

OTLEY ROAD CYCLE ROUTE

COMMENTS FROM HARROGATE AND DISTRICT CYCLE ACTION.

General Comments:

1. Otley Road is one of Harrogate's busiest routes and is heavily congested at peak times. There are 5 schools within a short distance of the route, Cardale Park is a commuter destination for a significant number of people, Harrogate Spring Water traffic uses Otley road, as does construction traffic for the new developments to the west of town. Once completed, the new housing developments are only going to worsen this situation
2. The bus services along Otley Road are very limited and at peak times westbound traffic becomes so congested that it is close to impassible for cyclists. This leaves only walking as an alternative to road transport for users of the route. This is unpleasant due to the fumes generated by the stationery / crawling traffic. Off-peak, the route is also unattractive to cyclists as the road is too busy and too narrow for cars to overtake safely. The volume of heavy vehicles also make cycling a very intimidating experience. Queues of motor vehicles build up quickly behind a cyclist travelling slowly westbound up hill as it is so difficult for overtaking to take place
3. The design presented creates a route for cyclists that is completely segregated from motor traffic and so is likely to attract a wide range of users who wouldn't consider cycling on the road in Harrogate. If it is to reduce school run traffic, it needs to be able to attract school age children without parent safety concerns
4. When the route is completed from the Prince of Wales roundabout to Cardale Park it will provide a meaningful complete route which is a significant driver to usage. It is critical that the route is continuous for the entire route for an effective incentive, rather than disappearing at difficult junctions or pinch points, or blocked by parked vehicles, as can be seen elsewhere in the town on existing poor quality routes
5. Maintaining priority for cyclists across side roads along the route is critical if the route is to be effective. Without this, cycling speed will be reduced to a level that is not a great benefit compared to walking. Having to look behind for turning motor traffic at every side road is also potentially dangerous when pavement traffic is busy. For the eastbound, downhill route, there would be no incentive to cyclists if a reasonable speed cannot be maintained as a confident cyclist can already achieve speeds comparable to the motor traffic down the hill on the road
6. There are very few private driveways exiting onto Otley Road and so the hazard to cyclists from cars pulling across the route is very limited. Where pedestrian and cycle traffic has been separated, the pedestrian route is closest to the houses, reducing this risk further.

Specific Comments to the Latest Design Drawings:

1. The representatives of HDCA were pleased to have been consulted at an early stage of the design proposals. We see that many of our comments have been taken on board, and in several cases improved above and beyond our suggestions.
2. The concept of having a "through flow" for cyclists without having to stop frequently at side turnings has been adopted and is most welcome.
3. We note some increase in shared lengths of path. No doubt this is a result of detailed design work. This may cause some local opposition. If that happens we would urge you to site the example of Slingsby Walk where a shared path with quite extensive cycle and pedestrian use at school times and rush hours takes place, and where the system works smoothly and safely. There appear to be few instances of conflict between users, and, to our knowledge no record of accidents after several years use.

4. We have some remaining concerns and would ask that you try to address the first one within the design:
- A. **Cycle Access at Beech Grove End.** Our most major concern is cyclists accessing the route adjacent to Beech Grove. Cyclists will naturally climb up Otley Road on the left side as per traffic flow. It is accepted that Park Avenue and West End Avenue provide a good access but that is not the same from the Beech Grove side, and that will probably be the direction of most popular use. One solution would be a pedestrian/cyclist crossing point adjacent to Beech Grove. Another would be to make the length of footway on the north side from Beech Grove to the West End Avenue toucan all shared and so wide enough for two way cycling. This latter solution would need to be well signed.
 - B. **Build up of Litter and Leaves.** Street cleansing will need to keep up with litter and leaf clearing as the cycle path is below adjacent levels and will form a trap for detritus. No doubt you will liaise with the Borough Council to ensure this added to the mechanical footway sweeper routes.
 - C. **Winter Gritting.** Harrogate is now starting to get a reasonable network of cycle routes (but obviously there much still to do) and Otley Road is likely to be well-used. If all these are to be all-year routes for children, commuters and shoppers then they will need to be gritted with the same frequency as the road network. While speeds for cyclists are lower than for cars the resulting accidents from skidding on ice on a bike can be quite severe.

Martin Weeks and John Rowe for HDCA

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