

Draft Comments on LCWIP

from Milton Keynes Green Party

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General

We very much welcome the proposals in LCWIP and appreciate that the long list captures most of the aspirations for new or upgraded routes for walking and cycling. However we are concerned about the proposed timescales for implementation.

The majority of schemes are proposed for the medium or long term with only about a quarter of the schemes in the quick win or short term category. We know from experience that as far as MK Council is concerned medium or long term usually means never. MK Council produced its first Local Transport Plan in 1999. 23 years later we are still waiting for many of the schemes in it to be implemented. Some of the schemes proposed for medium or long term should be brought forward to short term.

Safety

We feel that the issue of personal safety is not sufficiently considered in the report. This is particularly an issue for women. We have had many comments that women do not use Redways, especially at night, because of fears about personal safety. Underpasses are often mentioned in this context. We accept that personal safety, especially for women, is a society-wide issue that has to be addressed outside of an LCWIP but it impacts on how people choose to travel. Fears about personal safety deter people from cycling or walking. The plan should address this issue. The more people that use the Redways the safer they will be perceived to be - safety in numbers.

There are also multiple road safety issues. Foremost is the speed of traffic. The plan should recommend a default 20mph speed limit in residential areas, shopping areas, eg High Sts, near schools, etc. This would make the roads safer for cyclists sharing the road with vehicles and for pedestrians having to cross the roads. Again this removes a reason for not walking/cycling and so would enable more people to walk and cycle. More low-traffic neighbourhoods should be proposed.

Speeding on rural roads between towns and villages is also a deterrent to walking and cycling, especially where there are no footpaths alongside the roads and pedestrians have to walk in the carriageway. The road between Lavendon and Olney is an example of this. Where this is the case lower speed limits should be considered in the short term until safe walking routes can be provided.

Lighting is another issue. While Redways are lit not all paths are. More paths should be considered for lighting but we do understand that this will not always be appropriate because it may conflict with environmental concerns.

Many people do not use Redways and footpaths. They need to be encouraged to do so instead of using cars. The plan seems to focus on those who are already using Redways. More needed on widening user base for Redways.

Bell mouth junctions

Redways alongside grid roads have to cross the entry/exit road from estates at grade, typically twice per km. Generally these entry roads have wide bell mouth junctions which allow vehicles turning left off grid roads into estates to do so at speeds well above the 30mph of the estate roads. This is not safe for cyclists and pedestrians that have to cross these entry/exit roads. Left turning vehicles need to be slowed down before making the turn. This could be done by reducing the width of the bell mouth so that the turn becomes sharper, forcing vehicles to slow down. This could be done fairly cheaply. Kerb stones could be positioned on the carriageway to narrow the bell mouth and create a sharper turn.

Are wide bell mouth junctions compatible with the new Highway Code, which prioritises pedestrians on slip roads? It may also require physical measures such as speed cushions or zebra crossings at entry/exit road from estates.

Gender

We feel that that there is a gender bias throughout the report. It fails to acknowledge that there are differences in the way men and women travel about. Far more men than women cycle in MK. Why is this? What can be done to address this difference? Women are often accompanied by children, eg journeys to and from school. Walking and cycling routes need to be safe for men, women and children to use. Women do more multi-leg journeys – e.g. dropping kids off on the way to work, shopping on the way home etc., rather

than just straight A to B. These factors need to be considered as part of the plan.

Strava

The use of Strava data (2.2.3.2) risks biasing estimation of cycle usage to dedicated exercise/sports/leisure cyclists at expense of more occasional, but probably fairly numerous occasional/'fair-weather' cyclists, e.g., for shopping trips and visits to garden centres. While we appreciate that cycling and walking data is very limited we are concerned that giving such prominence to the Strava data will distort perception of cycling and walking useage. The demographic od Strava users is very different to the demographic of walkers and cyclists in general. Many of this using Strava are not using walking or cycling as a mode of transport to get from A to B but as a form of exercise and so the journeys are often circular, eg around a lake as is clearly shown in Fig 2-7.

