Wolverhampton City Centre Traffic proposals

4 November 2012

David Holman – CTC Right to Ride Representative, Wolverhampton for Wolves on Wheels Cycle Campaign.

Briefing to Cllr Martin Waite.

The proposed changes to the city centre traffic flows are in response to the decline in retail trade. Everyone agrees that something must be done to keep our city centre fresh, appealing, vibrant and commercially viable.

The present draft proposal that you have kindly sent me are totally unacceptable and we shall urge all cycle users to STRONGLY OBJECT [forcing a public inquiry if necessary] unless the proposals published are positive in their assessment of the value of cycling visitors and customers and in the provision to enable them to move around the city in the current directions. Indeed we are looking for an improvement in the city centre's offer for cycling over the present situation. This is in line with the reduction in motor traffic – the main hazard to pedestrians and cyclists alike.

The proposal signals its intent with the omission of the word "Cyclable" from the vision statement. We ask that the vision statement reads a vibrant, walkable, cyclable, family-friendly city centre. Let's get the proposal off to a positive, inclusive start instead!

We would like to get across the principle that people cycling in and out of our city centre are

- Customers
- Visitors and Shoppers
- Normal
- They want to get to work or go home.
- They matter to our local authority and the local economy
- They don't want to be criminalised by the scheme in your proposals
- They appear undervalued by your authority's proposals.

The presumption in your authority's proposals should be that cycling is

- Important to the local economy
- Convenient and attractive to do.
- Freely moving in all directions presently available.
- Improved over the 2012 situation e.g. exemptions to restricted moves like Lichfield St. into Princess St. are included in the plan because motor traffic levels will be reduced.
- Improved and fit for the next generation – after all WCC trains over 1500 children a year to attain Bikeability levels 1 to 3 year after year. As young adults many will choose to cycle [for economic reasons] to get around and the city centre is the destination of choice.

The Present Situation – City Centre Cycling.

Wolverhampton city centre is like an island of calm surrounded by a hostile race track called the ring road. Cyclists MUST cross the city centre to reach other destinations, shops, amenities, work and the railway station. The Ring Road is out of bounds.

NOW THE KEY POINT – THE ROOT OF OUR OBJECTION TO YOUR AUTHORITIES PROPOSALS – IS THERE IS ONLY ONE EAST-WEST ROUTE AND ONE NORTH-SOUTH ROUTE USED BY ALL RIDERS CROSSING THE CITY CENTRE.

Between Chapel Ash and the Railway Station cyclists have to use Darlington Street, Queen Square and Lichfield Street. THERE IS NO OTHER ROUTE. It's a fair climb too so no-one is going quickly. It's the main desire line for cyclists and on the most prestigious local cycle route of all – National Cycle Route 81 – Birmingham to Aberystwyth. Curiously the proposals omit any mention of making this impassable with a one way street.

From the Bantock Park and the Markets to the railway station, cyclists ride uphill on Victoria Street and into Queen Square – it's another desire line.

Rail commuters who cycle to W'ton Station from e.g. Tettenhall, Compton and Finchfield will be particularly affected.

North – South cycle traffic has to use Stafford Street – Princess Street - Market Street and Garrick Street. THERE IS NO OTHER ROUTE.

The proposal acknowledges there is a problem to these in 4.10 saying that an alternative east-west route needs to be found. Listen to the users – there isn't one! No-one is going to ride 'round the Wrekin' via Cleveland Street and you'll be ridiculed if you put NCN81 up the stairs to St Peter's.

Your authority's proposals take cycling in the city centre from the most convenient mode of transport to unviable. It's that stark. We're talking about the most healthy, lowest overall emissions, sustainable mode of wheeled transport [in a city with endemic public health issues] rendered no longer practical. The city economy needs all the customers it can get. How can you afford to drive anyway? Amazon and EBay will love these proposals.

No entry except cycles to the pedestrianised city centre in Peterborough
http://www.cyclestreets.net/location/38038/

Imaginative signing in the UK is possible!

