

**A52T Bramcote to Dunkirk Non-Motorised User Study
– Response from Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign),
September 2011)**

Introduction

Pedals very much welcomes the interest of the Highways Agency and A-One Plus in improving provision for non-motorised users on this very important radial route into Nottingham and one which is of particular importance for cyclists being relatively flat and because of its location in a part of Greater Nottingham with above average numbers of cyclists. It is also of particular importance because of its close proximity to the main University Park campus of Nottingham University with its high numbers of staff and student cyclists and where Sustrans, in close collaboration with the University and Nottingham City Council are involved in a major effort to promote cycling further through the Ucycle Project.

The report mentions (in Table 3, on page 12) that the accident rate for both cyclists and pedestrians greatly exceeds the national average. However, it then fails to address what should surely be the clear implications of this very important fact, i.e. that measures to improve NMU safety must be given much higher priority, rather than giving overriding importance to the provision of extra capacity for general motor traffic.

Detailed comments

We do welcome these specific proposed cycling improvements:-

- a new shared path on the south side of the A52T between Church Street and Town Street (Bramcote)
- the provision of a wheeling ramp on the footbridge across the southern arm of the Bramcote roundabout
- the conversion of some of the pelican crossings at the Priory roundabout to toucan crossings
- the recognition of the need to ensure that all drivers respect the toucan crossing signals across the slip roads on the south side of the QMC (Derby Road) roundabout

However at the same time we do find it very disappointing that little else is proposed and that most of the suggestions made by Pedals and other groups have been rejected as not practicable.

We are particularly disappointed at the dismissal of the case made by Pedals and other organisations for the provision of cycle lanes in both directions on the stretch of the A52T between the Priory and QMC islands where the lane width for two officially marked general traffic lanes in each direction is inadequate and where it is only on the approaches to the main junctions at both ends (Priory and QMC islands) and in the peak periods that drivers are inclined to form two unofficial traffic lanes. We consider that this unofficial usage by drivers is being too readily regarded as an absolute barrier to improved cycling provision and that the overall desirability and practicality of achieving this needs to be much more carefully and thoroughly scrutinised.

While appreciating the constraints on converting the two footways to shared paths we do think that it should be feasible to create 1.5m cycle lanes in both directions, accompanied by reducing the speed limits on this single carriageway stretch to 30mph to make on-road cycling safer and more comfortable for less confident cyclists who, in the absence of safe on-road provision, are more likely to resort to riding on the footway. There does, incidentally, appear to be some confusion in the report in its discussion (page 22) of the type of cyclists to whom such cycle lanes

might appeal (if well-designed and well-enforced). Its statement that “: *“the provision of an on carriageway facility would not necessarily be attractive to most categories of cyclists other than „utility“ cyclists”*” appears not to recognise that the majority of users here are “utility cyclists”.

Although University Boulevard, on the south side of University Park, with its good shared paths, is a very popular route for most cyclists (and forms part of Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 6), we do also consider that there is also a specific need for improved provision on the Derby Road route to the north of University Park, as this is better suited to the origins and destinations of some cyclists, e.g. those riding between Beeston and area along the Outer Ring Road (Middleton Boulevard etc) to the north of Derby Road, a major and relatively flat link to and from the north side of Nottingham and a route where the City Council intend to improve provision for cyclists as part of their Ring Road Major Scheme, if funding for this is confirmed.

Our feeling that the NMU Study has not investigated sufficiently the scope for cycling improvements (in partnership with other organisations including Pedals, Sustrans, Nottingham City Council, Ridewise and the Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership as well as Nottingham University and the Queen’s Medical Centre) is strengthened by the apparent lack of involvement of many of these organisations in the preparation of the study.

Had there been more such partnership working we think that the Study would have been strengthened by showing more awareness of the existing links (e.g. the shared use subway south of the Dunkirk flyover roundabout and the pedestrian overbridge between University Park and the QMC to the north of the roundabout) are apparently not mentioned). There would also have been more accuracy in references to the status of existing paths, cycle paths and shared paths both within the highway boundary of the A52T (e.g. in Sections 3F and 3G on page 19, covering the area on Clifton Boulevard near the east side of University Park etc.) and nearby, including important cycle routes across it such as the route from Beeston town centre to Moor Lane etc. to the north of the A52T via the shared path across the Beeston Fields Golf Course, Brindle Way, etc.

