up this connection.
- ID commented positively about the plans and IMP's approach, noting that **C&RT's primary request would be to support the retention of the rural character** of the canal as it comes

out of Curdworth. ID was keen to see how people can be guided through spaces to easily find their way to the canal towpath, whether it's travelling to site via the towpath or exiting the site onto the canal – the wayfinding aspect is critical, and good signposting is as important as good connections.

- ID asked if more detail would be provided in the planning application. C&RT would be interested in ideas for **improvements to facilitate walking and cycling** to and from site supporting a green infrastructure corridor – currently, C&RT has to trade off maintenance of different towpaths based on usage. There is some guidance and advice on suitable towpaths online. Given noted constraints, there needs to be DDA compliance with access points. C&RT would be happy to have a more in-depth conversation ahead of planning application, to take into account sustainable drainage and possible discharge into the canal.
- Attendees discussed the merit of having **bike docking stations** on site e.g. at the Mobility Hub, and whether this would support increased active travel. AB noted that these were great for lunchtime fitness, short trips or to make logistics trips within the site, limiting the need for short car journeys on site. LP asked if there were docking stations at Coleshill Parkway. WCC is currently looking at installing Brompton bike pods at the station, which can be hired for the day.
- Attendees were generally positive about plans shared and supportive of IMP's approach.

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