
To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 21 January 2025

Subject: Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road)

Introduction

1 The decision which is the subject of the Call-ins and the reason for Call-ins

- 1.1 The decision taken by the Cabinet Member for City Services on 09 December 2024 to approve the construction of Section 7 – Clifford Bridge Road cycleway has been called in.
- 1.2 Two call-ins were received, the reasons given for the call-ins, which have been validated, were as follows:

Councillors J Blundell, M Lapsa and T Sawdon:

- “The report fails to take account of a key safety report which is omitted from the report”.
- “The report contains misleading information regarding the health of the trees”.
- “The report does not give sufficient weight and fails to evaluate and cost the alternative routes as set out in the report”.

Councillors R Thay, F Abbott and A Hopkins:

- “There has been no consideration of any disability reports. Sight of these reports has not been forthcoming, and freedom of information requests have not been fulfilled. A decision cannot be made without a disability assessment”. (It has been clarified that this relates to the outcome of consultation with disability groups and their views)”.
- “The report does not sufficiently evidence that residents’ concerns have been resolved, particularly considering residents at the meeting were saying that their concerns had not been resolved to their satisfaction and issues remain at specific properties along the road”. (It has been clarified that this relates to the ability of people at specific properties to have safe access to and from their drives).

2 Background to the decision

2.1 The Cabinet Member for City Services considered a report on 09 December 2024 entitled 'Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road)'

2.2 At the meeting, the Cabinet Member for City Services was recommended to:

- 1) Note progress in response to the recommendations made within the 15 November 2023 Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) report.
- 2) Consider the responses, representations and objections to the Tree Felling Notices, Notice of Proposal and Notices of Intent.
- 3) Consider the petitioners concerns relating to the proposed cycleway and tree felling.
- 4) Subject to recommendations 1), 2) and 3), approve the construction of Section 7 – Clifford Bridge Road cycleway.

2.3 The Cabinet Member for City Services approved all four of the above recommendations.

2.4 The Cabinet Member for City Services has considered and approved two previous reports on Binley Cycleway, including Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road), they were:

- Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 20 October 2021 - Binley Cycleway – Scheme part-approval, way forward and petition responses.
- Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 15 November 2023 - Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road).

3 Material facts relating to the specific reasons for these Call-ins

3.1 Safety report

To ensure safe design, the scheme has been designed in accordance with national design standards, been subject to an externally led design review and a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken. These documents are either publicly available or have been provided to members of the public, and the documents are referenced within the 09 December 2024 Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) report.

A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) will be undertaken prior to construction commencing. The RSA2 will be completed by an external company and any recommendations raised in the RSA2 will be considered and responded to by the Council's design team.

The Strategic Lead for Policy and Innovation has Delegated Authority to approve or reject the Designers Response to the RSA. The process the Council is following is

a standard and best practice approach nationally and is no different to that followed for every other significant transport scheme within the Council's capital programme.

It should be noted, collisions involving personal injury have significantly reduced across the previously completed sections of Binley Cycleway.

The Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 09 December 2024 - Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) covers these items within paragraphs 2.1, 2.6, other useful documents section and Appendix D (Responses, Representations and Objections Summary Report). In addition, at the meeting the Head of Public Realm and the Strategic Lead for Policy and Innovation responded to a number of questions raised by Councillors and members of the public invited to speak by the Cabinet Member for City Services on a wide range of safety-related issues and made the RSA processes clear to those attending the meeting.

3.2 Health of trees

The removal of up to 26 trees is necessary to implement the proposed cycleway along Clifford Bridge Road. The decision to remove trees is never taken lightly and for this reason the removal of trees has been minimised by narrowing and realigning the proposed cycleway, and trees of significant value have been retained as part of the scheme. As part of the plans, the Council has completed a comprehensive risk assessment, and the Urban Forestry Team have assessed the trees. Members of this team are highly experienced, fully qualified and have the required knowledge to undertake and understand the assessment. This assessment concluded that some of the trees are at risk of disease and are highly likely to die in the medium term. Additionally, other trees have a limited remaining usable life, limited amenity value and will need to be replaced in the medium term, with or without the cycleway. Therefore, it is wise to replace them as part of this scheme. The number of new semi-mature trees will be more than those removed, and the new high amenity value trees will be planted in purpose-built root protection systems, giving the trees the right conditions to thrive. This approach will provide ecological benefits, in excess of and earlier, than if the Council waited for the trees at risk of disease to fail and then replaced when required.

The Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 09 December 2024 - Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) covers these items within paragraphs 2.1, 2.4, 6.5 and Appendix D (Responses, Representations and Objections Summary Report). In addition, at the meeting the Director of City Services and Commercial responded to several questions relating to the trees raised by Councillors and members of the public invited to speak by the Cabinet Member for City Services, covering a range of issues including the health of the trees including those affected by ash die-back.

3.3 Alternative routes

Alternative routes have been assessed as part of the development and design of Binley Cycleway.

Alternative routes were first analysed as part of the development of the West Midlands Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (WM LCWIP) published in 2019.

Further analysis was carried out as part of the Binley Cycleway Full Business Case submitted to and approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in 2021. An additional Business Justification Case, for Clifford Bridge Road, was approved by WMCA in December 2024. Both business cases analysed alternative routes and both business cases had positive benefit cost ratios for the preferred option along Clifford Bridge Road.

The funding for Binley Cycleway, including Clifford Bridge Road, is external capital grant funding and can only be spent on the cycleway and not revenue type activities such as highway maintenance. A detailed costing exercise cannot be completed without investing significant costs into commissioning surveys, technical assessments and detailed design work, as the funding bodies have indicated that they would not support the funding being used to deliver the alternative route options put forward, the costing exercise would need to be funded by the Council.

Alternatives were analysed as part of the 15 November 2023 and 09 December 2024 Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) reports. The alternative routes include:

- Hipswell Highway / Farren Road
- Sowe Valley (various options)
- Bridgeacre Gardens
- Coombe Park Road.

External bodies who specialise in active travel (cycling) have formally assessed Clifford Bridge Road and alternative routes using their option appraisal tools. The outcome of the Active Travel England (ATE) formal assessment of Clifford Bridge Road and alternative routes was to support the Council to proceed with the option of a segregated cycleway along Clifford Bridge Road. The outcome of the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and their specialist consultant's formal assessment, of Clifford Bridge Road and alternative routes, scored Clifford Bridge Road as the preferred route.

The Clifford Bridge Road section is forecast to have the largest increase in cyclist numbers as it is the most viable and beneficial option for achieving the goals of improved connectivity, safety, and accessibility for cyclists in the area. Using a Department for Transport model, the expected daily average number of cyclists who will use it once it has been constructed, is 204. The Clifford Bridge Road section will also likely increase cyclist numbers on other completed sections of Binley Cycleway.

For the reasons set out in the Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 09 December 2024 - Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road), paragraphs 2.1, 2.7 - 2.14, 5.1, the executive summary and Appendices D (Responses, Representations and Objections Summary Report), F (Independent Route Options

Review), G (ATE letter and DRP findings) and H (Sowe Valley flood zone data and photographs), alternative routes were discounted, and Clifford Bridge Road was identified as the preferred route. At the meeting, representatives from ATE and TfWM set out the role that their respective organisations had played, as funding agencies, in the assessment of the business case, including scheme options, and provided their views on the alternative options based on audits and site visits that they had conducted. The representatives also, along with the Head of Public Realm and the Strategic Lead for Policy and Innovation, responded to questions raised by Councillors and members of the public invited to speak by the Cabinet Member for City Services relating to alternative routes that had been considered during the business case and scheme development process.

3.4 Disability reports and assessment

The safety of all road users, including those with additional need is paramount and has been considered. For this reason, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken for the scheme. The EIA is appended to this briefing note as Appendix A.

The July 2023 consultation employed a mixed approach to engage local residents and businesses. This included:

- **Widespread distribution:** 1,200 copies of "Street News" were delivered to local homes or businesses.
- **Public meetings:** A well-attended public meeting with 140 participants facilitated open dialogue and feedback.
- **Accessibility:** A drop-in session, attended by 100 people, offered a less formal opportunity for engagement.
- **Online engagement:** A "Let's Talk" online survey, supported by dedicated email and phone contact options, ensured accessibility for those unable to attend in-person events.

Various stakeholder groups were specifically invited to participate in these activities. While the survey maintained respondent anonymity, 9.9% of respondents self-identified as disabled. This indicates that the consultation successfully captured the perspectives of disabled users and relevant groups.

In addition to the July 2023 consultation, the Council engaged with the Access Development Group through the 'Let's Talk' online survey, launched in September 2020. Due to COVID restrictions in place in 2020, no in-person meetings were held.

Responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were responded to on 07 November 2024 and 10 December 2024, subsequent follow-up responses were responded to promptly by Officers.

