

## **Abergavenny Cycle Group**

### **Response to Consultation on Integrated Network Map for Abergavenny**

**January 2018**

Abergavenny Cycle Group is a group of volunteers who have been working since 1995 for safe cycling in the Abergavenny area. Registered Charity, no. 1070816. Abergavenny Cycle Group is open to all local people.

This response contains some general comments about measures to improve active travel routes in the town, such as reducing speed limits, tackling rat-running and cycle contraflows on one-way streets. There follows a detailed response to each of the routes in the INM and some routes that we believe should be added to the INM. We then list our priority improvements.

#### **General comments**

Abergavenny is characterised by very low rates of transport cycling but considerable ‘suppressed demand’. Both cycling and walking could contribute to reduction in congestion, shorter journey times, cheaper transport and more active, healthier living.

Abergavenny is a small market town, it is not a vast urban metropolis. It should not be a scary place to ride a bike. Yet the volume and speed of traffic and the lack of protected cycle infrastructure on main roads, the number of one-way streets and the reduction of carriageway space as a result of on-street car parking all combine to make cycling an unpalatable choice for the majority of people who might consider riding a bike as an alternative to driving for journeys in the town.

We believe every road in Abergavenny (except A465) is potentially useful for cycling. Main roads are, almost by definition, the most direct and least hilly route from A to B. Measures to make main roads in towns safer for all users (motorists, cyclists, pedestrians) will have significant benefits for active travel journeys. As the design guidance of the Active Travel Act states:

*“While main roads are often the most direct, coherent network available to cyclists, they are the places where fear of and intimidation by motor vehicles is at its greatest. Consequently, in many areas the provision of adequately safe, attractive and comfortable facilities along these roads is crucial to encouraging active travel. These routes can be supplemented by more indirect routes along minor roads or paths.” (section 4.9.3)*

The single most powerful intervention to improve active travel in Abergavenny is **a 20mph speed limit on all roads in the town, including all main roads**. Signs and enforcement can go some of the way, but design interventions such as narrowing carriageway widths and widening footways, introducing cycle-permeable chicanes, planting trees and reducing sightlines can all contribute to reducing traffic speeds and thus cutting road danger at source.

Some residential streets are hostile to cycling due to the volume of **rat-running**. Measures to discourage rat-running not only enhances the quality of a street as a place to live, but increases its attractiveness for active travel journeys. Modal filters (technical term for bollards) can transform a residential street cheaply and immediately.

One way streets were introduced to the Abergavenny to discourage motor traffic from the town centre. But they are a significant impediment to cycling by forcing cyclists onto more hostile distributor roads. Cycle contraflows on one-way streets are the answer. Among these problem one-way streets are Lion Street, Upper Cross Street, Frogmore Street, Lower Castle Street, Market Street, Commercial Street and Union Road West.

New developments (residential and commercial) must be 'active travel proofed' at the earliest possible pre-planning stage. It must be made clear to prospective developers that no planning applications will be approved without the provision of high quality active travel routes.

### **Detailed comments on the draft INM routes:**

#### MCC-A1

We are pleased to see this on the to-do list. Without cycle safety improvements to the A4143 and, in particular, the roundabout by Waitroise, the risk is that the new cycling/walking bridge leads to no increase in cycling, as the roundabout is more intimidating than the existing bridge itself.

We propose this roundabout either be converted into a traffic-light controlled junction or a cycling and walking friendly roundabout (Dutch style), with priority for cycles. The most dangerous part of the current roundabout is where traffic is exiting the A465 at speed, and coming around the corner towards the bridge.

Another option is to create new crossing point of the A4143 between the bridge and the roundabout to connect with the cycle route south to The Cutting.

At the northern end of MCC-A1 the route should continue on north all the way to the roundabout junction with A40. It is an important link within the town and there are no

alternatives anywhere near as direct. It is a wide road so there is plenty of space to make improvements. At times motor traffic is fast and intimidating. We would propose a lower speed limit (20mph), narrowing of the carriageway and segregated or soft-segregated cycle lane. If the footways were widened this could be a shared use footway/cycleway, though it should have priority at junctions with side roads.

Though it looks on the map as if MCC-A1 connects with Union Road West/East and onwards with MCC-A25, this is an illusion. The connection is via a 22-step flight of steps, which is not compatible with a high quality and fully accessible cycling route.

