

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) would like to state its position regarding the Downs Place and Movement Framework to be considered by this Special Committee.

Background

As acknowledged in the Downs Place and Movement Framework document of November 2015 (P&MF), there are several main modes and motivations for movement within the Downs area:

- On foot
 - Recreational walking - by individuals and small groups (including those using mobility aids)
 - Utility walking - by commuters etc crossing the Downs
 - Running for exercise - mainly by individuals (unless for organised events)
- On bicycle
 - Recreational cycling - including young people learning to cycle
 - Utility cycling - by commuters etc crossing the Downs
- By motor vehicle
 - Recreational-related motor transport - by those stopping to access the Downs for leisure activities
 - Utility motor transport - by those crossing the Downs

Those using the Downs for leisure typically move more slowly than those using it for running or utility. Allowing for differences in speed of movement is key to providing safe routes, whether pedestrians and cyclists sharing paths or cyclists and cars sharing roads.

BWA campaigns on behalf of those on foot, including those using mobility aids. **We encourage segregation of routes especially where difference in speed of movement (such as between pedestrians and commuter cyclists) has the potential to dissuade walking through concerns for safety.**

The simplest means of controlling contention is through clearly separate provision, where contravention is obvious. Clear segregation of routes, in which all users are aware of who should use each route, is necessary for this to be effective. Users moving at different speeds on the same shared-use route, even if accompanied by signage exhorting care, can lead to feelings of insecurity for those who move more slowly, since reckless behaviour can go unpunished.

A4018 Westbury Road path

Funding will become available for improving movement along the A4018 corridor. This is an opportunity to upgrade pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along this route. BWA has already stated its position in a previous submission to the Movement and Place Sub-Group's meeting on 6 November 2019:

The current provision of a shared use footway beside the road is inadequate for the desired increase in use by both pedestrians and cyclists. We therefore advocate that the current informal path on the grass is made into a pedestrian-only all-weather path allowing a segregated cycle-only route along the road.

Improvements to the route along Westbury Road were included in all three Scenarios of the P&MF. In particular Scenario B included the proposal we support for a new pedestrian-only route on the grass, parallel to the existing shared pedestrian/cycle footway, though we believe it should have an all-weather surface to prevent further erosion of the grass and allow year-round use.

We support the following two further suggested improvements from the P&MF being included as part of the A4018 proposals:

- *Improve crossing design for walking and cycling at the White Tree Roundabout.*
- *Improve legibility for walking and cycling around the Blackboy Hill gyratory.*

In addition, we support the Addendum (15 January 2020) to the document *A4018 Westbury Road and cycling* which makes the following proposals to support separate cycling and pedestrian routes:

- *A lowered pavement surface to provide a kerb-segregated bi-directional cycle route between the Henleaze Road area and Blackboy Hill (exact northern and southern termini to be determined)*
- *Priority at side road crossings (already proposed)*
- *A buff coloured path (possibly rolled limestone, which is not good for cycling and would therefore aid self-enforcement) on Downs land for non-cycling use only*
- *Additional lighting, potentially mounted on existing columns, to light the new footpath*
- *Pedestrian routes between the trees and across the cycle path to access existing facilities such as bus stops and pedestrian crossings*

Leisure Loop

This proposal, though not yet funded, is to enhance provision for leisure walking and cycling, as well as running, in a circular route along Rockleaze and Downleaze, Circular Road, Ladies Mile and a section of Stoke Road. On the northern side along Rockleaze and Downleaze, it would improve the de-facto grass path made by runners and walkers. On the western side it proposes making Circular Road one-way to allow segregation for cyclists. Along Ladies Mile, it proposes widening the current footway to make it shared-use for pedestrians and cyclists.

BWA supports measures that increase leisure activity on the Downs. Making additional all-weather paths would be a significant help. Given adequate width, shared-use paths between pedestrians and recreational cyclists may sometimes be acceptable. However, we would discourage utility routes to be shared-use because of the difference in speeds of commuting cyclists and pedestrians.

The suggestion included in the Leisure Loop proposal, of making Circular Road one-way to allow for a segregated cycle route was included in Scenario C Option 2 of the P&MF. In addition, safer segregated walking, cycling and motor traffic along Ladies Mile could be achieved by adopting the proposal included in both Scenarios B and C for making it one-way for motor traffic, to enable a segregated two-way route for cyclists.

Other aspects of the Place and Movement Framework

In general, we support the level of ambition described in Scenario C of the P&MF, and the design principles set out on page 32 of that document.

As well as the specific projects covered in the previous two sections, we would support several other improvements to the walking environment which were included in one or more of the three Scenarios in the P&MF:

- *Improve crossing of Stoke Road at cafe / water tower place hub for pedestrians.*
- *Improve pedestrian crossing of Ladies Mile at junction of Ladies Mile with Stoke Road - reduce kerb radius and return redundant hard surface to grass.*
- *Improve pedestrian crossing points and path links where the two public rights of way cross Ladies Mile. Restrict parking across paths.*
- *Improve form, appearance and safe function of the junction with Bridge Valley Road for benefit of all users, and the character and quality of the Downs.*
- *Widen the two existing Cross Paths from 1m wide routes ~~to 3.6m~~ (2m wide should be the minimum for pedestrian-only routes) with self-binding natural aggregate materials.*

Beyond the improvements suggested in the P&MF, we would also suggest the following:

- Reduce conflict between pedestrians and cyclists in the section between the cafe and Roman Road (though it is not clear how this can be achieved without re-allocation of the overall highway/footway space).
- Provide more seating alongside all pedestrian routes, especially for the benefit of those with less stamina, whether through age or infirmity.

Next steps

BWA supports the need for engagement to produce a single agreed strategy for Place and Movement across the whole of the Downs. We would very much like to be involved in this engagement.

In the meantime, **we advocate outline approval be given for the latest version of the A4018 proposed improvements as discussed above.** These improvements, which should be funded through Bristol City Council, are needed irrespective of any other improvements across the remainder of the Downs.

Bristol Walking Alliance

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