

Beddington North TfL Major Scheme consultation (July 2017)

A response from Get Sutton Cycling (London Cycling Campaign in Sutton)

A summary of our response

- The proposals for a continuous cycle lane and footway on Beddington Lane are supported, but there are certain reservations in regard to implementation
- There is some disappointment that the opportunity has not been taken to produce an exemplary scheme

Key points

Our two key points relating to the proposed Beddington Lane cycle path are:

- Quality of construction
- Ease and priority for cycling at intersections

It is assumed that best practice will be used throughout, and the design decisions will follow the London Cycling Design Standards¹ and other ongoing, and emerging, research sources.

Overview

Get Sutton Cycling, representing the London Cycling Campaign in Sutton, is pleased to respond to the Beddington North TfL Major Scheme consultation (specifically in relation to the proposal to provide an improved cycle and footway connecting to key public transport stops as well as east-west links to Croydon and Hackbridge).

Consultation documents were accessed from the Beddington North Major Scheme page on the Sutton Consultation hub website (<https://sutton.citizenspace.com/environment/lbs-and-tfl-major-scheme-for-beddington-lane/>) in June 2017.

A stakeholder engagement workshop for the scheme, which took place on 4 July 2017, was also attended. This event provided a useful opportunity to hear more about the scheme, and to discuss the proposals in more detail with project managers from urbanism practice 'We Made That' and the London Borough of Sutton.

The proposal for a segregated, two-way (bi-directional), cycle path, separate from the carriageway to protect people cycling on extended sections of Beddington Lane, between the Beddington tram stop in the north and Beddington Village in the south, **is welcome**. The new path will be a substantial improvement over what currently exists, a rather dated, incomplete facility, which in places is poorly facilitated.

The proposed 'Section 106' east-west link path between Beddington and Hackbridge will be a useful addition. For this link to provide access all the way to Hackbridge, as suggested in the proposals, significant cycling infrastructure will be required on London Road in Hackbridge. As it stands, the S106 link will effectively only link Beddington Lane with Beddington Park.

¹ London Cycling Design Standards, TfL, November 2015. (Accessed July 2017 from TfL's 'Streets toolkit' <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/publications-and-reports/streets-toolkit>).

Key point 1: Quality of construction and maintenance

The surface condition of any cycle-path, and the rolling resistance it provides, is a key quality element. The comfort that the surface provides is a major determinant on use, and therefore the cycle-way needs to be constructed to a very high standard with the surface providing a rolling resistance that is at least as good as, if not better than, that of the adjacent carriageway. This would ensure a genuine facility for cycling, rather than a glorified footway.

Subsequent maintenance of the cycle-path is paramount, and it would be expected that Sutton Council (backed by TfL) would provide clear details of a maintenance regime now, well ahead of any construction work.

It was noted at the Stakeholder Event held on 4 July 2017, that Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) is to be used in the construction of the Beddington Lane path (to include white stone to improve appearance), and that this will be machine laid.

It is understood that the intention, at the moment, is not to construct the new east-west link between Beddington Lane and Beddington Park to the same standard as the path proposed for Beddington Lane. The reason given for this is that the area is of high archaeological interest, and that digging to any depth could disturb artifacts. Perhaps consideration could be given to using the construction of the path (to a high standard) as an opportunity to carry out archaeological research, and that the costs associated with this be included in the S106 remit.

Key point 2: Ease and priority for cycling at intersections

A challenge of cycle path design is ensuring safety at intersecting streets and driveways. Motorists' expectation of conflicting bicycle traffic can be enhanced by marking bicycle crossings through intersections². The best designs engender a sense of comfort when cycling.

Where the proposed Beddington Lane cycle path crosses minor intersections, the path needs to be continuous and priority given to users of the cycle path rather than to traffic crossing the path.

