

Nottingham City Council Waterside Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – November 2018: Comments from Pedals (Nottingham Cycling Campaign)

Introduction

We very much welcome the publication of these draft planning proposals which will help greatly to guide the comprehensive redevelopment of this long neglected but very important area of Nottingham.

We particularly welcome the renewed commitment to the extension of the riverside path on the north bank of the River Trent from Meadow Lane Lock to Colwick Park, along with other proposed improvements for cyclists and pedestrians, and also the recognition of the opportunity to include a foot-cycle bridge across the Trent, east of the very busy, dangerous and intimidating Trent Bridge and Lady Bay bridges, both as a landmark and symbol of the comprehensive regeneration of the area and because of its very great potential functional benefits for many people, for both leisure and utility trips, by bike and on foot. This will also do much to add to the already very considerable qualities of the riverside environment through Nottingham, one of the city's great assets, and encourage more people to enjoy them.

The Waterside Regeneration Zone, and the area within it that is the subject of this SPD, and particularly the proposed new foot-cycle bridge, should be regarded as a high priority project not just for Nottingham City but for Greater Nottingham. For many reasons, discussed below (on pages 5-7), we strongly favour (Option B), the Trent Lane site, is the best site in overall terms for the new bridge.

We would like to see its further planning and implementation carried out in close collaboration by the City, County and Rushcliffe Borough Councils, in cooperation with Sustrans, the Environment Agency, Canal and River Trust, developers and prospective developers, as well as the various user and other groups that have taken a lead on developing and promoting aspects of the bridge proposals. In doing this much can be learned from the experience of other similar project such as the Sustrans Diglis Bridge over the River Severn in Worcester completed in 2010, the Christchurch Bridge over the River Thames in Reading (opened in 2015) and also ones now being planned such as the very impressive bridge over the River Thames in London between Canary Wharf and Rotherhithe, due to be implemented by Transport for London and Sustrans within the next 3 years.

Detailed comments:

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Para. 9.12

We welcome this recommitment of the relevant policies from the Nottingham Aligned Core Strategy (2014) Policies and we strongly support the proposed upgraded canalside public realm, improved green infrastructure including a continuous footpath and cycleway along the north bank of the River Trent, pedestrian and cycle access across the river, and improved connections to the city centre and surrounding communities.

Page 32: Section 12: Development Concept

We strongly support the proposed public realm improvements listed in para 12.5, especially:-

- Providing a new riverside path and associated green infrastructure, connecting Nottingham and Beeston Canal, Victoria Embankment through to Colwick Park
- Connecting Waterside with new and enhanced pedestrian and cycle links to the city centre, surrounding neighbourhoods, leisure attractions, public transport and employment areas

- Establishing a more pedestrian friendly character on Meadow Lane and Daleside Road with improvements such as new wider pavements using high quality materials, better crossing facilities, dedicated cycleways, street trees and new street furniture

Public realm features on the extended riverside path (as indicated on the drawing on page 39) should include the bottom of Trent Lane to help create a focal point on the riverside walk/cycle path at what will be an important junction with one of the principal routes shown on page 35. As an interim measure double yellow lines on the road should be provided so drivers do not get used to parking there, and in the longer term significant landscaping, benches, and trees, creating a really attractive stopping point along the riverside. This would help to consolidate the significance of the Riverside Character Area, mentioned in para 12.6 on page 34.

Completing this stretch of the riverside path (between Trent Bridge and Colwick Park) we consider so important that, if there are problems in implementing early on the whole of the permanent path, as shown in Appendix 2, we suggest the idea of an interim riverside boardwalk cycleway and footpath between Meadow Lane Lock and Lady Bay bridge. Alternatively, the use of compulsory purchase powers may be considered appropriate to facilitate completion of the permanent facility, given that it will be integral to the transport infrastructure serving the Waterside area.

