

A46 Active Travel Partnership Comments

Application Quotes

7.4 Transport Assessment table 11

'Build an **inclusive** Scheme which **improves** facilities for cyclists, walkers and other vulnerable users where **existing routes** are affected.'

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

*The scheme aims to build an inclusive scheme which **improves** facilities for cyclists, walkers and other vulnerable users where **existing routes** are affected supporting the key principle of sustainable development in paragraph seven*

Comment

Existing routes will be any route used by NMU as the status is not defined.

1. Our concern is with the eastern end of the scheme where NMU have to negotiate ever increasing traffic volumes and complexity through the A1, A46 & A17 junction system that severely impedes NMU. Travel needs of NMU are as important as motorists' and their transport needs should be given due regard. That means at the very least that the Active Travel network will not be degraded and that journey times and distances should not be increased without mitigation. Environmentally in this context mitigation has three meanings - *Avoidance, Minimisation and Compensatory Mitigation*. Our objection focusses on the latter. In providing compensatory mitigation for the flood plain and bio-diversity areas of land were included in the Order Limit(OL). NMU have not been treated in the same way.
2. Before this scheme started an Active Travel Group had been formed for the National Highways A52 schemes for the Nottingham Knight (65000 vehicles/day) and Wheatcroft (50,000 vehicles/day) roundabouts. The capacity was to be doubled but two bridleways and a footpath crossed the road between the roundabouts. An existing cattle underpass meant grade separation could be achieved at low cost but links to the PROWs were needed. National Highways admitted there was a very serious safety problem but refused to extend the OL. The issue went to designated funding but the landowner was not willing to cooperate. We sought to avoid such problems with the A46 scheme. Our first submission highlighted NMU issues and asked for meaningful discussions that could inform decisions about the OL. Discussions were not offered until the second consultation and we were told the OL was fixed. A working party was formed but this was heavily circumscribed by the OL. It was not until June 2023 that a WCHAR was produced in order to justify the decisions already made.
3. The Government in setting a legal target of zero emissions by 2050 stated that many more local journeys are going to have to be made using Active Travel. Scheme designers are directed to make suitable provision for NMU to replace that which is lost and provide that which is needed. The design team have failed to take on board that good NMU connections will reduce the need for local motorised journeys through the junctions reducing congestion for through traffic thereby improving journey times. Using the DFT figures £1 spent on the road has return of £1.20 whilst the figure for Active Travel is £4.30 so NMU routes are good value for money as well as helping to achieve many Government climate and health targets.

4. The 3 routes affected

To the north of the A46 currently there is a very good Active Travel route along Winthorpe Road that goes northeast through the Trent valley. This important green space has the Trent Valley Way Long Distance footpath and Trent Vale Trail passing through it to the Fledborough Viaduct where the Dukeries Trail, which connects Lincoln and Shirebrook, crosses the River Trent. It is an increasingly important corridor with a chain of small villages and nature reserves connected by the two NMU routes. Our assessment based on NMU needs is that the Winthorpe Road link (NCN 64) is currently wide, green and level plus virtually car free making it very suitable for a wide range of users including children going to school. The latter is a major Government target. This connection will suffer significant loss of utility and amenity with increased journey time, worse air quality and increased noise. The diverted section is 80% further than the section it replaces. An adult on foot travelling at 1.3m/s would take just 2mins to traverse the current section but after construction 4mins plus the time at the signalised crossing (DfT recommends max 2mins) so the peak flow gain for motorist is the same as the loss by NMU.

5. Footpaths 2 &3 have not been severed as claimed. Satellite images show they are still in use. They terminated at the old A46 because highway foot rights across the road already existed and walkers could cross the road anywhere, including the petrol station crossing and Winthorpe roundabout. The application plan has users crossing the A17 on the bridge, crossing back at grade, using the roadside route to the NMU bridge over the A1 slip road and turning east to the signalised crossing. Then northwest to the side of the A1, a pollution hotspot of very poor environmental standard, and climbing back to the connection going east. The route will be downgraded in terms of environmental quality, distance and journey time. The route is 1 km longer =13mins plus SC time.

6. The only access from Newark to the PROW network south of the A46 is through the roundabout complex where a shared use footway/cycleway on the verge gives access to Drove Lane leading to the Danethorpe bridleway and the PROW network and quiet lanes. It also gives access to the Newark Showground and employment sites around the Showground but specific NMU provision stops at Winthorpe roundabout. The amended Development Framework will create many more employment sites served by this route. This NMU route was omitted from stage 2 plans. Avoiding such errors is the purpose of the WCHAR done before designing starts. Importantly between the service station and Drove Lane the route is set back from the road avoiding the danger of NMU being pushed towards large vehicles when too close to vehicles passing them at speed. It is the same effect as lift on a wing. Being a roadside route it suffers less degradation but the above point is relevant.

7. Mitigation to replace what has been lost.

The routes above have all suffered significant degradation resulting in loss of utility and amenity so compensatory mitigation should be included in the scheme.

8. BW6

The design team have admitted extending Newark BW6 (alongside the Trent) across Winthorpe Rack field would be a compensatory mitigation for the Winthorpe Road link. Discussions with the landowners have convinced us that they would not willingly dedicate the missing section. This means applying for designated funding is misdirected. Changing the OL and sorting this out should be made a condition of consent so a solution can be reached.

9. Drove Lane

It is narrow and application classes it as a 60mph link road between the A46 and A17. Newark Showground's RR asks for the NMU route to be extended to the main entrance. This would greatly improve safety of NMU during events. We have had discussions with trustees and management about extension towards BW8. It appears possible. National Highways should engage now with the Showground. With agreement to create the route designated funding could be sought for construction costs.

10. Beacon Hill

Whilst this route is further from the OL it would create another access point to guide NMU away from the roundabout complex. It is already in use but Statutory Declarations starting in the 1980s block a right of way claim. The route would reduce the NMU pressure on the main junctions as it could use the existing bridges under the A1 and over the A17. Rejected as outside OL.

11. The scheme designers are wrong to assign signalised crossings(SC) as 100% benefiting NMU. SC are part of the road infrastructure like traffic lights(TL). TL deal with competing motor vehicles(MV) streams in order to maintain smooth flow. For SC one stream is replaced by NMU, who are legitimate users of the Kings Highway and have a right to cross the roads including Strategic Road Network (SRN). Whilst NMU have some benefits from predictable interaction by avoiding becoming victims, drivers gain by the avoidance of congestion as the free flow on the road breaks down after an accident. An example where 100% of the benefit goes to NMU would be installing a SC where the Coddington-Winthorpe FP crosses the A46. This would seriously impede MV flow so NMU must use a much longer route placing NMU below drivers inverting the Highway Code hierarchy of users. Similarly NMU already cross at the Winthorpe roundabout so the design places a SC at the junction. Again it is a traffic control measure that benefits motorists.

12. We are not asking for facilities to encourage general NMU use in Newark. We are asking for improvements to compensate for the identified losses and to reduce the NMU going through the main junctions as traffic volumes increase. By swapping local car journeys for Active Travel SRN congestion would be reduced and help meet climate targets.