

Response ID ANON-MHZJ-7QCJ-E

Submitted to A435 Alcester Road South Bus Priority
Submitted on 2022-11-25 23:54:12

Introduction

Are you responding to this consultation as an individual or on behalf of a business/organisation?

On behalf of a business/organisation (including elected members)

About your business/organisation

What is the name of your business/organisation?

Group or organisation:
Birmingham Friends of the Earth

What is the postcode of your business/organisation?

Postcode:
B5 5TH

What is your name?

What is your name?:
Martin Stride

Please confirm you are authorised to respond on behalf of your group or organisation.

I am authorised to respond on behalf of my group or organisation

Can we contact you via email about the Cross City Bus Scheme between Kings Heath and Druids Heath in the future?

Yes

If yes, please provide your email address:
martin@birminghamfoe.org.uk

Idmiston Croft to Millpool Gardens Proposals

To what extent do you support the proposals to implement a northbound bus lane between Idmiston Croft and Millpool Gardens?

Strongly oppose

Please use the box below to explain your answer:

Overall, we believe that the damage to the environment far outweighs the unclear benefits of road widening for bus lanes, based on the following.

Loss of trees, hedgerows and other greenery: The current road is lined with many mature trees and hedgerows. These provide a physically and psychologically beneficial barrier between the road and people's homes, footways and shops, as well as the other benefits of urban trees in general, such as reducing pollution, reducing temperatures on very hot days in the summer, creating habitats and reducing flood risk. We do not believe that the introduction of young saplings is an adequate replacement when the removal of the established trees can be avoided.

The removal of the hedges and banks along some parts of this section would require retaining walls, which would adversely affect the appearance of the local environment.

Lack of evidence of increased congestion and delays to buses: local residents and users of the current bus service report that there are no significant delays in this area, south of Kings Heath, even in morning rush hour. At the TfWM Teams event on 17th November, current congestion was given as a reason for the scheme at first, but then later in the presentation, predictions for future congestion were given more emphasis. Uncertainty re: data predicting future congestion: we understand that the plans are actually based largely on forecasts of future congestion. It is not clear what has been accounted for in these calculations e.g. have they been adjusted for changes in working practices and shopping online since the pandemic, as reported in the National Travel Survey 2021.

Given the above, we would question whether these proposals are primarily intended to improve bus services or whether they are a means of increasing road capacity to cater for an increased volume of traffic.

This road widening is at odds with the Birmingham Transport Plan 2021 (BTP 2021) which calls for planning for less traffic in coming decades, not predicting and providing for more traffic, and this reduction is required by the Climate Emergency and city's Route to Zero carbon, as well as the Air

Quality Strategy. Furthermore, one of the key themes of the BTP 2021 is a call to reallocate road space to active travel and public transport. Bus lanes should therefore be created by reallocating roadspace rather than by widening roads to accommodate them as is the case here.

There is plenty of research to demonstrate that widening roads actually induces increased volumes of traffic as the extra space created fills up with more traffic (e.g. the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, 1994).

A further concern is that the widened road would attract more traffic including HGVs from the M40/M42 and make it a more attractive route to the city centre and a short cut to points north. This would result in increased long distance traffic and HGVs passing through busy shopping centres of Kings Heath, Moseley and Balsall Heath on single carriageway roads when it should be using more suitable routes of the motorway box and existing dual carriageway routes around and into Birmingham such as the Aston Expressway.

A wider road would induce higher speeds which could lead to more speeding.

Potential for increasing bus use and reducing congestion by other means: we do not believe that all the measures to encourage people to change from car to bus use have yet been exhausted. BCC should continue to promote its initiatives to encourage safer, greener and healthier travel while disincentivising car use.

Delays mainly happen at junctions and bus activated smart traffic lights giving priority to buses should be considered instead of widening roads for bus lanes.

Sladepool Farm Road to Stot Fold Road Proposals

To what extent do you support the proposals between Sladepool Farm Road and Stot Fold Road?

Strongly oppose

Please use the box below to explain your answer:

Our comments against widening the road on the northbound side of Alcester Road South between Idmiston Croft and Millpool Lane also apply to the southbound side of the road between Sladepool Farm Road and Stotfold Road in that this will result in an unacceptable loss of mature trees and hedgerow.

The justification for a southbound bus lane here is even more questionable than the northbound lane given the spreading of peak traffic flows in the afternoon.

Pedestrians can currently cross this section of road informally when traffic is light. The widened road would make this more difficult and could create community severance. The end result is that whole local community would be disadvantaged.

At this point it is worth emphasising that both south and northbound bus lanes are part time being operational only between 07:00 and 19:00hr, so outside that period the road effectively becomes a dual carriageway for all traffic. This increase in capacity will lead to an increase in traffic volumes.

Between Sladepool Farm Road and Whitland Drive, we note that the footway on the eastern (southbound) side of the road becomes very narrow and is hazardous for pedestrians. We note the proposal to widen the road along this section by cutting into the eastern embankment which would necessitate the construction of a retaining wall in places. This would require further removal of mature trees and shrubs resulting in a less pleasant environment made worse by the imposition of a retaining wall. We consider that this is an unnecessary and costly undertaking. Instead we suggest that this could be avoided by widening the road towards the west instead. This would allow the narrow footway on the eastern side to be widened westwards without cutting into the embankment and enable a cycle lane to be accommodated on the western (northbound) side of the road along with partial extension of the bus lane.