There would also have been less risk of the apparent confusion in some passages in the report, e.g. between the Bramcote and Dunkirk roundabouts (as in the wrong caption on page 27; Figure 3) and in the references near the bottom of page 10 to the locations of the proposed tram (Nottingham Express Transit extension line to Toton) stops to be developed in the vicinity, mentioning one at the Dunkirk roundabout as well as the one actually proposed on the south side of the QMC.

Closer partnership working in the preparation of the Study would also have enabled a more thorough investigation of the possible use of nearby cycle routes to take some of the pressure for cycling provision away from the A52T itself, where there really are major constraints to achieving this.

Although we do not think it feasible on the section between the Priory and QMC islands to find practical, direct and convenient routes through either University Park or Wollaton Park, we do think there may be some potential for encouraging the use of alternative parallel routes, not just on paths but on quiet roads, on the section between the Priory and Bramcote roundabouts (i.e. between Woodside Road and Brindle Road) where nearby roads are much quieter, if also in some cases hillier. Such a route could also be considered in relation to the City Council’s plans for improved cycling provision on the west side of Woodside Road, between the Priory roundabout and the roundabout by the west entrance to University Park and east of Broadgate Beeston.

We also think that closer collaboration with other organisations would help to find ways of making better cycling provision between the QMC and Dunkirk roundabouts, both in terms of a better use of space on the existing footways and cycle path (particularly on the west side of Clifton

Boulevard) and also in terms of accesses to and from it, e.g. achieving some form of contraflow cycle lane or cycle path on the south side of the campus exit onto the Clifton Boulevard slip road just south of the QMC roundabout, through close working with Nottingham University since most of the land to provide this link lies within the University Park campus rather than within the highway boundary. This proposal from Pedals seems to be dismissed all too readily as though it is solely a matter for the Highways Agency.

As well as making more effort to take account of the knowledge and experience of a range of possible partner organisations about cycling provision the study would benefit from cooperation with such organisations to assess how other transport projects such as the NET extension could be best used to help give improve provision for cyclists, as in the case of the detailed alignment for the new tram bridge across Clifton Boulevard between the QMC and Science Road (University Park) and its approaches.

It should also be remembered, in considering the scope for taking further the work of this study, that many of the organisations mentioned have extensive wider cycling expertise not just in terms of the relationship of this study to ongoing plans for the expansion and improvement of the Greater Nottingham cycle network but also in terms of being able to learn lessons from good practice in other places in the UK and elsewhere.

For example, Sustrans, the major partner in the Ucycle Project, has very extensive experience of developing and promoting good cycling infrastructure, not just in terms of off-road routes such as disused railways and canal paths (many forming part of the National Cycle Network) for which they are particularly renowned but also in terms of a range of quality on-road provision, designed and implemented according to local needs and contexts as well as good engineering standards.

It would therefore be very useful to follow up this study with a more concerted effort to engage with these various partners and, where appropriate, as in the case of Sustrans, with their wider national expertise, both in terms of specific site visits and further discussion of possible solutions at several locations between the Bramcote and Dunkirk roundabouts.

Summary and Conclusions

While welcoming this detailed study of the needs of non-motorised users on this very important, busy and dangerous section of the A52T, we do think that there needs to be a much more thorough and comprehensive assessment of the potential for improved NMU (especially cycling) provision, going beyond the relatively small number of specific proposals in this report.

This report should be regarded as the beginning of a dialogue with other interested organisations, particularly Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham University as well as Sustrans and Pedals to investigate further the potential for improvements both with the A52T highway corridor and in its vicinity and taking full account both of the existing provision away from trunk roads in the area and other plans for extending and improving it, on a closely coordinated basis, and with particular regard to the improvement of road safety.

As in the case of our earlier involvement with the Highways Agency over proposed cycling provision within the A453T and A46T improvement schemes, we very much hope that further dialogue will help ensure improved provision in the case of this scheme too.

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for Pedals
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