#### MCC-A2

We agree. Nevill Street (part of MCC-A2) is shown green, though cycling is prohibited – as it is in High Street and other streets shown in blue. Confusingly this is indicated on the map as a pedestrian route, and on the table of schemes its indicated as a pedestrian route in the “Use” column but the “Proposal” column relates to cycling. If MCC plans to amend the traffic order in these streets to be the same as Frogmore Street they this route should be shown green on the map. Market Street and Cross Street should be shown in green, not blue, as they are key routes in the town that follow obvious desire lines.

#### MCC-A3

A new link between Llanfoist and the Railway Station is a very good idea. Needs to be continuous all the way to the railway station via Station Road (i.e. not via a link to MCC-A6). We acknowledge that this is aspirational due to land ownership issues but it has great potential. Needs to be tarmac or, at least, very good clean gravel, not mud as at present in many places.

The present gates are just about usable for normal cycles but are difficult or impossible for cargo bikes, trikes, handcycles or cycles with trailers. The gates could be improved to reduce journey times.

#### MCC-A4

We agree. The cycle/footway from Castle Street west towards Mill Street needs upgrading. This is a potentially very powerful route within the town centre, and much needed as Upper Cross Street is one-way so it's not possible to cycle down it. The off-road cycle/walking route from Castle Street to Mill Street needs a better surface. Though the gradient is steep in places, this has the potential to be a very useful route, and is already part of the National Cycle Network. We regard this as a high priority and a quick win.

Furthermore, the junction of Castle Street and Lower Castle Street is a serious

accident / nearmiss blackspot for cycles heading into (and out of) the castle. One of the members of our group is an MCC employee who works at the Museum. She has experienced several near misses at this junction on her ride to work, as cars coming up Lower Castle Street do not expect to meet cyclists going into the castle. There is a very simple solution: a stop / give way line for motors at the top of Lower Castle Street, and a sign indicating drivers are entering a two-way street and cycles are coming from the right.

#### MCC-A5

This is a useful connecting route but not a high priority as it's already fairly quiet and usable - the new(ish) bollards on the footway are most welcome - thanks!

#### MCC-A6

We agree. Is there a need for signage too, as this route is little known?

#### MCC-A7

This route is basically OK, but signage could be improved. There is sometimes conflict with pedestrians at the narrow 'cyclists dismount' section.

#### MCC-A8

The problem with this route is the A40 crossing. Many cyclists just use the pedestrian signalled crossing, which is not convenient and there are safety issues, depending on the direction. This junction will change fundamentally with the part-pedestrianisation of Frogmore Street as traffic flows on Frogmore Street will be just a fraction of current flows. Old Hereford Road itself rather steep so the desire line for many is more likely to be route A19. However, this is the main route out of town to the north and part of the National Cycle Network. A lot of the traffic using the southern end of Pen y Pound is doing the rat-run via Park Crescent to avoid the A40. Reducing rat-running will reduce the hostility of this road.

#### MCC-A9

This is rather narrow for a shared use path, and poorly lit. We would be concerned about personal safety issues? There are also steps. This route has been looked at before but we believe the costs of an upgrade are high and could be deployed elsewhere. We do not see this as a priority cycling route, and would prefer attention be paid to improving cycle provision on the A40 in this area of the town, and using Stanhope Street and Avenue Road as a quiet roads alternative (including a cycle contraflow on Stanhope Street).

#### MCC-A11

Cars can be a bit rather fast on this road. A 20mph speed limit is required. The roads is wide and narrowing the carriageway would reduce speeds. There are sections of this road frequently used by pedestrians, despite no footways at all.

#### MCC-A12

This is a good walking route and a potentially good cycling route, however it is rather narrow and the metal barriers are placed too close for many cycles, especially bikes with trailers, cargo bikes, trikes and hand-cycles. Widening the tarmac strip and removing/replacing the cycle-unfriendly barriers would help.

#### MCC-A14

This is a potentially very useful route. There is a barrier chicane on one footpath section here that stops use by cycle trailers, cargo bikes, trikes and hand cycles etc and overgrown hedges. There is a lack of signage, and dropped kerbs for cycles. We believe it is a high priority to get a good safe route between the town centre and Mardy, a relatively deprived area where not everyone has access to car. This route is popular with children going to and from schools.

#### MCC-A15

We agree. Links in this area that avoid the Hereford Road will be very useful. It would be good to link this route to A19 via St Andrew's Crescent.

