



To: Claire Tregembo
Parks and Countryside
Farnley Hall
Leeds LS12 5HA

By email to: claire.tregembo@leeds.gov.uk

Your reference: Thorpe Park

RE: Proposed Diversions at Thorpe Park.

03 August 2014

Leeds Cycling Campaign is a voluntary organisation with around 270 members, seeking to make Leeds a better place to cycle. In preparing for this consultation we sought views from the membership, several of whom live and work close to the proposed changes.

Regarding the first proposed diversion, 14/02488/FU

Our members have reported that the cycle/bridleway has already been substantially diverted once. The notice at the end of the road (when originally blocked off with a wooden fence) stated the diversion was temporary. It used to be possible to cycle in a straight line from the end of Barrowby Lane straight onto the park network; a fairly direct and very quiet route to the shops and residential areas around Cross Gates.

The lengthy and circuitous diversion around the back of the offices has made this route wholly impractical. Some cyclists have reported now riding via the A63 including negotiating a couple of dangerous roundabouts instead of using the new, signed route. The old route is blocked with a fence and a small strip of landscaping between offices. This could be reinstated easily and Leeds Cycling Campaign would like to see this considered.

The bridleway/cycleway should serve the park as well as allowing a convenient, direct and inviting route for cycling between Garforth and Leeds. This is a key commuter route that cuts out a motorway roundabout and ties in to the end of the planned CityConnect superhighway.

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The diversion shown in Map A is an improvement on the current situation, as it is closer to the original route. But the bridleway is proposed to be surfaced in crushed stone (similar to the current diverted path), and 'then along the grass verge'. Recent and ongoing discussions on canal towpath surfacing have illustrated that crushed stone is inadequate for cycleways, quickly becoming unusable for many types of bikes unless regularly and properly maintained – and revenue funding for this is notoriously difficult to source. It should be surfaced in a weatherproof sealed surface in order to avoid future disputes over maintenance.

Any 'shared footpath' solution is generally a poor compromise for both cyclists and pedestrians, and anecdotally the shared footpath here is hardly ever used. The 'shared pavement' at Thorpe Park is block paving, and there are some damaged sections and access covers which are icy in winter. The paths aren't cleared of snow and ice, which creates a dangerous environment for bus passengers making the long trek from the nearest stop with a frequent service. This path is generally poor for cycling, and isn't a suitable replacement for an existing track.

Regarding the second proposed diversion, 14/01216/FU

The diversion shown in Map B is unacceptable. While no distances are given in the materials provided, we estimate the proposed diversion is 1535m from where it leaves Barrowby Lane to Point D, compared to 700m for the old direct route – more than double the distance. A route much closer to the original route should be reinstated in order to fulfil the Council's stated objectives on making cycling an attractive transport choice.

One of our members, a Sustrans Volunteer Ranger Co-ordinator, has emphasised that NCN 66 (which is also part of the City Centre to Garforth Leeds Core Cycle Network route at this point) needs to remain safe and convenient for users - and this includes being well-surfaced and reasonably direct.

If possible an alignment close to the original Barrowby Lane track should be provided. There are no physical barriers to reinstating the diverted section. Even if not part of the through route this would at least provide a safe route to the offices on the park.

This is the situation at present:



The solid blue line is the former route of Barrowby Lane that was blocked off 'temporarily' then landscaped - the orange dotted route is the much longer replacement, blue dotted route the bit built over by the road.

It is clearly inconvenient to get from some locations on the park (such as indicated by the red dot) to Barrowby Lane (yellow arrow), a quiet route out of the park that avoids the A63.

Some users seek to access the new track (by the green dot) by cutting through a private car park and climbing a steep sometimes overgrown bank, indicating a strong desire line which should be facilitated by the design of the park. This should be rectified while development is still ongoing.

There has been no attempt to consider permeability to walking and cycling in Thorpe Park's development, leading to an environment that essentially ignores bridleway and footpath desire lines. Maintaining necessary rights of way within 'acceptable' limits is the bare minimum and Leeds should be aiming not just to provide circuitous and poorly-surfaced routes but to make cycling and walking attractive and desirable choices.

We have asked council staff about processes to hold businesses to account over failure to implement the measures upon which planning consent was based, and adherence to travel plans, and we have been given no information on whether and how this is ever done. New developments offer a prime opportunity to plan for cycling and walking, but while the Council continues to trumpet the need to seek more active and sustainable ways to travel, developments such as this one designed primarily to accommodate vehicle access and with little thought to the directness and convenience of rights of way are failing to meet the Council's aims.

We look forward to hearing the Council's views on our concerns and would be happy to meet and discuss this in more detail.

Best wishes

Elizabeth Reather

Chair, Leeds Cycling Campaign