

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	21 st November 2024 7 pm	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Mayor and Chair of Green Working Group, with Congleton Sustainable Travel, Congleton Climate Action		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	13 Congleton Sustainable Travel		
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	<p>Congleton is a town divided by a simple river and a road. For residents of the new housing estates to the north of town, the River Dane and Mountbatten Way/ Clayton Bypass form two strong physical barriers to non-car-users wanting to negotiate their way safely into and through Congleton. Fortunately, Congleton has existing, overlooked assets which would, with a little retrofitting, overcome these obstacles.</p> <p>Cheshire East’s own North Congleton Masterplan (October 2015), envisaged a traffic-free East-West Greenway connecting all the new housing developments proposed within the Link Road with each other.</p> <p>Developers are being asked to fund and build the East-West Greenway with varying degrees of success. However, there is little of the same joined-up cycle infrastructure to bring these new residents into the town centre.</p> <p>Providing direct, traffic-free routes is crucial to encouraging people to travel sustainably, leave their cars at home and alleviate the severe traffic problems experienced in Congleton. As such, this proposal has two aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Link together 5 disconnected cycle paths to create a legible, linear pathway for cyclists and pedestrians into the heart of Congleton. 2) Overcome the physical barriers to the take-up and disjointed accessibility of walking and cycling within the town of Congleton. 		
THIS PROPOSAL	<p>The scheme intends to implement only minor interventions which together, take a comprehensive, strategic area-based approach to fulfil the above aims.</p> <p>Problem 1: Link Clayton bypass and Barn Road cycle paths</p> <p>Solution 1: Barn Road grass verge hardening and new refuge</p> <p>This would entail replacing 145 metres of the existing grass verge with a hard surface to widen the footway to shared footpath / cycleway width. Clearly this measurement excludes the vehicular accesses / egresses to business premises which would remain as uncontrolled crossings.</p> <p>By asphaltting the verge along the south side of Barn Road from the Shell garage to the first bend adjacent to Halfords autocare garage, then several metres on the north side,</p>		

this would link together two existing cycle paths which already run alongside Clayton bypass to the south and Barn Road to the north.

Placement of a refuge centrally within the first bend (at the road's widest point) would allow maximum sight-lines to aid crossing at this point. In addition, decreasing the very wide one-way Shell garage/McDonalds entrance to the necessary single vehicle width would greatly improve pedestrian safety against vehicles leaving the roundabout.

Zooming out for a broader view, we see that this small "missing link" would form a complete active travel route between West Road/West Heath and the Business & Retail Park and the new housing development inside the link road.

From this small step, residents of Congleton's growth areas would have safe, attractive routes to the existing facilities in and around the traditional town centre without using a car. Without this key linkage along Barn Road, then the amount of vehicular traffic emanating from the Congleton North Urban Extension will soon surpass the amount of traffic that the Link Road is aimed at reducing.

The Barn Road cycle link is also critical to prevent the town from being divided in two.

Problem 2: Crossing the A34 trunk road at the optimum / most efficient location

Solution 2: Clayton Bypass refuge

At the northern end of Dane Street, a refuge could be placed centrally on Clayton bypass sitting just to the west of the junction to provide a 2-stage crossing of this busy road. The bigger picture indicates that crossing improvements over this busy trunk road would facilitate safer walking and cycling from all parts of town. A refuge in this location would enable a complete route between the town centre and the Barn Road retail, businesses and growing housing estates (alongside Barn Road verge hardening above).

Problem 3: Linking the town centre and its river.

Solution 3: Cycle route from the town centre, past Congleton Market Quarter to the riverside

Currently, cycle routes between the north and south of Mountbatten Way follow Sustrans route NCN573 along Market Street past the bus station. Whilst no accidents with cyclists (or indeed any road users) have been reported here, there are perceived safety issues with this route given how busy and narrow Market Street is, which could be off-putting to potential cyclists.

An alternative takes a less trafficked route which can be signposted via the level access from Victoria Street, taking the alleyway opposite Specsavers in the pedestrianised area to Princess Street, past the Market Quarter to Stonehouse Green and Brookside Road (the service road parallel with Mountbatten Way). The pavement here could become shared-use with a short length of minor verge hardening to widen the path around to Mill Street (low budget), or the grass embankment could provide an access track from Brookside Road to the pavement. Mill Street has a suitable existing refuge to allow safe crossing to reach Rope Walk and the existing riverside path to the west, leading to Dane St. All roads named here are adopted highways.

The opening of this route, in conjunction with the previous two interventions in this report, would allow uninterrupted journeys between the town centre and the Barn Road retail, businesses and growing housing estates inside the new link road.

Problem 4: Crossing Mountbatten Way

Solution 4: Zebra crossing at Dane Bridge roundabout

Investigate a zebra/light-controlled crossing on the town side of the Rood Hill bridge. This has been requested before and seemingly, the available visibility for approaching vehicles prevented a crossing from coming to fruition. This is exactly what makes this location unsafe for pedestrians currently crossing at this point. A compromise needs to be found around this impasse to improve the hostility of this location for active travel.

