

Suggestion for pedestrian & cycle crossing of Otley Rd by Beech Grove junction

11th September 2018

A cycle route is planned along Otley Road. Since works will be taking place, is this an opportunity to put in a much needed cycle and pedestrian crossing of Otley Road near its junction with Beech Grove?

Walking

People walk into and out of town along the path across West Park Stray. They want to cross Otley Road near its junction with Beech Grove and Park Avenue. It is the natural trajectory of many journeys, but Otley Road is a barrier, and the nearest crossing is up at Queen's Road.

As Chris Boardman, Manchester's Walking & Cycling Commissioner, said in his Made to Move report:

'Everybody should be able to cross the road safely, directly and without delay. Crossings should be positioned in the right place and give everyone enough time to cross the road.'

That should apply to Otley Road at Beech Grove. There should be a safe crossing at the point where people naturally want to cross it. Instead, every day I see local people standing by the side of the road, waiting for a gap in the traffic, then dashing across dodging vehicles. It is dangerous.

We know that North Yorkshire County Council wants to encourage more walking and cycling. In an article for the Yorkshire Post on 3rd July 2018, NCC's Walking & Cycling Champion Don Mackenzie wrote:

'The council is working to implement real behavioural change, by getting people out of their cars across these three very different types of urban areas [Harrogate, Scarborough, and Skipton], to reduce pollution and congestion.'

These words are fantastic to hear. The acid test is whether they are backed up by actions. As well as urging people to get out of their cars, NYCC has to support them when they do the right thing. The council can show people that it values them when they are walking, and gives them safe and convenient crossings in the right places, rather than prioritising them only when they are driving.

Cycling

As a cycle route is being built on Otley Road, it is logical to link it up to existing cycle routes – in this case, Beech Grove. Beech Grove is not a good cycle route, but it is a designated one on HBC's cycle routes map.

Therefore, the crossing should be for pedestrians and cyclists.

Type of crossing

All light-controlled crossings in Harrogate are hugely skewed in favour of vehicles, giving them priority, and making people on foot wait an extremely long time before their lights turn green.

To avoid this, I suggest a cycle zebra crossing at Otley Road/Beech Grove.

David Mitchell