This green (walking and cycling) route presumably serves Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni (though the school is planned to be moved to the Deri View Site in 2021), village hall and playing field. The section between Poplars Road and Midway Lane appears to follow private driveways, but there could be an opportunity through the grounds of Hollycroft if this is proposed for development (the owner died last year). The section between Midway Lane and Gwent Road is a footpath, questioning the green status of this route.

#### MCC-A16

This should be a cycling/waking route, at the very least at the eastern end. It is the only direct route into the town centre for all the residents on the western edge of town. There is a need for more pedestrian crossing points on the Brecon Road.

#### MCC-A17

This route needs a good surface and to follow the obvious desire lines, rather than weaving a convoluted way through the car park. Ideally tarmac but certainly no mud and giant puddles. Castle Meadows sometimes floods in winter so there will need to be good alternative routes for those times.

The route indicated on the INM is through Linda Vista Gardens. This is a very steep gradient for a cycle route. It may be worth considering a route on a shallower gradient via the Merthyr Road, including measures to improve this road for cycling - speed reductions etc.

There are major new housing developments coming to this site (the former police station and magistrates court) so it will be important to serve the new residents with good active travel options. We are happy to help advise further on the alignment selection for this important route.

#### MCC-A18

The new bridge is a great idea, but it will only be useful if the routes to and from the bridge are of a high quality, in terms of directness, safety and attractiveness.

#### MCC-A19

It is a top priority of our group to get a safe, direct, attractive and visible route between the new Morrisons supermarket, Bailey Park and Mardy, a relatively deprived area where not everyone has access to car. The links from this route to King Henry VIII school could be improved, e.g. via between MCC-A19 and MCC-A8 via Bishops Crescent and/or Rholben Way and footpaths to Old Hereford Road.

Going north on this route, there is a steep hill (Hillcrest Avenue) and so anyone heading to the north/east of the town, will likely want to avoid it and consider taking Park Crescent or Park Avenue in an easterly direction and either taking the Hereford Road north.

#### MCC-A20

This is indicated as a pedestrian route but there is no way round the fact that the Hereford Road clear desire line for cycles as it is straight and avoids the worst of the hills that rise to the east of the road. It is currently a busy road for motor traffic and narrow in places. We would see the whole road as part of the INM for cycling, but in particular the northern section (north of the junction with Croesonon Road / MCC-A24). In this section there is sufficient width to provide safe, segregated or soft-segregated cycle infrastructure on the road. As there is new deveopment in the north of the town, and more coming in future

years (e.g. at the Deri Farm site), this link is important to the future active travel needs of the town.

#### MCC-A21

Likewise for MCC-A20 above, this should be a cycling/walking route as it's the most direct route into the town centre from the south and south-east end of the town including the railway station.

The junction between Upper Cross Street and the A40 (outside the Angel Hotel) is in urgent need of improvement to enable safer use pedestrians, and cyclists. This is probably the most dangerous junction in Abergavenny for pedestrians and should be a priority for active travel improvements. For cyclists, the most dangerous route is when coming southbound on the A40 and turning right or going 'straight on' up Lower Castle Street.

Lower Castle Street is not pedestrian friendly, yet is an important walking route in the town. The footways are very narrow. It needs a single surface, a speed table and/or a width restriction at the entrance (and possibly occasional bollards to contain traffic).

#### MCC-A23

This route has possibilities, especially as King Street is soon to become two-way. Park Crescent used as a cut through to avoid the A40 and there is lots of traffic, some of going too fast. This route is part of National Cycle Route 42 but is rather indirect, and poorly signed. The surface is poor in parts. Many cyclists would likely prefer to take Route MCC-A8 down Frogmore Street and onto Pen-y-Pound. The crossing point of the A40 is not designed for easy use by cycles.

#### MCC-A24

A useful link and not too bad in its current state.

#### MCC-A25

This is a useful short connecting route to the A40 but the problem is that Commercial Street is one-way (southbound only) at its very northern end. This route is inaccessible from MCC-A1 because of the flight of 22 steps connecting them (the roads are at very different levels). We would sooner see cycle improvements to the A4143 as it's more direct and more useful.

## **Gilwern routes:**

### MCC-G1

The Surface poor in parts but maintained irregularly by canal trust. Very steep access to road at eastern end, possibly too steep for some people to even push their bikes up?

### MCC-G2

A tarmac path through park. OK for pedestrians. Too narrow for shared use?

### MCC-G3

Along the main road but all 30 mph zone with good footpaths and some pedestrian crossings. We recommend a 20mph limit or a wide shared use path that meets the design standards of the Active Travel Act and has priority over side roads.

