



04 August 2021

Aberdeen City Council

By email to: [transportstrategy@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:transportstrategy@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs,

**Ellon P&R to Garthdee corridor**

Thank you for the invitation to respond on this transport corridor study. The corridor is a long one and a significant amount of information on issues, options, and potential actions, is presented. This may be off-putting to many people and we suspect the number of responses you may receive may be relatively low considering the importance of the corridor and the issues at stake. We have limited ourselves to commenting on the active travel (AT) options presented.

**AT2 Signage** Signage is useful for visitors or those who are new to the area, or new to cycling. By itself however, signage is of limited value and is not a replacement for proper cycle routes. In addition to new signage, there may be existing signage which would need updated.

**AT3 & AT4** It is unclear whether these are offered as alternatives or both could be provided. We note that it is now just over 2 years since we commented on the proposal for a route between Murcar and Blackdog. We don't know if any further progress has been made on this proposal, except that nothing has yet appeared on the ground which is very disappointing. Our comments at the time remain valid and can be seen here: [a7000-murcar-to-blackdog-consultation-acf-comments-august-2019.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/a7000-murcar-to-blackdog-consultation-acf-comments-august-2019.pdf)

Although we welcome the idea of a long distance route to Ellon, we also expect that in terms of cost/benefit, those sections of the corridor within more densely populated

urban areas (i.e. within Aberdeen city) offer a better return and so should be progressed first.

- AT10 The current route between Murcar and Bridge of Don is incomplete and on the west side of the carriageway only. This section should be a priority for improvement.
- AT11 Although the route proposed here could be useful, mainly to residents in the area, it should not be a replacement or an alternative for a direct route alongside the A90 (AT10). AT11 also implies more changes of level, and gradients are generally off-putting to cyclists.
- AT25 This is essential. It needs to be a link which is direct and convenient, without relying on shared-use sections or repeatedly crossing from one side of the route to the other.
- AT32 As above, this is essential and preferable to the other alternatives suggested (AT33 & AT34) which are indirect and don't serve the University as a destination. AT32 needs to be continued all the way to Union St, rather than stopping at West North St as the current advisory route does. We previously produced a cycle-friendly design for this junction which we'd be happy to share with you.
- AT33 & AT34 These routes may have some benefit for local and feeder journeys, or for leisure cycling, but are unlikely to serve well as useful travel corridors and so are not a replacement for AT32. You will no doubt be aware that a temporary cycle lane was briefly provided along Beach Esplanade as part of the *Spaces for People* measures. AT33 & 34 are also more likely to be exposed to the elements, and again involve more gradient change. Our comments on the *Spaces for People* beach route pointed out that it was significantly less efficient both in terms of time (55%) and distance (37%), by comparison with a direct route using King St.
- AT43 Holburn St is an important section of the corridor so cycle lane provision here is fundamental. Better connections on and off the Deeside Way would also be useful.
- AT44 Although directing cyclists onto quieter side streets away from the main corridor may seem appealing, it also takes cyclists away from the shops, businesses or other destinations located on the main corridor and so loses some of the benefits that a direct route can provide. We do not favour this choice over AT43. AT44 also has some significant changes of level which as mentioned above can be off-putting to cyclists (especially between Justice Mill Lane and Willowbank Rd).
- AT50 A recent Council-led study has looked at this section and failed to come up with what we thought were realistic or worthwhile improvements.
- AT8,11,23,30,41,48 With-flow segregated cycleways
- AT9,24,31,42,49 With-flow 'light' segregated cycleways

These appear to be alternative designs. We would prefer full segregation over 'light' infrastructure. One benefit of the latter is that it may be less expensive and so can be

done more quickly and even on a trial basis in some cases. However the *Spaces for People* measures in Aberdeen have shown that with such 'light' measures, compliance and enforcement are real issues and in many cases what were supposed to be cycle ways or extended pavements were abused and became unofficial car parking areas where ACC and/or Police seemed unwilling or unable to carry out meaningful and effective enforcement action. This demonstrated that the full benefits of cycleways will only be realised if protection from vehicles is through hard infrastructure.

However, at this stage, would it not be preferable to concentrate on the route location(s) first, rather than adding additional complexity by considering detail of the infrastructure too?

We don't want to comment individually on the junctions and crossing points but agree that these are key to providing meaningful routes which are direct and convenient. Currently Aberdeen has far too many places where advisory cycle lanes simply stop ahead of junctions – the point where arguably cyclists are most vulnerable and in need of protection. Also, as a rule, signal-controlled junctions are likely to be safer and easier to negotiate by bike compared with a roundabout. However we note that the largest, busiest and probably most dangerous roundabout in the corridor is at Bridge of Dee yet no measures are identified for it within the study?

We also don't wish to comment in detail on the various public transport measures. However we note that in many places (Holburn St is one example) space is at a premium and private motor traffic, public transport (buses) and active travel (walking and cycling) are all likely to be competing for the same space. Again using Holburn St as an example, the study refers to the need to create 4 full lanes for traffic (2 each for buses and private vehicles) and the need in some places to widen the carriageway. If this is so – where is active travel to go? We acknowledge that this is a very difficult issue to resolve in many places – difficult decisions will be needed and those will only be possible with political will and courage that has to date been lacking. The study also refers to locations where capacity for vehicles needs to be preserved to prevent congestion. We would suggest that this is the wrong approach and what is needed is a means of effective demand management, such as congestion charging to reduce the number of private motor vehicles coming into the city. Without reducing the volume of private traffic, it is difficult to see how else the needs of active travel, and public transport, will be met. It should go without saying that where space is at a premium and one group of users needs to be prioritised over another, then the Council should follow the transport hierarchy as set out in national policy and in its own policy documents, notably the recent Active Travel Plan.

Yours faithfully,

Gavin Clark,

Chair, Aberdeen Cycle Forum

Cc Cllr Sandra Macdonald, Transport Spokesperson