This would complete a green active travel artery along Congleton's riverside spine allowing safe cycle and pedestrian passage east to west, work to home, house to shops and most importantly providing for and complementing the Safe Routes to School scheme.

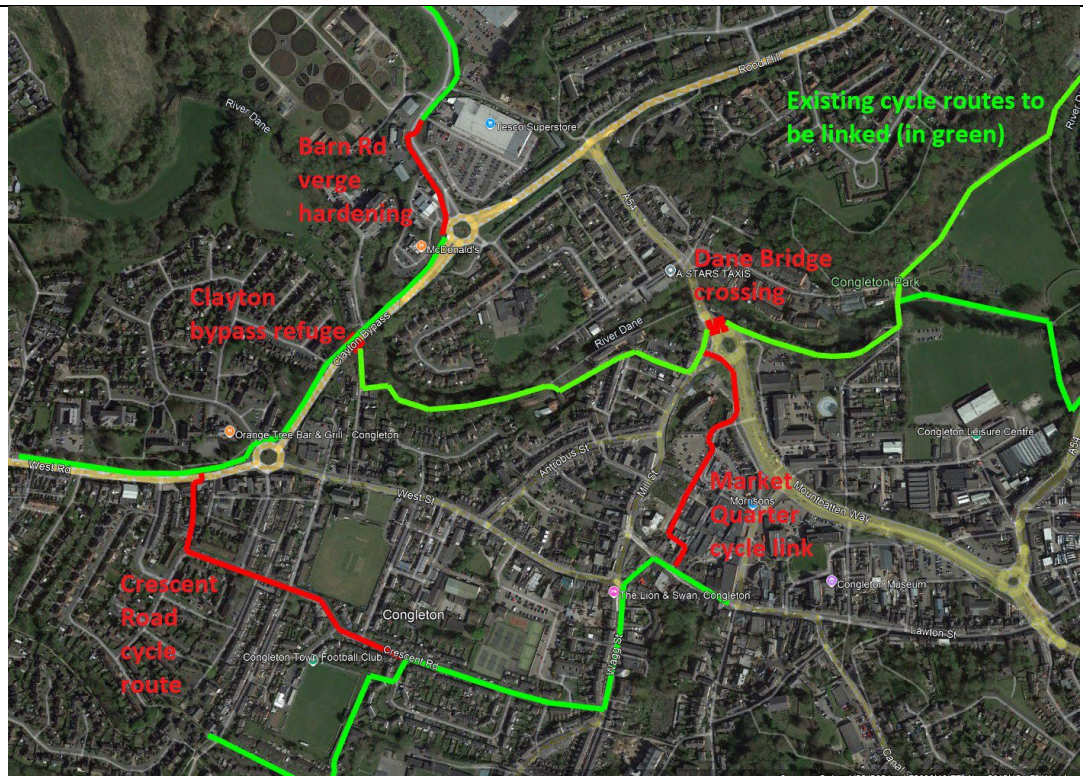
A safe crossing at this location would allow a safe and direct cycle route for the residents of Buglawton and Bromley Farm to reach the town centre and the Barn Road retail, businesses and growing housing estates inside the new link road, as well as the park.

Problem 5: Unsuitability and hostility of West Street for cyclists

Solution 5: Signed cycle route to the town centre via Cycle Store, Garden Street and Crescent Road

A signposted route from the pedestrian crossing between The Orange Tree and the Cycle Store via Crescent Road to the town centre would provide a safe and quiet cycle route between West Heath and the town centre. It would also divert cyclists who currently use the pavement along West Street, creating a safer environment for all.

The map shows all these improvements:



Conclusion

Small improvements could create definitive shared-use routes across town to benefit equal access (mobility aids, pushchairs, people on foot or cycles). In combination, these relatively minor interventions would allow people to travel from West Heath, Barn Road Retail & Business Park and the new developments within the new Link Road to the town centre and onwards to Buglawton and the Railway Station entirely along the riverside and linked quiet roads and pathways without needing to travel alongside busy road traffic.

Environmental Considerations	Promoting cycling and walking is a key part of the green agenda and will help to lower the carbon footprint, noise and pollution generated by people travelling around our town centre.
Equality Considerations	Cycling and walking are accessible to many people who do not or cannot drive a car. This includes the old, the young, the disabled and those on a low income. To make cycle routes more accessible and joined-up will improve accessibility for all.
Financial Considerations	Not known. The government has promised investment in cycling routes as part of its active travel strategy. The responsibility for the cycle routes lies with Cheshire East Council.
PROPOSAL	That CTC supports the provision of these improvements to ‘join up’ Congleton’s town centre cycle and pedestrian routes, write to Cheshire East Council to – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the proposed work and 2. Request a meeting with CEC to discuss it, including timetable and funding