

B4102 Blossomfield Road (Tudor Grange Leisure Centre to Widney Lane)

Background

- 1.1 To introduce the contraflow cycle lane on eastern side of Blossomfield Road, it was necessary to make a Traffic Regulation Order under the experimental provisions of section 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. This allows the restrictions to be trialled, for up to a maximum period of 18 months, before a final decision is made. This approach helps to ensure that the real-world impact of a proposed scheme can be assessed and provides a 6-month period for the public and stakeholders to make representations. This order came into effect on 4th April 2022. It was subsequently modified on 7th July 2022 to allow the cycle lane to be suspended for maintenance operations and the consultation period ended on 6th January 2023. The decision to make the order permanent or not, must be made by 3rd October 2023.
- 1.2 It is acknowledged that there is a strong community feeling around the perceived impacts of this scheme. Officers therefore recommend that further consultation is undertaken after the Order is made Permanent, seeking feedback and further improvements that can be implemented in future.
- 1.3 It was envisaged that this scheme would be the first phase towards achieving a high-quality cycle route connecting Dickens Heath and Solihull Town Centre as part of the LCWIP approved proposals. Funding for this route has been secured as part of the City Regional Sustainable Transport Fund (CRSTS). The permanent scheme will be formally consulted on later in 2023.
- 1.4 As part of Tranche 2, a dual cycle lane was implemented along the south-bound carriageway of Blossomfield Road from a position approximately 70 metres north of the Longmore Road/ Widney Lane/ Blossomfield Road/ signal junction continuing in a northerly direction to the junction of Dorchester Road with Blossomfield Road a distance 1.9km. The cycle way measures between 2.5 and 3 metres in width and is supplemented throughout with light segregation measures (Orcas and Wands) and road markings, in addition to raised tables provided at each bus stop location along the

route to facilitate safer cycling and pedestrian accessibility.



- 1.5 44 representations were raised by members of the public on the design of the route. Where practical and within the constraints of the budget, additional measures or changes have been implemented including signage and lining together with blue surfacing at key junctions and accesses.
- 1.6 There have been no formal objections raised by the emergency services, local bus service operators or schools. Officers have agreed with Solihull College to make additional minor improvements on the approach to their entrance and are continuing to work with the College as part of the wider Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.

Usage

1.7 A comparison of pre and post installation usage is provided below:

2021 Observed Date (June 29/06 – 04/07)*TfWM Video Surveys	2022 Observed Data (June 29/06 – 04/07)*Vivacity Video Data	Change
688 two way cycle movement in a 24h period	828 two way cycle movements in a 24h period	+24%

Safety Concerns

- 1.8 Collision data shows that in the last 4 years (2018 – 2021) there were 12 injury collisions. The provisional data for 2022/23, shows 8 slight accidents in 2022/2023, There were 2 cyclists injured but these reported to be on the main carriageway. It is far too early to say with confidence at the present time, however, the provisional figures are encouraging. We are continuing to monitor accidents.
- 1.9 Officers are also aware of a further incident in 2023 which involved a cyclist colliding with a vehicle turning into Solihull College entrance. The speed at which the cyclists was travelling downhill and driver behaviour at the junction were factors in this incident. This is being addressed by providing a speed reduction hump in the cycle lane and further signage.
- 1.10 Concerns were raised highlighting a perceived risk of a head on collision as cyclists are travelling against the flow of traffic in the dual cycleway. Feedback relates to vehicles or cyclists straying into the cycle lane or carriageway or turning manoeuvres (into junctions or accesses) not noticing a cyclist causing a collision.
- 1.11 Stages 1 and 2 Road Safety Audits (RSA) were undertaken by an independent Road Safety Auditor during design, development, and construction of the scheme. A further Stage 3 RSA has also been undertaken during the day and night times. All recommendations raised in the RSA have been considered and responded to. The route has also been assessed independently by Transport for West Midlands and Sustrans (walking and cycling charity, and the custodian of the National Cycle Network). The scheme has been designed in accordance with Department for Transport Cycle Design Guidance (LTN1/20) and provides an overall safer facility compared to what was previously in place. For example, the Orcas provide protection to stop vehicles inadvertently straying into the cycle lane and cyclists from straying into the live traffic lanes.

Traffic Delay and Congestion

1.12 This relates to the removal of the central hatching which was previously used by

vehicles to inappropriately overtake buses and other vehicles and the removal of right turn bays meaning vehicles must now wait behind or overtake if traffic conditions permit. It has been reported that the cycle route also causes problems for residents to access and egress onto their driveways.

- 1.13 The introduction of the contra-flow cycle lane necessitated the removal of the right turn bays and central hatching. Only a very small percentage of traffic on Blossomfield Road used this part of the carriageway to turn right from, whilst motorists overtaking using the central hatched area created a safety hazard for crossing pedestrians and cyclists.
- 1.14 In terms of delay and congestion, the journey time data and traffic conditions during typical peaks periods shows little or no change to observations before the Active Travel Lane was implemented. The right turners and buses do create a minor queue, but this dissipates quickly once the vehicle moves off.

Parking Issues

- 1.15 The scheme removed two restricted parking bays with a combined capacity of 15 vehicles from outside Alderbrook Secondary School. Early in scheme implementation, concerns were raised about inappropriate parking during school pickup / drop off times in nearby residential areas (White Falcon Court and Alder Park Road / Endwood Drive).
- 1.16 Inappropriate parking on private land (White Falcon Court) is largely a matter for the appropriate private organisation to enforce. This was communicated to the Management Company and residents. Parking Enforcement Officers regularly patrol these areas, and there are no recent reports of parking issues in these areas which now covers a slightly wider area.

Emergency Services

- 1.17 Concerns were raised that blue light services are being delayed. Due to removal of the central hatching and right turn bays being removed, there is a perception that police, fire and ambulance services are slowed in queuing traffic.
- 1.18 West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS), West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) and West Midlands Police (WMP) have not formally raised any concerns with the Council regarding this change.

Maintenance

- 1.19 Cyclists and pedestrians raised concerns that the cycle lane was not being cleansed and detritus, including twigs and leaves, had built up, particularly in autumn months. The presence of trees and vegetation along this route means there is larger than normal build-up of detritus.
- 1.20 In response to such concerns, the ETRO was amended to aid maintenance of the

cycle lane, subsequently it is now being swept and cleansed every two weeks. Vegetation along the entire length of the route has been cut back and this is being monitored through the statutory highway safety inspections. There has been a decline in concerns raised about the cycle lane being cleansed.

Recommendations

- 1.21 The ETRO has provided the opportunity to trial the contra-flow cycle lane and to receive feedback from road users.
- 1.22 The design was changed to improve signage, reprofiled the ramps at bus stops to facilitate pedestrian and cycle movements and provide more protection at junctions using wands to separate cyclists and vehicles. Blue surfacing on key parts of the network to make drivers and cyclists aware that they are entering a different space in the highway has also been provided.
- 1.23 Monitoring shows that the number of cyclists using the route is increasing and is expected to do so as the LCWIP cycle network expands and improves. The new layout of the highway has not seen any significant change in casualty or congestion along the route and therefore, it is recommended that the ETRO should be made permanent.
- 1.24 This will then allow the next stage of the project, that will see it extended and made into a permanent solution, subject to design changes, to be consulted on and funding applications prepared. There has been no actual road safety.
- 1.25 There are no other changes proposed at this stage, expect for the provision of a new pedestrian crossing facility on Blossomfield Road, close to its junction with Charles Road that is being delivered as part of this year's Local Network Improvement Plan capital allocation.