Page 35: Proposed Land Use Map

There will need to be careful consideration of how best to connect the north bank landing of the proposed foot-cycle bridge to the Eastern Cycle Corridor (east and west directions), especially the Daleside Road / Manvers Street junction for trips to and from the City Centre and Nottingham Station etc.

While the recent Eastern Cycle Corridor improvements have been very welcome there is also a need for some similar high standard provision on the south side of Daleside Road, and taking full account of the proposed Principal Route shown on this map and also the construction of Kilpin Way (between Trent Lane and Poulton Drive) both of which should include safe cycle and pedestrian facilities.

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Paras 12.27 to 12.33: The Provision of a Riverside Path

As mentioned above we very strongly welcome the renewed commitment to the extension of the riverside path on the north bank of the Trent from Meadow Lane Lock to Colwick Park, which, we recall, was first included in the City Local Plan of 1987. We agree that this is crucial to the success of Waterside, as well as the general establishment of an attractive Green Corridor along the river frontage all the way from the mouth of the canal through to Colwick Park. We also very much agree with the statements in para 12.28 on the importance of the wider connectivity of this path, especially to and from the City Centre, Boots Enterprise Zone, Nottingham University and the QMC and the riverside path further west. Furthermore, we very much agree that direct connections to the riverside path should be provided from within the development site and be clear and safe for both cyclists and pedestrians.

The proposed foot-cycle bridge will expand even further the connectivity of this path, for both leisure and utility trips, and help create a series of circular routes in the wider riverside area, including those made using the Suspension Bridge, the Wilford Bridge tramside path and the shared path on Clifton Bridge, resulting in a very attractive and extensive network, especially when combined with other routes such as the Eastern Cycle Corridor, the Sneinton Greenway and, on the south bank, the south bank riverside path (part of Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 15 and the Trent Valley Way) and the Grantham Canal towpath etc., as well as other existing and extended and upgraded routes south

of the river, including those to and from the major new housing areas east of West Bridgford in the Gamston, Bassingfield and Tollerton areas.

We are also pleased to see, in para 12.30, the recognition of the path being wide enough for the use of pedestrians and cyclists and that both the path itself, and its connections, should be well lit and overlooked.

Appendix 2, the Riverside Path Feasibility Study (pages 67-73) provides a very useful detailed analysis of the work required on different sections to achieve the whole path, depending on the varying exact space available at different locations, and other constraints and considerations. It will be a great advantage for this path to provide further sections of continuous path on both banks of the river, including safe connections under the main bridges which, with further path connections by those bridges, will help further to make both riverside paths attractive, safe and well-used, and offering further options for circular trips. The consultation on the City Council's revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan showed the demand for these circular trip options, for runners, as well as cyclists and walkers.

The proposed new bridge, and the riverside path extension, could also be of great value in offering new opportunities for hosting major events such as Cycle Live / Great Nottinghamshire Bike Ride and the Robin Hood Marathon, as well as assisting the development of cycle tourism in the Greater Nottingham area and the rest of the county, connecting to an even wider series of national, regional and local routes including The Big Track, the Erewash Valley Trail, the Grantham Canal towpath, and several Sustrans National Cycle Network routes (6, 15 and 67) and long distance and local footpaths such as the Trent Valley Way and the Robin Hood Way, providing an even greater boost to opportunities for active travel.

Pages 42-44:

Transport and Connectivity:

We very much endorse the statement in para 12.44 that the highways and traffic environment surrounding the site makes it feel isolated for non-car users. It is also very intimidating, especially around the north end of Lady Bay bridge, as well as suffering from very high and unhealthy levels of poor air quality. Improving wider connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians is therefore essential in addition to completing the extended riverside path and reducing the domination of heavy vehicles creating a hostile road environment, as acknowledged in para 12.46.

