12th February 2024

Leamington to Kenilworth cycle route K2L

An Assessment of the recently built cycle path, section 1a, along the Kenilworth Road, and the plan of the proposed next stage, section 1b, to Blackdown.

Introduction

In December 2019, WCC announced that it would provide £4.749m to build a **high- quality** cycle route between Leamington and Kenilworth, K2L,[1] being classed as a **flagship active travel** scheme.[2]

Construction of the first phase, 1a, the Kenilworth Road, commenced in the spring of 2023.

This assessment has been carried out by two experienced cyclists with many years of urban cycle commuting. The DfT (Dept for Transport) technical notes[3] being used for reference.

Summary

The provision for cycling along the Kenilworth Road has been made by widening the pavement by 3.0m on the eastern side to provide a 2-way cycle track. However, such provision is not without its problems, as identified in this report, and makes it the least favourable option for the cyclists, as well as a poor option for pedestrians. Not surprisingly it is not recommended by the DfT, as they highlight,

In urban areas, the conversion of a footway to shared use should be regarded as the last resort.[4] As the DfT emphasise,

Cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians. On urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians, and should not share space with pedestrians. [5]

[1] 1.3,1/4, Minutes of the WCC Council meeting, 17th December 2019
[2] WCC web site, 19/5/23
[3] Gear Change, 2020, DfT, and LTN 2/08, 1/20,DfT
[4] 6.5.4, p67, LTN 1/20, DfT
[5] 2, p41, Gear Change, 2020, DfT

Assessment

The initial section of K2L, which has not yet been started, is designed to join the Kenilworth Road on its western side from Binswood Avenue, with access for cyclists to the new 2-way cycle route via a signal crossing. However, there is insufficient space for two cycles to pass each other, a problem intensified by the high level of pedestrian use of this crossing, as part of the E-W route to three schools. A typical problem well recognised by the DfT, as they highlight,

***….at crossings and junctions, cyclists should not share the space used by pedestrians but should be provided by a separate parallel route*.[6]**

At the next junction, with Lillington Avenue, cyclists have to turn right into the footpath to access the signal post, again bringing in conflict with pedestrians.

At the next junction, Cloister Croft, the cyclist has to turn right into the pavement to access the dropped kerb to cross the road, awkward for the cyclist and with potential conflict with pedestrians.

The other area of potential conflict with pedestrians is at the three bus stops on the route. Pedestrians have to cross the cycle path when getting on/off the bus. Whilst there are stop lines on the cycle paths at each of the bus stops, these are likely to be ignored.

A practical issue with a 2-way cycle path is that for the commuter cyclist cycling north, during the dark winter months, they have to cycle into the lights of oncoming traffic.

For cyclists who wish to access Woodcote Road on the western side of the Kenilworth Road, there is no means of doing so since the new road traffic lanes are too narrow to accommodate cyclists and vehicles. Woodcote Road is a quiet residential road which provides a useful link, not only to the houses off this road, but also to all the housing settlements to the west, Beverly Hills estate, Milverton, etc.

A serious problem lies adjacent to the junction of Northumberland Road, where the width of the cycle/pedestrian path has been reduced to 2.1m. Such a narrow width makes it difficult for two cyclists to pass each other safely, a problem further compounded by the path being bounded by a high wall with “blind” vehicle exits, on one side, with the main road, A452, on the other side.

The minimum width required for a two-way cycle path is 2.5m, plus 2.0m for a footway, making for a total minimum width of 4.5m.

To conclude, the correct solution to provide a cycle route along the Kenilworth Road would be to create cycle lanes on each side of the road, in line with the DfT’s recommendations.

[6] 2, p41, Gear Change, 2020, DfT

Evidence from the UK and abroad is clear, <u>physically segregated bike tracks on main roads</u>, including at junctions, are the most important thing that we can do to promote cycle use.[7]

Such an option would not impact on pedestrians at all, and importantly, would be able to cater for the expected growth in cycling demand, as identified in the County's Report,

The K2L scheme is expected to release considerable suppressed demand for cycling on the A452 corridor……..as well as supporting cycle access to the University of Warwick, Stoneleigh Park, JLR Whitley and Coventry.[8]

Such a view by the County is also underpinned by the DfT, who highlight,

Cycle infrastructure should be designed for significant number of cyclists, and for non-standard cycles……[9]

Note

The figures quoted for track widths should be regarded as the minimum for a small number of users, they do not take into account the need for increased width to accommodate larger user flows. Wherever it is possible, widths larger than the minimum should be used.[10]

Assessment of the next phase, Section 1b to Blackdown

The first half of this route is via the playing fields, on the eastern side of the Kenilworth Road. The other half of the route consists of converting the existing footpath alongside the main road to a shared use path, and it is here there is a significant problem.

Some 60m of the footpath is much too narrow for cycling, varying from 2.1m to 2.8m, in width. In addition, the inside edge of the path is bounded by a 1.8m high fence, while the outside edge is bounded by the busy A452 road.

To provide a comfortable 2-way cycle route, plus a footpath will require an overall width of at least 4.5m.

Conclusion

The provision of a cycle route by extending the pavement along the Kenilworth Road is a wholly inadequate choice for a potentially high density urban cycle route.

To choose such a design, which is a poor option for cyclists and pedestrians, is inexplicable since these are key modes in any ***active travel strategy,*** which is an integral part of WCC's transport plan. What is also inexplicable is the continual failure by WCC to work to the well

[7] P16, Gear Change, 2020, DfT
[8] 1.7, Minutes of WCC Council meeting, 17/12/19
[9] 5, p42, Gear Change, 2020, DfT
[10] 8.5.1, LTN 2/08, DfT

proven guidance, such as LTN 2/08, LTN 1/20, and Gear Change, that draw on the many years experience of the DfT.

What is also evident, both in the Kenilworth Road section, 1a, and the subsequent section 1b, is the lack preparedness to identify problem areas when drawing up the scheme. This lack of preparedness is evident in the lack of recognition of the need for access from the Woodcote Road, and all the settlements to the west of the Kenilworth Road.

WCC continues to develop sub-standard cycle facilities, even for its ***flag ship*** project, despite consistent and repeated input from Cycleways and other local groups. WCC conceded that it would have been entirely possible to develop an on-road solution for the K2L, in line with best practice, and yet has failed to do so.

WCC has spent significant amounts of money on cycle schemes to date, but this public money has not been well spent, and not spent in the best interests of cyclists.

Recommendations:

Cycle provision should be in accordance with the guidance and experience provided by the DfT.

WCC should seek training support from Active Travel England, where appropriate,[11]

Funding from Active Travel England should be contingent on WCC meeting DfT guidance.

Cycleways should ask Active Travel England for advice in how to achieve better performance from WCC planners, and, including an audit of WCC's existing cycle routes.

Cycleways should consider highlighting the poor quality of cycle routes to the wider public.

On-carriageway cycle provision should be the default option in future plans. If it decided that an on-carriageway solution is not viable, the reasons for this should be documented.[12]

The consultation process for cycling schemes needs to be considerably strengthened, with the outcomes being transparent and widely communicated.

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[11] P33 Gear Change, 2020, DfT
[12] 4.12, p13, LTN 1/20, DfT