Maintenance

Whilst not strictly part of an improvement plan Redways and footways must be properly the maintained. Many paths have earth and grass creeping in from the sides, making them much narrower that they should be. The path from Newport Pagnell to Sherington is an example of this. Similarly some paths have hedges and brambles encroaching into the area above the path. Many footways have uneven surfaces or lifted paving slabs. Flooding is also an issue, especially in underpasses. All of these things deter people from walking and cycling and must be fixed as part of regular maintenance.

Links beyond urban MK

Cycle superhighways on the Redways – but there really should be a link between

- Towcester and MK
- Buckingham and MK
- Leighton Buzzard and MK
- Olney and MK
- Cranfield and MK

Some of the neighbouring LAs are planning major housing developments just beyond the border of MK, eg Salden Chase. Much as we may disapprove of these developments if they are built then they should be accessible to/from MK for pedestrians and cyclists. The Redways necessary to enable this should be included in the plan.

The shared cyclist/pedestrian function of redways may not always be suitable running besides some of the narrower roads of the older town areas, as it sometimes leads to conflicts between the two groups of users, so thought should be given to providing cycle lanes fully separated from footpath-pavements in such settings.

Comments on Specific routes and/or areas

WS

Woburn Sands is in a similar situation to the old market towns in MK listed in 1.3.2 (Establishing Geographical Scope) and 2.2.1.2 (Travel Catchments – in which Woburn Sands isn't even labelled on the map in Fig. 2.4!), i.e. situated on extensions of the Redway network. Why was WS excluded from the priority treatment afforded to the other towns? And indeed it receives very little mention in the Report, altogether. The detailed proposals that WSTC and Wavendon PC took the trouble to put forward to the 2021 survey appear to have been 'kicked into the long-grass' of Medium to Long-Term projects (Fig. 6.3). This is short-sighted in view of the current plans for the development of SEMK, with which it would be sensible to coordinate upgrading of the surrounding LCW provision in parallel. Not to do so would surely be a wasted opportunity.

Woburn Sands – cycle way was intended to come up to the high street. There is a Redway but it officially stops at the railway station.

Olney

CR has asked MKC to look into reducing the speed limit to 30mph south of Olney Bridge and to 40mph on the entrances into Sherington. SB and GB also mentioned the problem of speeding through Lavendon which is on the main road between Northampton and Bedford. More signs, cameras etc might be worth pursuing.

Missing bit between Olney and MK is where the Sherington Road joins the bottom of Chicheley Hill, the last mile into Newport Pagnell.

Olney – CR has asked for a reduction in speed limit south of Olney Bridge. Maybe should ask for 20mph on High street between Church St and just north of the Market Place?

The path/Redway/cycle paths from Newport Pagnell to Olney and Olney to Lavendon should be brought forward in the plan.

Connectedness between Olney and the villages? Clifton Reynes, Weston underwood all in the long-term category. Could footpaths through the fields between Olney and Lavendon be upgraded to a walkable and cyclable standard? Many would be on private land.

10 Bletchley North

This links Bletchley station to Denbigh Industry and Stadium. It would have to cross both a rail line from the flyover and the Marston Vale line. Instead this should be replaced by a Redway bridge over the WCML from Sherwood Drive to Third Avenue. This would be much more useful for travel between West Bletchley and Denbigh Industry/ Stadium than the proposed route 10. It would also be useful for football fans walking between the station and the Stadium. It would also possibly mean that 193 Bletchley North rail crossing was no longer required.

It would leave Sherwood Ave adjacent to the north end of Challenge House and the south end of Bunkers Cres, cross multiple rail tracks and descend to join Third Ave where it does a dogleg. There was bridge on this alignment for about 100 years, approx 1850-1950. It was probably removed when the flyover was built.