Improving connectivity of the site for cyclists and pedestrians should include improved connections to and from the canal towpath, at various points, and also reinforce the value of those proposed as part of the Island Site regeneration plans, announced a few months ago and which we also much welcomed. As well as generally improving cycling and walking connections to and from the City Centre (associated with the reduction of through motor traffic in the Broadmarsh and Canal Street areas) this should also help greatly to encourage more cycling to and from Nottingham Station, particularly if these improved connections include a better route to and from the East Midlands Trains Cycle Hub on Queen's Road, as well as the Secure Cycle Compound on the north (Station Street) side of the Station.

This would also be much encouraged by the proposed provision of more safe routes in the design of the new neighbourhood, as mentioned in para 12.47 and also by the further junction improvements proposed along Daleside Road (mentioned in para 12.48) prioritising cycling and pedestrian movement. This we think should include in particular the upgrading of the present very substandard and constrained toucan crossing just west of the Trent Lane roundabout. This would facilitate access to and from the Eastpoint Retail Park, and to and from the section of the Eastern Cycle Corridor east of Trent Lane towards Colwick Park and Netherfield etc., and also to and from Sneinton Greenway, all improving local permeability and connectivity.

In the longer term, with growing use of ebikes, and the consequent greater ease of making longer trips and cycling in hillier areas, there may also then be increased demand for cycling in the hillier areas such as Colwick Wood and further north, in Gedling Borough and including trips to and from Gedling Country Park.

In para 12.54 there is a reference to the NET3 indicative tram alignment along Meadow Lane and Daleside Road. Any detailed plans to extend the NET system in this area must have full regard to the needs of cyclists, avoiding the dangers arising on some constrained sections of the rest of the network, especially in the Beeston High Road / Chilwell Road area. Detailed planning of this NET extension should be carefully integrated with local cycling provision.

Any other network improvements, targeted at key junctions (such as Daleside Road / Poulton Drive), as mentioned in paras 12.55-12.56, must also have fully regard to the needs of cyclists and pedestrians and overcoming the present very hostile road environment on many of the roads in this area. This also applies to the detailed proposals for the Cattle Market Road Straightening, shown on the 'Proposed Transport and Infrastructure' map on page 45, with improved cycling provision, and connections to and from the canal towpath.

It is also important to improve connections for cyclists and walkers across Daleside Road, to and from Sneinton. This particularly includes the Eastpoint Shopping Centre and the very substandard toucan crossing nearby, but also more generally for trips to and from the rest of Sneinton, local shops, Sneinton Windmill, Sneinton Greenway and Colwick Woods (for walkers in particular), etc. It would also help provide safer crossing facilities to the proposed new school site nearby, west of Trent Lane and north of Trent Basin itself.

A new toucan crossing should also be provided at the junction of Daleside Road with Poulton Drive which would also improve connections between the Waterside area and Sneinton and the City Centre etc, as well as the connectivity of the proposed new bridge.

These new links should be widely promoted in various ways both to commuters and to leisure users, including via the very useful and comprehensive Nottingham Cycle Map, and the Self-Guided Walks leaflets produced by the Nottingham Local Access Forum. There is already one for the Sneinton / Colwick Woods area, published in 2014, which would need to be revised to incorporate all the new potential routes opened up by these improved local links.

In addition, the extended riverside path should be widely promoted in its own right, and as an extension of the very popular Big Track riverside path and canal towpath network (connecting Meadow Lane Lock and the Suspension Bridge to Beeston Lock, etc.) as well as the wider Greater Nottingham Cycle Network, on both sides of the Trent including the many commuter destinations and various leisure attractions which it serves. Extensive signing, especially well-designed securely installed directions signs, would also be an essential part of this wider promotion and taking into account the probability of longer trips being made by bike with growing use of ebikes, especially in hillier areas such as those north and north-east of Waterside.

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Para 12.58: River Trent Crossings

We are very pleased to see the recognition of how pedestrian and cycling movements in this area of Nottingham are now limited by the existing river crossing points, impeding the full potential amenity benefit for walking and cycling along its banks. We think however that the proposed new river crossing should be given much more weight in the SPD.

