

John Wetherill (ref 20016217) - Written Representation on the proposed Underpass at Chiverton.

1. Introduction

The proposed underpass is a substandard crossing in three main respects:

- It is likely to raise concerns about personal security and thus not encourage use by non motorised users.
- It is unsuitable for joint use for Walking Cycling and Horseriding.
- It involves a 1km extra long trip compared to bridge on the B3277/A390 alignment.

2. Why an underpass solution was chosen.

2.1 Due to Highways England's failure to gauge suppressed demand and to follow their own pro cycling policies no segregated cycle crossing at Chiverton was in the scheme as presented for the Public Consultation between January and March 2018.

2.2 This consultation subsequently showed that there was a high demand for one. Their reason for answering this demand with the proposed PR2 underpass, rather than a bridge at the present junction site, can be read on page 66 of the Consultation Report:

" Highways England has considered providing a WCH link on the line of the existing Chiverton Roundabout. A link at this location would have landscape and visual impacts on the World Heritage Site to the south of the new A30. In addition, surveys of usage of the existing crossing at Chiverton by WCH have also shown that there is very little demand for it in this location. Given these issues and the cost of providing a new bridge in this location, Highways England cannot justify including the in this location as part of the DCO. The underpass proposed has been incorporated into the scheme without any significant environmental impacts, with minimal cost and in recognition of the perceived "suppressed demand" highlighted in feedback to the statutory consultation. "

2.3 The choice of the underpass solution is not to provide the optimum crossing facilitating use at all times of year and day and by as wide range of users as possible. It does not reward and encourage cycling in line with the shown demand and national policy. It is down more to keeping the DCO process going, and fitting into the existing budget.

2.4 Moreover these considerations have led to this particular underpass being in an especially isolated position, overly long and of minimum height and width.

3. Underpass Likely To Raise Concerns About Personal Safety.

3.1 .Generic Poor Perception of Underpasses.

3.1.1 Underpasses in general raise issues of personal security or safety. This is recognised in many documents. These include Highway Englands 'TD 36/93 Subways for Pedestrians and Pedal Cyclists'. This, if not explicitly, seems to acknowledge that underpasses per se raise these concerns. It has a paragraph 2.5 entitled 'Personal

Security Aspects' which I will quote from. Chapter 6 on construction includes this quote on interior tiling: 6.4 'Bold designs....can create an atmosphere that the subway is well used and therefore safer'. The chapter has various references to vandalism and graffiti.

3.1.2 Also Highways England Advice Note 91/05 (6.56) notes that 'personal safety can be a significant issue in underpasses.

3.1.3 Sustrans Design Manual from February 2015 refers to underbridges as likely to generate 'issues of personal security'

4 Particular Shortcomings of Proposed Chiverton Underpass.

4.1 The considerations of not delaying the DCO process or adding to the budget have led to this underpass being particularly unsuitable. It is to be situated under the embankment which will carry the A30 and two slip roads serving traffic using the new Chiverton junction to and from the West. This presumably saves on excavation costs but means that its indicative length is 70 metres long. TD 36/93 states 'The subway should be kept as short as possible' (2.2) (The fact that the length of 23m is often used in TD 36/93 as a threshold for different minimums leads me to gather that this is what is seen as denoting short.)

4.2 Presumably, also to save on cost it is only 4m wide and only guaranteed to be 2.7m high. Already in a relatively unpopulated area it is further away from the few houses, 2 petrol stations, cafe and public house than a crossing at the present junction site would be. The entrances to the underpass would be some distance from the roads it connects. Judging from the map they would be about 20m from the B3277 and 50m from the A390. This will mean even more that the length of the subway will not be easily in the view of passing traffic which is seen as helping to minimize fears of personal safety in paragraph 2.5 of TD 36/93.

4.3 I believe this underpass with its great length and narrowness and isolated position will be an especially intimidating underpass to use, especially for those commuting in the winter or later in the evening when they are more likely to be the only user. It certainly wouldn't fulfil the statement in Highways England Intermediary Advice Note 195/16 paragraph 2.2.1 that Cycle networks shall not only improve cyclists' and other road users' safety, but also their feeling of how safe the environment is. A large number of relevant representations can be seen to talk of this issue.

5 The Proposed Underpass is unsuitable for joint use for Walking Cycling and Horseriding.

5.1 The width of the proposed underpass is 4 metres. This is less than the 5 metres required to afford segregation of users, as according to HD 36/93 in chapter 4.3. Thus not only is it narrower than the ideal; it will have to be for unsegregated use.

5.2 Chapter 4.7 states that 'Where the number of pedestrians and cyclists is small, an unsegregated subway may be acceptable, particularly for short subways with good through visibility.' This underpass is definitely not short. Also its relative narrowness may limit its usefulness in future years where factors such as housing development or increased cycling rates may require more width or segregation from other users. I

suspect it would be more difficult to widen than a bridge crossing that could more simply be replaced if need be.

5.3 The underpass only has a guaranteed height of 2.7m. HD 36/93 paragraph 4.10 states 'Where bridleways are to be incorporated into subways, the minimum headroom available should be 3.7m except where suitable facilities for the riders to dismount and remount are provided, when the headroom may be reduced to 2.7m. Thus horseriders would need to dismount to use the underpass.

5.4 Highways England TA 90/05 'The Geometric Design of Pedestrian Cycle and Equestrian Routes' refers to the need to avoid low headrooms over longer distances since horses are more difficult to control when being led. Thus other users and the dismounted rider would be vulnerable, especially considering their closer proximity due to the narrowness of the underpass but it's long length. (moreover HD 90/05 gives a minimum headroom of 2.8m over 'longer distances')

6 Less Direct Route

The underpass incurs a 1km detour in comparison to the route on the direct B3277/A390 alignment. IAN 195/16 States ' Directness: Cycle networks shall serve all the main destinations and shall seek to offer an advantage in terms of distance and journey time. ' The longer journey time involved would reduce the number of people able to fit cycle commuting into their daily lives.