

Solihull MBS Cycling and Walking Strategy

Consultation Response of Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council

Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council wishes to submit its thoughts on SMBC's draft Cycling and Walking Strategy. At the outset we should say that we entirely support the general direction and content of the Strategy and are keen to see cycling and footway routes improved throughout the Borough.

The Catherine de Barnes Residents Association and Hampton Society have asked to be associated with this response.

The Parish of Hampton-in-Arden sits across the route from the town centre through Catherine-de-Barnes to the Clock Roundabout on the A45 and the route from Catherine de Barnes to Meriden along the B4102. Additionally, we have an interest in the route from Hampton to Knowle along Eastcote Lane.

Solihull to Catherine de Barnes (B4102 Hampton Lane).

This route is currently part of your Priority Cycling Corridor E(c) route, which connects Solihull Town Centre via Catherine-de-Barnes to the Clock Roundabout on the A45. We entirely support the priority given to this.

Hampton Lane is a reasonably wide single lane carriageway corridor. Cyclists who chose not to use the road must currently share a fairly narrow footpath with pedestrians. We agree that safety would be enhanced by the widening of the existing footpath and verge to create a high-quality shared use route, as a dedicated cycle lane would have to take out highway space or impinge on the front gardens of properties.

The route becomes problematical once it reaches Catherine de Barnes village centre. In particular there is a major challenge at the Canal Bridge. There is a separate footpath bridge adjacent to the canal bridge on Hampton Lane but any widening or improvement to this would be a major undertaking. The section through the village and over the bridge is too restricted in width for separate cycle lanes and therefore it will have to be classified as shared used. However, the effect will be to generally slow traffic, but this is consistent with our draft traffic calming proposals which are currently in preparation (currently awaiting residents' comments).

Planning options concerning the Oak Farm site at the Friday Lane/Catherine de Barnes roundabout raise important issues around pedestrian and cycle access. It seems likely that either a care home complex or housing will be built here. This strategy needs to align with those considerations to ensure that whatever the decisions reached on this site are, they support the optimisation of the cycling and pedestrian strategy.

Catherine de Barnes to the A45 (Catherine de Barnes Lane).

Heading out of Solihull the route for Cyclists to the A45 cuts off the corner by travelling along Bickenhill Lane to join Catherine de Barnes Lane later. This route is not possible when cycling in a Southerly direction. However, this part of the Plan needs to be aligned with the proposals from Highways England relating to the M42 Relief Road. This project will create a new roundabout in this vicinity and substantially realign the whole of Catherine de Barnes Lane. It is important for SMBC to ensure there is no loss of cycle pathway incurred in this development. No strategy makes sense therefore without reference to this major piece of civil engineering.

Catherine de Barnes to Hampton (B4102 Solihull Road).

All of the SMBC Strategy seems to focus on getting cyclists moving on a north south axis. In our view it omits the importance of cycle and pedestrian traffic moving from west to east. Although some of the maps suggest a value is placed on the route from Catherine de Barnes through Hampton to the Kenilworth Road (A452) this is not reflected at all in the text. It is a major safety and community infrastructure issue for us, and we are in discussion with other parts of the Council and with Highways England and Skanska (contractors for the M42 Relief Road) over creating a dedicated cycle/footway through here. There is no footpath of any description between the Friday Lane Roundabout and Hampton, and it experiences heavy and fast through traffic. It is therefore very hazardous for cyclists and virtually impossible to tackle as a pedestrian, despite it connecting the two main residential areas of our parish and being only around two kilometres in distance.

Where the new M42 Relief Road crosses the Solihull Road a small length of footpath/cycle way (around 0.5km) will be included as part of the project. We (and SMBC) are pressing for the release of Community Funds to extend the cycle path in both directions to Hampton and Catherine de Barnes (an additional 1.5km). It would severely weaken our arguments if the route appeared to have no value or priority within this Strategic Plan.

The Strategy seems to focus excessively on pedestrian and cycle traffic for work/business purposes and underplays the importance of leisure and recreational exercise. However, encouraging people to take exercise both on foot and bike is just as important. Anyone heading out of Solihull through Hampton to Meriden, Berkswell, Balsall Common and so on will benefit from a safe route through the Parish, along the B4102 from the town centre to Meriden, and we believe this should also be identified as a Priority Route.

Hampton to Knowle via Eastcote Lane.

The Strategy appears to identify the route from Hampton to Knowle as a Secondary Priority, although not with much conviction or detail. We would like to see greater attention given to advancing the arguments here, in particular to create a footpath between Solihull Road and the new Care Home at Eastcote, where no pedestrian route currently exists at all.