Having worked closely since 2014 on developing the case for a new foot-cycle crossing and done extensive feasibility study work on all the possible sites, with close collaboration between Pedals, the Nottingham Local Access Forum, the Nottingham Civic Society, River Crescent Residents' Association and Blueprint Regeneration, as well as Sustrans and several officers of the City, County and Rushcliffe Borough Councils, and with the support in principle of 20 other local community,

environmental and transport groups, we are convinced of the merits of the Trent Basin location as the best overall site for a new river crossing. These groups now include the Trent Bridge Residents' Association, following a meeting in September 2018 which agreed to give its strong support.

With particular reference to paragraph 12.58 we would also like to emphasise not only that we have been working with Blueprint and developers but also that we have been working with Sustrans etc. on other possible sources of funding. Since May 2018, to help take this further, we have taken full advantage of the stakeholder engagement opportunities in the process for preparing the D2N2 area LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan), which is aiming by the end of March 2019 to produce a proposed network of walking and cycling routes and an agreed list of priorities, for the next 10 years, and with short-term medium-term and longer term priorities..

Like other groups such as the Nottingham Local Access Forum we have emphasised that the lack of a safe river crossing on this side of Nottingham for cyclists and pedestrians is the most important missing link in the Greater Nottingham network. Although this LCWIP process is still continuing we have been very encouraged to see the serious consideration of our case by Sustrans and PJA (Phil Jones and Associates) who are providing the DfT-funded strategic and technical support for the D2N2 LCWIP process, in close collaboration with the local authorities.

We were also very pleased to see our proposed bridge included in the map of (officers') proposed network extensions for the Nottingham Urban Area presented by John Bann of the City Council and Paul Hillier of the County Council at the second LCWIP Stakeholder Meeting, in Nottingham, on 24 October 2018. We now very much hope that if the proposed bridge is included as one of the agreed priority schemes in the final version of the D2N2 Area LCWIP this will greatly improve the chances of being able to make successful bids for funding, (e.g. from the DfT Transforming Cities Fund), both for bridge construction and for improved and extended routes on both sides of the Trent, all with further close stakeholder involvement and public participation in which we would be very willing to play a prominent role.

Consistent with the growing momentum and broadening support behind our proposals for the proposed foot-cycle bridge, we would ask that greater weight is given to it in the SPD. We are firmly of the view that it will serve as a positive feature in the public realm and should be referred to as such by featuring in the plan on page 39, supported perhaps by an image of a similar (landmark) structure elsewhere.

We also suggest that the proposed bridge can and should be seen as an essential part of the transport infrastructure serving Waterside (and the wider area), rather than a nice to have add on for leisure use only. We are convinced the bridge would add value to development sites in Waterside. Whilst we acknowledge that it would be unrealistic to believe that developments alone could fund construction of the bridge, they could with only modest contributions certainly contribute to development of the proposals, as some (notably Blueprint) have already done. As such, reference to the bridge should be made in section 13 of the SPD (Delivering Infrastructure) to help secure developer engagement, including via potential Section 106 obligations.

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Map of Proposed New River Crossing Location Options

As mentioned above, as a result of our extensive feasibility study work since 2015 and examining of all the possible site options, we are convinced of the merits of the Trent Basin location (Option B) as the best overall site for a new river crossing, taking full account of the needs of both cyclists and pedestrians, for both leisure and utility trips, as well as the location of existing and proposed major housing and employment areas, and nearby leisure / recreational attractions on both side of the Trent. We also took account of the existing and potential new and upgraded paths to which a new crossing could link including in particular Route 15 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network and the Trent Valley Way, running along the south bank.