Path alignment is paramount at the major intersections on Beddington Lane (notably Marlowe Way), with the sighting provided as close to the desire-line as possible. The recently constructed cycle facility on a northern section of Beddington Lane, west-side, opposite Coomber Way at the entrance to the Viridor waste management and recovery plant, does not provide for a comfortable cycling experience because the cycle path deflects significantly from the alignment of the carriageway.

At the major intersection at Marlowe Way by Asda, the current proposal is not supported as it currently stands. Here, the plans show the path hugging the carriageway as it diverts towards the Marlowe Way parallel crossing. The geometry of this design would require cyclists to make a sharp ninety-degree manoeuvre when accessing the crossing, and a second such manoeuvre when egressing from the crossing.

An improvement would be for the cycle-path to be constructed in such a way as to be more directly aligned with the new crossing. It is appreciated that such a design would require a greater take on land, but this option needs to be explored and the case made.

It is worth noting that, in addition to providing access to the store's car park, Marlowe Way is also used as a link between Beddington Lane, Beddington Farm Road and Purley Way (even though the road is indicated as a no-through road). Consequently, traffic levels here are high, and this could explain why it is proposed to replace the existing signals with a mini-roundabout. (See 'Other comments and observations', item 7, for more on this).

² *City Cycling*, edited by John Pucher, Ralph Buehler; The MIT Press (2012)

Ideally, traffic signals will be provided for those on foot and bicycle at the Marlowe Way crossing. Traffic signals that default to green as people approached the crossing by bicycle, as have been commonplace in the Netherlands for many years, would greatly enhance the user experience here too.

At the northern and southern extremities of the cycle-path (Beddington Tramlink stop and Beddington Village), suitable interfaces between the cycle-path and the carriageway (and, or, crossings and associated paths) are required.

The project team at the stakeholder engagement event accepted the issue of side road and intersection treatment, and would look again at the design of the cycle-path alignment opposite Coomber Way and at Marlowe Way. The recently constructed cycle path opposite Coomber Way will be rebuilt. There was genuine interest in the idea of traffic signals that defaulted to green when cyclists approached.

Other comments and observations

1. Despite the reservations and concerns discussed, the initial designs for the proposed two-way cycle path indicate a vast improvement over the existing provision.

From the stakeholder engagement event on 4 July, it is understood that the path will, for most of its length, be five metres wide. Three metres are to be allocated to cycling, and two allocated as a footway, with a line delineating the two. In a few places, the width of the path will narrow to 4.5 or 4 metres due to the location of mature trees. There will be a short section of shared-use just to the north of the proposed signalised parallel crossing by Therapia Lane (due to constraints on space - notably an electricity sub-station, but also properties on the east side (where there is future potential through the possibility of the council being able to obtain some of the adjacent land at a later date). Another challenging section for obtaining the full five-metre width will be at the southern end just north of Beddington Village where the pavement was widened a few years ago for shared-use. Successful delivery will depend on the co-operation of landowners.

2. Given the existing relatively low footfall on the northern sections of Beddington Lane, and the proposed overall width of the path, conflicts between those walking and cycling are likely to be minimal. On the short shared-use sections, cyclists will need to give way to pedestrians. At bus-stop locations, very clear demarcation between footway, bus stop and cycleway will be required.
3. It is very good to know that a limit is to be set on the weight of vehicles using Beddington Lane (south of Coomber Way) through to Croydon Lane, with a maximum speed limit of 20mph enforced through the village too. Also, the future development of the Wandle Valley Regional Park in the immediate area is an exciting prospect.
4. There are some shortcomings elsewhere on Beddington Lane of course. Beddington Lane through Beddington Village itself will remain a missing link for cycling. It is noted that changes to footway parking are being considered. A more holistic approach is required in the management of parking (both for residents and visitors), in line with the spirit of the borough's emerging Parking Strategy. Otherwise the issues will not go away, and the problems will just be parked (excuse the pun).
5. South of the village, nothing appears to be proposed for cycling on Hilliers Lane (a challenge). It is also not clear how, or if, the existing east-west London Cycle Network alignment (Guy Road and Bridle Path) will feature in the overall scheme either. (The limitations to access, provided by Wandle Bank, are recognised³).
6. Just to the north side of the village, there is significant potential for a major upgrade to the existing path that links Beddington Lane with Richmond Road. An exemplary scheme would provide a fully inclusive, barrier-free, well-connected, cycle path complete with an adjacent footway – essentially a road free of vehicular