Solution.

The proposals must design in two-way cycling on all the affected roads. These are streets of over 9 metres wide where two buses can presently pass. A contra-flow cycle lane is 1.5 to 2 metres wide. UK best practice is to tackle the issues now so that conflict between different road users, especially the visually handicapped, is mitigated. People will cycle on the affected streets one way illegally because there is no other viable alternative. It's better to cater for them from the outset with infrastructure instead of handing out £30 fixed penalty notices to folks trying to ride to work.

With reduced motor traffic then this is the golden opportunity to make the city centre a more attractive and safer place to cycle. WCC can increase the convenience advantage that cycling to the city centre presently has over other modes of transport by exempting cyclists from banned turns . There are some long standing restrictions that could be lifted like the banned right turn from Lichfield Street into Princess Street.

Everyone we've spoken to is taken aback by the "get lost" message to cyclists in these proposals – it's so backward. We're looking for a design solution that has an open arms welcome instead!

We dislike the narrow meaning applied to cafe culture in the proposals. **Cafe culture** in its home, continental European sense applies to a relaxed atmosphere in a street scene where people arrive under their own steam on foot, mobility scooter , wheelchair and in large numbers by bike. Pictures below from my family's travels capture the flavour rather better than the WCC proposals.

Historic city centre of Utrecht alongside the canals. Toegestaan = permitted

Northern German scene with Cafe Culture. Cycle parking provided for the pharmacy's customers

Utrecht – another cyclist threads her way through unconcerned pedestrians.

Life on a street in northern Germany - 2009

A first class scheme would embrace the principles of Shared Space described in Local Transport Note LTN 1/11 from DfT – the most famous example of which is the successful scheme on Exhibition Road,

South Kensington [Natural History and Science Museums]. Cowley Road in Oxford is another IIRC. This would give Wolverhampton the best public realm design in the region!

So our message is **design in full shared use and cycle access to our city centre using contra-flow cycle lanes,** many of which are self-regulating speed wise because they're uphill ,with a CAN DO attitude including all the visual clues and tactile surfaces that will please the Elderly lobby and the campaigning arm of the Guide Dogs for the Blind . Then you'll have the city centre we want and deserve! Don't forget to ask for Cycle Counts before and after.

Brand new facility in Kettering, Northamptonshire [A Hopkins]

Literature

http://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/category/tags/pedestrianised-areas including the HMG "Re-imagining urban spaces to help revitalise our high streets" response to the Portas review – no making city centres less penetrable to cyclists here.

Main Conclusions TAL 9/93 – Department for Transport

- Observation revealed no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas, suggesting that cycling could be more widely permitted without detriment to pedestrians;
- A wide variety of regulatory and design solutions existed to enable space to be used safely and effectively in pedestrianised areas. These varied considerably in response to local circumstances.

Findings TAL 9/93 – Department for Transport

Pedestrians change their behaviour in the presence of motor vehicles, but not in response to cyclists.

Cyclists respond to pedestrian density, modifying their speed, dismounting and taking other avoiding action where necessary.

Accidents between pedestrians and cyclists were very rarely generated in pedestrianised areas (only one pedestrian/cyclist accident in 15 site years) in the sites studied.

Where there are appreciable flows of pedestrians or cyclists, encouragement to cyclists to follow a defined path aids orientation and assists effective movements in the area. At lower flows, both users mingle readily.

TRL 583 Cycling in Vehicle Restricted Areas is presents objective based evidence based mainly on Cambridge, Hull and Salisbury. Real people and their concerns are recorded.

http://www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/trl_reports/cat_traffic_engineering/report_cycling_in_vehicle_restricted_areas.htm

Conclusions on page 16 e.g. Observations showed that the majority of cyclists modified their behaviour by slowing down or dismounting as pedestrian numbers increased..... The majority of pedestrians in the survey were not particularly concerned by cyclists in the VRA – more when prompted were ore upset about litter.