In the early part of our work we proposed what is shown on this map as 'Option C', i.e. Trent Lane, as the best overall site. However, in 2017, it became clear that it would be difficult to incorporate plans for the north bank landing, especially its ramps, at this site with the developing Blueprint Regeneration Plans for Phase 2 of the Trent Basin housing site. A further issue was how to minimise the impact of a south bank landing at this site on the historic groups of trees, both a prominent landscape feature and planted as a memorial to those who died in the First World War.

As a result of these issues, and following further discussions in late 2017 and early 2018 with Blueprint and other interested parties, the Steering Group decided that it would be preferable to recommend the present site, opposite Trent Basin (shown as Option B on the map on page 47), and about 100 metres upstream of the Trent Lane site. This makes it much easier to incorporate the north bank landing with later phases of the Trent Lane housing project, by using the narrow isthmus of land just west of the entrance to Trent Basin itself, and also makes use, for the south bank landing, of the scrubland on the north side of the Rugby Ground, just south of the south bank riverside path between The Hook and Lady Bay bridge.

We also included in our feasibility study a very detailed examination of Option A, i.e. putting a shared path on the east side of Lady Bay Bridge, as first proposed in the feasibility study commissioned by the City Council in 2005 from Whitbybird Consulting. Although we can certainly understand the benefits for some cyclists and pedestrians (e.g. those living relatively close to both ends of the bridge) of providing a shared path on the bridge, as opposed to cycling on the carriageway across the bridge (a particularly unpleasant, badly polluted and generally intimidating and unattractive environment), or the rather narrow present footpath (used unofficially by some cyclists) on the west side of the bridge, we could only see this as a second best solution. Even a shared path would still represent a relatively unpleasant and noisy alternative, even for cyclists, and still be very unpleasant for pedestrians.

We also think that, even with a shared path, there would be great problems in providing safer and more attractive routes on the main approaches, especially on the south side with the busy and complex junction where Radcliffe Road meets Trent Boulevard and the Lady Bay bridge access road. These continuing intimidating conditions would greatly limit the appeal of a shared path on the bridge, especially for less experienced and less confident cyclists, or people contemplating cycling. So far as we understand Nottinghamshire County Council has no plans to improve the layout of this busy and complex junction (for the benefit of cyclists and pedestrians) even if there is some more definite prospect of changes in the vicinity of the north side of Lady Bay Bridge in the Meadow Lane / Cattle Market area.

While we appreciate that some more experienced and confident cyclists would not object to using such a route (via Lady Bay bridge), as some do now, particularly if it provides a more direct link between their exact origin and destination, we are still sure that such a change would not be sufficient to attract most new and less confident cyclists who most need to be encouraged, particularly if the potential great health benefits of a new river crossing are to be achieved.

And in the wider context of the major new housing proposals due to be built in the next 15-20 years on the east side of West Bridgford, around Gamston, Bassingfield and Tollerton, a route via Lady Bay Bridge might anyway no longer be even the most direct route into Nottingham for many cyclists, particularly if the present routes south of the Trent to and from the south bank landing of a new bridge could be extended and improved, with more direct connections.

We also think that, even with some improvements to Lady Bay bridge, including a shared path, it would not produce the same dramatically positive public realm improvements (and consequent 'wow factor') as a new traffic-free bridge, judging by wider experience of new such bridges such as the Sustrans promoted Diglis Bridge over the River Severn on the south side of Worcester. From what we learned of the experience of planning and building this bridge, during a study visit in December 2015, it is clear that actual usage levels greatly exceeded those which had been forecast and this despite the fact that that bridge, though with a series of good connections to local housing and employment areas, as well as national, regional and local walking and cycling routes, does not have the advantage of providing a much better connection between 2 major country parks, as would this proposed bridge

between Colwick Park (and Colwick Woods) and Holme Pierrepont Country Park (and Water Sports Centre) south of the river.

A further disadvantage of the Lady Bay bridge option (Option A on this map) is the cost, and all the more marked in view of the updated bridge estimates which we obtained from the County Council in 2016.

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