



21 August 2019

By email to:

transportstrategy@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

Consultation on proposed Shared Use Path (SUP) – Murcar to Blackdog

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

We are pleased to see this proposal brought forward but have the following comments.

1. Usefulness of the route and connectivity

i) Northwards. The route has the potential to connect Bridge of Don with communities to the north such as Blackdog, Balmedie and beyond. However this will only come about if the route is complete and the current proposal which terminates at a bus stop south of Blackdog is therefore of limited benefit *in its own right*. At present a desire line over the grass adjacent to the bus stop shows demand from pedestrians using the parallel service road. This could provide a practical link noting that the future proposed route (indicated on your plans by a broken line) is through a constrained space immediately next to the dual carriageway. We are aware of active moves in Aberdeenshire to complete the link from Blackdog, through Balmedie to Ellon.

ii) Southwards. At the south end the route will connect with the SUP from Murcar roundabout to the Parkway roundabout. Beyond that, city bound, a route exists only as far as Balgownie Road. Thereafter no route is present across the bridge or to connect to King St. These are important links that need to be made in due course if the route is to appeal to significant numbers of people.

iii) Evidence from our annual cycle count is that numbers of cyclists using the northern approach to Aberdeen via Bridge of Don are not high and numbers at the Ellon Road counting location have notably *decreased* since 2015/16. The reason for the decline is not apparent to us, and the best we can say about the statistic is that there is significant potential for growth.

2. Design details

i) It is good to see that the proposal is for a 3 m width SUP along most of its length which conforms with 'Cycling by Design'. The separation from the carriageway is not specified in the consultation documents which we have seen: "edge of road marking" appears faintly on some of the drawings but without any dimension stated. Cycling by Design specifies a Desirable Minimum separation of 1.5 m where the speed limit for adjacent traffic is above 40mph. We note that the speed limit on this section is 70mph.

In our view, and with particular regard to the speed of traffic, the Cycling by Design absolute minimum of 0.5 m would not be acceptable in this circumstance.

We emphasize this point and cite – for example – the wind draft and turbulence created by an HGV passing at 70mph as a clear hazard to cyclists which would make the route not only unappealing but potentially unsafe if adequate set-back is not provided.

We are aware that Sustrans now use as a guideline the requirement that new infrastructure should be designed to be safe to be used by an unaccompanied 12 year-old. Again, if the Desirable Minimum specification for separation cannot be met along the majority of the route (perhaps excepting a few pinch-points) then in our view this test is not met either. Where width restrictions apply, some consideration could be given to barriers of some sort, if only to prevent an errant cyclist straying onto the road rather than meaningful protection from traffic.

ii) It is good to see a give way priority for the SUP at side-road crossings. Some off-set and thus deviation from a “straight” route is shown although the radius of the bend is not indicated. If the drawings are shown to scale, the bends - while not ideal - do not appear to be too sharp. The road crossing itself (shown in green) should be raised to the level of the SUP as this will minimize disruption and help to make the traffic priority clearer.

iii) The provision of a Toucan crossing over the A92 south of the Murcar roundabout is clearly an essential part of the scheme without which it would not connect to the next section of route on the west side of the A92. We understand that installing a Toucan here will first require a reduction in the speed limit. No detail has been provided of how the path will be built between Berryhill Crescent and the proposed A92 crossing. Width on this section would appear to be very limited and the path very exposed to the adjacent roundabout.

iv) No detail has been provided of the crossing of Berryhill Crescent. There is the potential at this point for traffic exiting the roundabout to be travelling quite fast and therefore the design of a crossing needs careful consideration

We hope you find these comments of assistance and would be pleased to discuss any further points.

Yours faithfully,

Gavin Clark, Chair
Aberdeen Cycle Forum

Cc Cllr Sandra Macdonald