³ A possible solution was discussed in *A cycle tour of Beddington Village* (<https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/02/18/a-cycle-tour-of-beddington-village/>) (Get Sutton Cycling | February 2016)

traffic. Implementation of such a design could help alleviate concerns that are often raised when the suggestion is made to replace barriers with bollards.

7. The Asda Wallington store is a prime destination for vehicular traffic using Beddington Lane, but the access road to the store, Marlowe Way (part of which we understand is privately owned), is also used as a link between Beddington Lane, Beddington Farm Road and Purley Way (even though the road is indicated as a no-through road). As a result, Beddington Lane can be expected to carry a much higher volume of traffic than that generated by the store alone (and consequently this increases the pressure on the Asda junction)). An intervention that could potentially improve the environment around Beddington North significantly, provide greatly improved reliability for buses, and improve ease of travel and safety for all road users, including for goods vehicles, would be the reconfiguration of Marlowe Way to prevent all but essential through-vehicular traffic. It is noted that the current proposals fail to provide provision for cycling anywhere within the Asda complex, or beyond towards Purley Way.
8. Further to the north, enhancements of the cycling experience along Therapia Lane and Endeavour Way to Coomber Way and towards Croydon would be expected from this project. It is good to see that upgrades to the existing cycle route here are proposed as part of the project.

The section of Beddington Lane to the north of the Beddington Lane Tramlink stop is situated within the London Borough of Merton. At the stakeholder engagement event there was mention that this authority had indicated interest in the possibility of extending the cycle lane and footway towards Croydon Road (A236). This would be welcome, but it would also be expected that the construction would be to a very high standard (unlike the shared-use, and substandard, path the London Borough of Merton commissioned for Croydon Road by Mitcham Common two years ago).

And finally...

It is perhaps worth noting that cycling infrastructure for Beddington Lane would ideally, and preferably, consist of two, with-flow cycle paths, one on each side of the carriageway, that were separate from the footway. Over a substantial part of its length, Beddington Lane runs alongside land that is either not built on, or which comprises of vast tracts of tarmac and parking lots. Consequentially, it would appear that there is the potential to build from the ground up, and increase the overall alignment width of Beddington Lane to provide the necessary safe and inviting infrastructure for all modes of transport. This would be our definition of an exemplary scheme. So, although the project for Beddington Lane is described as a major scheme, it could be argued that it is not major enough.

Nevertheless, we are where we are with this project, and there is no doubt that, subject to due consideration being given to the construction quality and treatment of the intersections, the new path on Beddington Lane could be a major boost to walking and cycling in this part of the borough. Along with the other proposed initiatives for the area to help reduce the dominance of traffic, including bus stop improvements, public realm improvements, improvements to public transport, and new crossings, Beddington Lane will have more of the attributes associated with a Healthy Street⁴. That has to be a good thing.

It is hoped that the Beddington North Major Scheme will act as a catalyst for the council, working with its partners, to commit towards the deliver of a fit-for-purpose cycle network that will to enable safe and inviting cycling across Sutton. The emerging Healthy Streets Approach (complete with its compelling evidence) needs to be embraced, and the case made, so that all of our residents can live more active, healthy lives.

We wish all those involved with taking this project forward every success. Let the bar be set high, and best practice be used, to ensure that the project is recognised for its contribution to the enhancement of the built environment and act as an example for others to follow.

Charles Martin, with contributions from Get Sutton Cycling supporters, 14 July 2017

⁴ *Healthy Streets for London: prioritising walking, cycling and public transport to create a healthy city*, Mayor of London and TfL, February 2017