Chartered institute of Transport and Logisitics – Cycling in Pedestrianised Areas.pdf is the list of choice showing schemes that also later converted to cycling 24/7

Sustrans leaflet FF04 - Many town centres have pedestrian areas where vehicles are excluded for all or part of the day. Prohibiting cyclists from such areas can force them on to longer, busier, unpleasant and dangerous routes. If satisfactory alternative routes cannot be provided, exemptions for cyclists should be considered, at least outside the busiest periods. There has been considerable debate about the ability of pedestrians and cyclists to mix safely in pedestrian areas. The Transport Research Laboratory has monitored this issue, concluding that there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas (8). It also concluded that a wide variety of regulatory and design solutions exist to enable space to be used effectively and safely in these areas, which could be tailored to local circumstances.

Practice –

Lots of contraflow cycling and cycling in vehicle restricted areas in UK plus Shared Space Schemes. A Google search on Cycling Pedestrianised is very fruitful.

A good real world survey is to work through the good and bad shown here:-

http://www.cyclestreets.net/search/?search=pedestrianised with maps and Google street view

E.g. Edinburgh & King's Lynn. There are bans too regrettably – where's the Can Do spirit here?

Peterborough – no ban on cycling in pedestrian zones

Cambridge – cycling permitted in ped zone outside peak shopping hours.

Leicester – no restrictions to cycling in the pedestrianised zones [ever] and the city council subsidises the brilliant City Bike Park business in the middle of it all. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-18119561 This is the inspiration for Cycle Point in Leeds and similar ventures that are being set up around the country – why not Wolverhampton?

Cycling on seaside promenades where the pedestrians really aren't looking where they going is common place. Even Llandudno promenade has joined the ranks after a mammoth 10 year fight from CTC right to ride rep Roy Spilsbury – they'll soon wonder what all the fuss is about.

Google Promenade cycling and look for the PDF list with this address.
www.ciltuk.org.uk/pages/downloadfile?d=B2A6E098-658B...

The whole of Blackpool's Golden Mile and more - **You can now cycle on sea front promenades in Lytham, Blackpool, Cleveleys and Fleetwood says Lancashire County Council.**

Woking – Disabled lobby gets a cycling ban in the former cycle demonstration town :-
http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/bike-blog/2011/apr/05/cyclists-shared-zones-disabilities

Also the detrimental influence of the campaigning arm of the Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) on schemes countrywide that try to civilise town centres.

Cardiff – cycling permitted most places in the city centre VRA's [lots of alternative routes] and a pragmatic approach from the interviewee

http://www.guardian.co.uk/cardiff/2010/aug/16/cardiff-cycling-access-routes-permitted-in-city-centre

Watford – Cycle Route through the pedestrianised zone is new -
www.ctc.org.uk/resources/benchmarking/Herts_**Cycle**_Route_through_a_**Pedestrian_Area**.pdf

Peterborough – cycling permitted main shopping pedestrianised shopping street.

York historic city centre walkings streets have no cycling 10-30pm till 4pm

Fascinating study of Darlington CCTV images looking at interaction in the VRA with Cyclists – very little conflict noted. www.grassick.net/**cycling**_downloads/CCTV%20STUDY.pdf . *WCC should look at its Dudley Street footage with an open mind.*

There have been pilots in London which have been successful and the City of London (aka the financial district) intends to open all one-way streets to two-way cycling (when I worked in London I found the one-way systems around the City very frustrating) – Simon Geller.

In Sheffield, we have some shared space areas which work very well. Cycling isn't allowed in the central pedestrianised area, despite our best efforts to get these changed, but tends to be tolerated outside busy times. Relations with the Local Access forum are pretty good, but they're not keen on non-demarcated cycling areas – Simon Geller.

Contra-flow cycling – what we need more of in this scheme-

http://www.cyclestreets.net/search/?search=contra-flow Cambridge and the world including Old Hall Street Wolverhampton http://www.cyclestreets.net/location/10130/