



ABERDEEN CYCLE FORUM
Response to Berryden Road/Hutcheon Street junction proposals

1. General comments

1.1 The Aberdeen Cycle Forum is very disappointed that the agreement by the full council on 27 October 2004 'That all new road building works undertaken are pedestrian and cyclist friendly' (in respect of the Central Aberdeen Infrastructure plans) has been so comprehensively ignored in the options that have been put forward.

1.2 Large roundabouts and gyratory systems are recognised as posing greater risks to cyclists. We made this point in our initial submission on the central Aberdeen infrastructure proposals in August 2004.

1.3 We strongly believe that there should be a bottom line principle that any new road measure, such as a junction upgrade, should not present cyclists with additional health and safety risks. New measures should either have a neutral impact or, preferably, improve cyclists' safety and amenity. We cannot imagine road schemes being brought forward with the known outcome being a reduction in motorist safety. We fail to see why cyclist safety should be any different. Indeed, we would see this as a dereliction of your responsibility for the road safety for all road users.

1.4 Large roundabouts and gyratory systems represent major obstacles to cycling within the city, deterring existing cyclists and discouraging potential cyclists. These proposals risk creating a further no-go area for cyclists, similar to roundabouts at the Bridge of Dee and Mounthooly or the gyratory around Guild Street. We would view these options as adding to the perceived danger of cycling in Aberdeen, resulting in a decrease in cycle usage and undermining the council's own target to increase cycle usage in the city. Such an outcome also runs counter both Scottish and UK national policies.

1.5 With new housing developments and commercial developments proposed for the area it is even more important that the choice to cycle safely is enhanced especially as distances to the city centre and some major employers (for example, ARI) are within ideal cycling distance.

1.6 We would also take this opportunity to re-iterate our concerns that much of the Central Aberdeen Infrastructure Plan, of which the current proposals are a part, includes road schemes that will contribute to creating a cycle-unfriendly and potentially more dangerous road network. Moreover, the creation of an urban dual

carriageway through the city will induce further traffic contributing to ever rising traffic levels. At a time when the contribution that cycling can make to everyday transport needs, pollution reduction and health improvement is increasingly recognised, these plans are viewed by the Cycle Forum as representing out of date transport planning.

1.7 We also note that the major impact on traffic volumes will be East –West, along Westburn Road and Hutcheon Street. Compared to Option A (which does not include the closure of Union Street), traffic volumes increase the greatest along this axis, not the Berryden corridor. We note a more than doubling of traffic levels on Hutcheon Street for example. The pressure to dual the Hutcheon Street/ Westburn Road corridor will then emerge in due course. This, to us, represents the folly of the current policy, as opposed to an integrated, sustained traffic reduction strategy.

2. Specific Comments

2.1 Option B: We can see no feasible measures that would mitigate the increased risk to cyclists from a large roundabout . An ‘on path’ option around the roundabout would be unrealistically inconvenient and would still require a cyclist to make numerous road crossings.

2.2 Option C: We can see no feasible measures that would mitigate the increased risk to cyclists from a full gyratory system. Even experienced cyclists that have looked at this option would not use it. The problems are:

- traffic speeds are typically high around gyratories;
- middle lanes that split into two directions are extremely hazardous for cyclists;
- and right turns around the gyratory require several changes of lane, which are high risk manoeuvres for cyclists.

This option design reproduces these undesirable features.

In this context, the liberal use of advanced stop lines in the option design is inconsequential.

2.3 Option D: This option has one advantage over the full gyratory system in that it allows straight on options across the junction. This maintains the current arrangement, though the funnelling of two lanes into one on Westburn Road and is potentially hazardous for cyclists. This road narrowing also coincides with the left feed onto Mount Street which currently is a risk zone for cyclists.

2.4 However, it also maintains the higher risks associated with Option B as it appears that right turns will be prohibited. It thus requires right turns to be made around the gyratory. This includes two instances of middle lanes splitting and feeding traffic in two directions. So, for example, a cyclist wishing to go ahead on Westburn Road has potential conflict with traffic wishing to go left. Such a measure places cyclists in highly vulnerable positions. The new section of road connecting Westburn Road and Berryden will also place cyclists wishing to turn right in the middle of three lanes, with traffic passing either side. This is an intimidating cycling environment.

3. Concluding comments

3.1 Options B, C and D represent dangerous and intimidating cycling environments. This cannot be justified either in respect of the safety of individual cyclists nor in respect of council policy and the recommendation of full council on 27 October 2004.

In effect, these options will create a no-go area for cyclists and will impose a significant barrier into the current cycleable network in the city.

3.2 In the light of these comments, Aberdeen Cycle Forum wishes to register a strong objection to Options B, C and D.

3.3 Our preferred option for the junction upgrade is to maintain a signal controlled intersection. With appropriate design and signal sequencing, this will allow cyclist to make their desired manoeuvres with greater safety relative to roundabouts and gyratories.

3.4 If the response is that such a junction cannot cope with the traffic volumes predicted by the modelling we would argue that any 'excess' traffic must be targeted by traffic reduction and demand management measures. A significant majority of car journeys are under two miles, and a significant majority of commuting is single occupancy. This indicates considerable scope to reduce traffic levels but requires an integrated and sustained strategy by the council.

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