Broad Lane Proposals

To what extent do you support the proposals at Broad Lane?

Somewhat support

Please use the box below to explain your answer:

We support these proposals in the interests of pedestrians who will have a wider, safer footway and bus stops closer to the leisure centre. Also the provision of turn pockets would improve safety and alleviate traffic build-ups.

The environmental damage highlighted on the plan seems minimal (removal of four small trees), however we would be concerned about any significant cut into the woodland on the southern corner of Broad Lane and Alcester Road South.

We would support widening of the footway between the crossing and the entrance to Cocks Moors Woods Leisure Centre.

Appian Close to Featherstone Road Proposals

To what extent do you support the proposals between Appian Close and Featherstone Road?

Neutral / Unsure

Please use the box below to explain your answer:

We support in principle the bus lane between Appian Close and Howard Road as this does not require any road widening and can be achieved by the reallocation of road space. However we are not convinced that this bus lane is necessary as the northbound bus delays tend to occur at the signal controlled junction of Howard Road with Alcester Road. Smart bus activated traffic signals at this junction which give priority to buses with an extended length of bus lane leading up to the junction may be more effective than the proposed entire length of the bus lane from Appian Close.

We are unsure about the merits of making Livingstone Road one way and of banning right and left turns into Featherstone Road / Tenbury Road as this may result in traffic being displaced to Broad Lane where a right turning pocket will make it easier to turn into this road from the north. However we do support the narrowing of the bell mouth for the entrance to Featherstone Road / Tenbury Road as it is currently far too wide which makes it hazardous for pedestrians to cross given the speed at which vehicles turn into and out of the entrance to these roads.

Summary of the Proposals

Overall, to what extent do you support these proposals along the A435 corridor between Kings Heath and Druids Heath?

Strongly oppose

How likely are these proposals to change how you travel through the area?

Neutral / unsure

Do you have any final comments that you wish to make about these proposals?

Do you have any final comments that you wish to make about these proposals?:

In general, we oppose the proposals for road widening to accommodate bus lanes. However we support some more minor aspects of the plans, as explained in the previous sections, in order to allow narrow footways to be widened and the turning points at Broad Lane safer.

We are concerned about the false dilemma being presented between bus lanes and green space, when other options are available and would be more preferable e.g. continuing to incentivise bus use and disincentivise car use.

Lack of coordination with cycling plans: We are concerned about the lack of integration of cycling provision within these plans. We understand that this is due to separate funding sources for bus routes and cycling/walking routes, but we think that proposals for both should be drawn up in a coordinated and holistic way. We are disappointed that no attempt has been made to include even any incidental cycling provision in these plans.

On some of the drawings, lines that appear to represent pedestrian guard rails are evident especially at side road junctions. We would oppose the widespread installation of pedestrian guard rails as these encourage higher speeds and are dangerous for cyclists.

A good cycling and walking route along this corridor through the green spaces would provide an alternative to the car, at much less cost than widening the roadway while retaining the trees and hedgerows that reduce the noise and pollution from the road. There is potential for a substantial shift to active travel for Druids Heath residents, which would prevent the projected increase in traffic with delays to buses from happening.

Low awareness of plans: We are also concerned about low awareness of the plans, based on our conversations with local residents, particularly among those who may not be familiar with engaging and responding to consultations. We suggest that either this consultation is extended or that sufficient time is given in the next stage for a proactive consultation that actively invites the views of all residents living in the sections where the road is going to be very much nearer their homes e.g. the blocks between Idmiston Croft and Manningford Road and the houses between Bulford Close and Alcester Road South.

About the consultation

Have you attended, or do you intend to attend an online or face to face consultation event about these proposals?

Yes

Do you feel that the information provided has enabled you to make an informed comment on the proposals?

No

What additional information would have helped you to comment on the proposals?

Other comments:

It is difficult to tell from the drawings provided what is currently in place i.e. where the present kerb line is and which trees and hedgerows are present and which will have to be removed for the road widening. In general, the locations of current trees were not identified on the drawings. The Broad Lane proposal specifies the number of trees that will be removed – four young trees, however the other proposals involve the removal of many mature trees and hedgerows and these more significant removals are not represented on the drawings.

A separate set of drawings should have been provided which shows more clearly what is present and what will have to be removed or altered. Such

drawings have been available for previous consultations so it is disappointing that none could have been provided in this case. We understand from one of the officers that such drawings will be provided at a later date but this will be after the consultation deadline. Because of this omission we believe that the consultation deadline should be extended so that people have a chance to look at these drawings when they are issued.

Details of future traffic forecasts: We understand that the justification for the proposals is based largely on forecasts of future traffic. It would have been helpful to see a summary of the figures, e.g. for time to be saved on bus journeys, with some transparency over their calculation.

About you

Which age group applies to you?

Age:

What is your gender?

Not Answered

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Not Answered

What is your ethnic group?

Not Answered

Other White:

Not Answered

Other Non White:

Not Answered

What is your sexual orientation?

Not Answered

What is your religion or belief?

Not Answered

Other religion: