

B4493 WANTAGE ROAD, DIDCOT: PROPOSED SHARED-USE CYCLEWAY & TOUCAN CROSSING

Harwell Campus Bicycle Users Group (HarBUG) represents cyclists who commute to the Harwell Campus. The B4493 Wantage Road is a main cycle route to the Harwell Campus from Didcot and the proposal is of particular interest to us.

This route has been identified by the County Council as being a cycle premium route connecting a main transport hub (Didcot Parkway) to a major employment area (Harwell Campus).

This route has also been identified by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership as being a key priority route. The LEP also state in their Strategic Economic Plan that 'A Science Vale Cycleways Network will be built to high standards of safety and convenience, ranking with continental best practice.

We note that although this project has been advertised as a consultation and you have used the word 'proposed', it is actually a statement of intent and has already been passed for construction.

HarBUG believes that the 'proposed' shared use cycleway is a very poor design and serves no cyclist well. Some of the main points are listed below:

- A significant number of houses along Wantage Road have high hedges or fences. We believe that this will pose a safety risk. As residents pull out or reverse out of their drives, in cars, they will not be able to see cyclists and cyclists may not have time to react. In particular children cycling will be at risk. Has a safety assessment been carried out on this path?



1: Typical high hedge and fence along Wantage Road

- It is difficult to see how a safe crossing point can be achieved at the Eastern side of Manor Crescent. There is a large private hedge on a sharp corner restricting the view of the road. Your plans state that the litter bin and speed camera will be re-located, is the telegraph pole being re-located? A similar situation occurs at the Oxford Crescent junction where a high fence obscures the view of the road.



2: Manor Crescent Junction – High hedge blocking views and telegraph pole will be in the path.



3: Oxford Crescent - High fences blocking views.

- Of particular concern is the safety of cyclists at the entrance and exit to the petrol station close to the junction of Sherwood Road. This a very busy area already, with many hazards for road users to deal with. In the next few months a new mini supermarket will be opening next to The Wheatsheaf pub opposite the garage, adding additional turning traffic. It is not safe to add two way cycle traffic, on the path, into this area.

- We are concerned that the path will partially blocked, down to a narrow strip, by residents parking their cars on the access to their drives.
- What happens when cyclists get to the end of the path at the Foxhall Road pedestrian crossing? Are there any plans to extend the cycle path into the town or connect to a network of paths?
- Who has priority when residents are pulling out of their drive or customers are accessing the forecourt of the Wantage Road shops? How are these priorities indicated?
- As with all poorly designed cycle paths most cyclists will continue to use the main carriageway. With the new paths motorists will expect cyclists to use it and some will try to enforce this by shouting at cyclists or 'cutting in' very close. This is a real problem and makes cycling less attractive.
- Will any lampposts, telegraph poles and other 'hardware' be re-located if they are now positioned in the widened path?

This Department of Transport has published a local transport note (LTN 2/08) covering infrastructure for cycling. This path does not meet even the very basic principles of this guidance.

Sadly, we are not surprised that the design for this path is so poor given the other pieces of bad cycle infrastructure already built along the B4493:

- The path in front of Holly Lane that stops abruptly, in sight of the UTC, but cyclists are forced back on the road to get there.
- The Great Western Park junction, where the cycle path starts again and then finishes after the junction. There are too many design flaws to list here.
- The five arm Harwell Link Road Roundabout, not yet built, but the design again ignores the needs of cyclists going from Didcot to the Harwell Campus.

Over the years HarBUG has responded to every consultation (South Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy, LTP3, LTP4 and The Science Vale Action Plan) and planning application (Great Western Park and Valley Park) and each time we have highlighted the importance of the B4493 as a cycling route to the Harwell Campus. We have walked and cycled down the Wantage Road twice with County Council officers, discussing options for cycle routes.

We feel that this has been wasted time as the results have been worse than doing nothing. This is a failure for Didcot town and Oxfordshire at a time when Didcot needs good additional transport infrastructure.

HarBUG is very disappointed with the design of this cycle path and overall the lack of planning for cycling in Didcot, despite our continuing efforts to improve cycling provision.