### MCC-G4

This route includes New School Lane, which is one-way (southbound). This route serves Gilwern Primary School, but the alternative route along Common Road avoids the one way stretch. A shared use path should be wide enough to meets the design standards of the Active Travel Act and should have priority over side roads.

### MCC-G5

This is a very important route as it links two new housing estates with the school and yet has no footway for much of its length and is narrow with fast cars using Cae Meldon and Ty Mawr Road as a rat run. This is a known issue that should have been addressed when planning permission was granted to the housing estates. At present MCC-G5 is unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. (Note neither housing estates appear on the INM). A shared use path should be wide enough to meets the design standards of the Active Travel Act and should have priority over side roads. If no shared use path is possible, then speed reduction, cycle permeable chicanes and other measures to stop rat running are recommended.



## **Cycling routes missing from INM:**

1. Merthyr Road from A40 to A4143 - this is a key linking road, and no matter whether there are good links across Castle Meadow, this will always be faster and more direct, therefore a popular choice for cyclists travelling between Llanfoist and Abergavenny town centre. Also, when Castle Meadows floods, there will need to have an alternative route. It should be part of the INM.

2. A link between MCC-A1 and MCC-A8. At present the map shows no link (MCC-A25 is no good as (a) it's at a completely different level, requiring access via a flight of 22 steps - not suitable or attractive for most cyclists and (b) Commercial Street at the northern end of MCC-A25 is one-way).

3. East-west links from MCC-A11 to MCC-A19. These are already there, on residential streets, but depend on suitable crossing points on Hereford Road. Oxford Road - Park Avenue is one possibility. There are elevation differences on the western side of MCC-A11 that need careful consideration.

## **Priorities**

All measures to improve active travel in the town are welcome. However we realise that not everything can be done at once. These are our priority routes for improvement:

MCC-A18. New walking/cycling bridge to Llanfoist. We support the idea of a new bridge as it will provide a safer and more pleasant (though possibly slower and less direct) alternative cycling route between Abergavenny and Llanfoist.

Various. Phase 3 of the town centre public realm works already underway. This includes a west-bound cycle contraflow Lion Street and improved cycling access to northern end of a part-pedestrianised Frogmore Street from the A40. We would like to see traffic orders amended to allow cycling on Nevill Street (part of MCC-A2) and High Street.

MCC-A1. Approaches to the Llanfoist bridge(s), especially on the Llanfoist side. The roundabout outside Waitrose is more hazardous and hostile for cycling than the present bridge over the Usk. Building the new bridge must be accompanied by measures to provide safe, attractive and direct onward journeys through this junction and into Llanfoist. We believe a new traffic-light controlled junction with cycle phases is the best solution. Beyond the roundabout, the B4246 through Llanfoist is excessively wide and fast. There is scope for narrowing the carriageway and providing wider footways and / or dedicated cycle infrastructure here.

MCC-A19. The spine route from Mardy to the town centre should be a safe, accessible, direct, well-defined and continuous route.

MCC-A3. A new and enhanced riverside route from Llanfoist bridge to the railway station. With nothing more than resurfacing, a high quality route is possible as far as Mill Close (and onwards to the station via Belmont Road, Belmont Close and an alleyway linking to Station Road). A better route would emerge onto the A40 directly opposite Station Road, but this may require a small amount of land acquisition. In either case, a new crossing point on the A40 would be required. A traffic light controlled junction at Station Road / A40 would benefit traffic flow to and from the station, and reduce speeding on the A40 which is a recognised problem by Community Speed Watch. The present cycle route to the railway station via Holywell Close is somewhat circuitous, especially for journeys to and from Llanfoist.

MCC-A4. Castle Street to Mill Street link upgrade (MCC-A5). This is a very quick win. The route is part of NCR 42 but is a very poor surface and there is a dangerous junction with Lower Castle Street. Paint and resurfacing (and even better, works to even out the gradient) is all that is required.

MCC-A21. The Junction of A40 / Upper Cross Street / Lower Castle Street. This is primarily a pedestrian benefit but it would also benefit cyclists travelling southbound on A40 and looking to go up Lower Castle Street or Cross Street. At present this manoeuvre requires cyclists to wait in the middle of a junction with bad sight lines and heavy traffic - not safe or inviting at all. We propose relocating the traffic lights from outside St Mary's Church to this junction.

MCC-G5. Improvements in routes in Gilwern between the school and the two new housing developments.