In November 2024 an online meeting took place between Officers and representatives from the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, no formal report was taken from the meeting. Items raised at the meeting did lead to minor detailed design changes such as additional tactile paving at junctions.

The Councils highly experienced Design Team are fully qualified and utilise best practices, including Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20, Inclusive Mobility, Manual for Streets and other relevant highway design documents, to ensure all schemes meet required safety and accessibility standards.

This includes specific considerations for vulnerable and disabled users, informed by their training and consultation with relevant organisations. All Design Team members attend ATE webinar training sessions monthly which focus on active travel and the latest improvements to the transport sector, and in 2024 attended site visits with the Thomas Pocklington Trust to discuss challenges faced by visually and mobility impaired users negotiating bus stop bypasses and floating bus stops.

The Team has regular contact and design reviews with TfWM and ATE. They have worked closely with specialist consultants who are advisors to ATE and developed LTN1/20 guidance. The final design will comply with all legislation and guidance, including the Equality Act 2010.

A Stage 1 RSA, in accordance with GG119 Road Safety Audit Standards, has been undertaken on the scheme, GG119 specifies auditors must consider the safety of all road users including vulnerable users. As stated in paragraph 3.1, the RSA2 will be completed by an external company.

A route check has been completed by ATE and a joint design review panel with TfWM and ATE, these checks and reviews include assessment and metrics to ensure designers fully consider and account for the needs of all users including those with a disability.

The Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 09 December 2024 - Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) covers these items within paragraphs 1.4, 1.7, 2.2, 3.0, 6.4, other useful documents section and Appendices D (Responses, Representations and Objections Summary Report) and G (ATE letter and DRP findings). The Head of Public Realm also responded to questions raised by Councillors and members of the public invited to speak at the meeting by the Cabinet Member for City Services on this subject.

3.5 Resident concerns

The section of cycleway along Clifford Bridge Road has been subject to four specific rounds of consultation and engagement, the first of which was held in 2021 focussed on a fully segregated cycleway, the second held between September 2022 and January 2023 based on a revised design, the third, in July 2023, focussed on an alternative shared use path design in response to feedback on the first two rounds of engagement, and the fourth, in January 2024, focussed on a segregated route complying with the core 7 principles recommended in the 15 November 2023 Cabinet Member for City Services, Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) report.

The 7 core principles considered items raised through consultation and petitions heard within the report. One of the core principles was that appropriate visibility be maintained for vehicles exiting side roads and driveways. Following the November Cabinet Member meeting and 18 January 2024 public meeting, Officers committed to working with all households individually along the route to make access to driveways as safe as possible and advised any future concerns would be picked up from RSAs.

Officers understand that residents have concerns and have engaged directly with many residents to discuss the project's potential localised impacts. Through 2024, Officers have responded to a significantly high number of emails and other forms of correspondence on the scheme, with the majority of these coming from people living on or directly off Clifford Bridge Road. Officers have also visited residents and businesses to discuss specific individual property related concerns and queries they may have with the final design.

While concerns have been addressed and responded to, Officers recognise that certain residents remain apprehensive about the safety of reversing manoeuvres and the potential impact on boundary walls. It is important to emphasise that the visibility issues when reversing exist with the current road layout and are not solely attributable to the proposed cycle lane. It should also be noted on average 54 cyclists currently use Clifford Bridge Road daily, of these, it is worth noting that around a third cycle on the footway. Over the last 5 years (04/12/2019 – 03/12/2024) there have been zero collisions, involving personal injury, between drivers accessing or egressing their driveways and cyclists travelling along the footway.

Officers have carefully considered these concerns and will continue to engage with residents throughout the detailed design process. Furthermore, the RSA process will continue to be followed to identify and mitigate any potential safety risks, including those related to driveway access and egress. As stated in paragraph 3.1, the RSA2 will be completed by an external company.

As with all transport projects, every individual's concern may not be fully alleviated, however, Officers have been and are still committed to working with residents to find solutions that balance their needs with the wider benefits of improved cycling infrastructure.

The Cabinet Member for City Services Report: 09 December 2024 - Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) covers these items within paragraphs 1.7.2, 1.7.3, 1.9, 1.11, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.12 and Appendix D (Responses, Representations and Objections Summary Report). Again, the Head of Public Realm and Strategic Lead for Policy and Innovation responded to a range of questions raised by Councillors and members of the public invited to speak by the Cabinet Member for City Services on a range of issues at the meeting.

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