

WORK PACKAGE 7 (WP7): BIRKENHEAD ROAD, SEACOMBE WARD – PROPOSED ACTIVE TRAVEL IMPROVEMENTS

OBJECTIONS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT

OBJECTIONS (83 NO. INDIVIDUAL OBJECTIONS & 2 NO. PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY 1 LOCAL BUSINESS)

Objections are detailed below:

Several objectors raised concerns over the impact of a loss of parking along Birkenhead Road as a result of the proposed scheme. Specifically:

- The impact on local businesses situated on Birkenhead Road (namely, The Soccer Dome that holds several indoor 5-a-side pitches and also hosts birthday parties etc.) and a how a reduction in car-parking space may affect customer footfall.
- The impact on users of local businesses, namely The Soccer Dome (the young, parents, the elderly, the disabled - who visit The Soccer Dome to support their physical and mental wellbeing) specifically that they will be unable to find space to park on the highway.
- The impact on local residents whom already struggle to park outside of their homes due to the number of people frequenting local businesses, namely The Soccer Dome, and old cars belonging to a local garage permanently parked on the highway within the existing bays.
- The existing parking situation coupled with the proposed new parking layout does not help residents whom suffer with depression and anxiety.
- The impact on nearby residents whom worry that users of the local businesses will choose to park in cul-de-sacs and side streets.
- The impact of loss of parking on disabled users of local businesses.
- The impact of loss of parking on elderly users of local businesses.
- That the objector does not trust Wirral Council to replace parking levels with that of a similar level to existing.
- That the objector will be unable to attend The Soccer Dome as often as they would like if they had to pay for parking.
- That, as a football coach with bags of equipment, it is not possible to do such journeys by bike or on public transport.
- That visitors to the area already ignore the existing traffic regulation orders when parking and that it will be same for the proposed traffic regulation orders (double yellow lines).

In response; There is approximately 354 metres of space available on the highway along Birkenhead Road, where road users are permitted to park their vehicles all day. As a result of the proposals there will be approximately 297 metres of space available on the highway along Birkenhead Road, where road users will be permitted to park their vehicles all day. Giving an overall net loss of 57 metres. However, further along Birkenhead Road (approximately 200 metres from The Soccer Dome) additional unrestricted space for parking on the highway can be found at East Street.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 and Traffic Regulation Act 1984 lists pedestrians and cyclists as ‘traffic’. The Highway Code’s ‘Hierarchy of Road Users’ places pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and motorcyclists as the road users most likely to be injured in the event of a collision. Wirral Council therefore has a duty to manage its highway in a way that ensures and facilitates safe movement for all traffic. Wirral Council also understands that not everyone is able nor wishes to cycle or walk (whether for leisure purposes or as part of a commute). The provision of adequate facilities for all road users (vehicle drivers, pedestrians and cyclists) allows residents to make a choice on their mode of transport, whilst enabling those that do wish to walk or cycle, to be able to do so safely. Any increase in the number of people choosing to travel by walking or cycling could be expected to reduce the number of people choosing to travel by other, less sustainable means of transport, thereby helping to reduce emissions, congestion and parking issues.

Instances of illegal parking can be reported to Wirral Council for enforcement. Instances of dangerous parking can be reported to Merseyside Police who have the powers to deal with such matters.

As a result of the concerns raised, Wirral Council would be happy to explore the possibility of providing on-street disabled parking bays directly outside of The Soccer Dome, should the management of the facility agree.

Resident parking only schemes are available where there are over 300 properties with a minimum of 80% of properties in support of the proposal. Further information can be found on Wirral Council’s website.

Wirral Council has no plans to introduce “pay & display” parking along Birkenhead Road.

Several objectors raised concerns about the safety of the proposals. Such as:

- The road being used by HGV’s and buses.
- The proposals will block traffic to the ferry port and Eureka Museum for long periods and thereby impairing the ability to attract tourists.
- The proposed parking layout being unsafe as drivers will have to pull out without a clear line of sight.
- Drivers will now stop their cars in the carriageway and put their hazards on, like they do on Victoria Road and Seabank Road.
- Visitors to The Soccer Dome will have to cross the road with young children.
- Birkenhead Road is already dangerous and the proposals make it more so.

In response; As a result of the proposals there will be no change to the number of lanes available to vehicular traffic, including HGV’s and Buses. Consultation was carried out with Merseytravel, Emergency Services, Haulage associations etc. and no such concerns or objection were raised.

At side road junctions traffic regulation orders (double yellow lines) will be implemented in-line with highway code guidance, thereby improving visibility for vehicle drivers.

Incidents of illegal parking can be reported to Wirral Council for enforcement. Incidents of dangerous or illegal driving can be reported to Merseyside Police who have the power to deal with such matters.

The removal of parking bays along Birkenhead Road should remove the need for visitors to The Soccer Dome to cross Birkenhead Road. Amendments to existing traffic regulation orders on the opposite side of the road will enable visitors to park on the same side of the road as The Soccer Dome.

Several objectors stated that the proposals were a waste of council tax and/or that the money should be spent elsewhere. Such as:

- Purchasing private land in the nearby area on behalf of The Soccer Dome and converting said land into a free car-park for Soccer Dome users.
- Safer pedestrian crossing points, street-lighting and improved pedestrian facilities.
- Improving the cycle link along the nearby dock edge adjacent to the River Mersey.
- Linking up areas that do not already have a cycle lane.
- Funding Libraries.
- Funding Leisure Centres.
- Street Cleansing.
- Grass Cutting.
- Social Services.
- Parts of Birkenhead that need re-generating (area around St. Catherine's Hospital referenced).
- Supporting Local Shops.

In response; The proposals are not funded via Wirral Council's Council Tax. This funding has been made available by The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority via the Department for Housing and Levelling Up and the European Regional Development Fund. The funding can only be used for active travel projects and cannot be spent on other matters, such as purchasing land for private businesses to use as a car park. If the funding is not used by Wirral Council it must be returned with the monies potentially being offered to other Local Authorities. Whilst the main product of the proposal is improved walking and cycling facilities, a by-product of the project (and as is common with many active travel proposals) is a newly resurfaced carriageway the full length of Birkenhead Road, resurfaced footways with safer pedestrian priority crossing points and repairs to any faults on street lighting along the route.

Some objectors stated that they were against the removal of existing trees.

In response; The proposals will result in the loss of 18 no trees along Birkenhead Road. Due to spatial constraints, it would not be possible to replace these trees along Birkenhead Road. However, as part of the proposals, new trees and landscaping would be provided at the junction of Corbyn Street/Birkenhead Road and the area around Seacombe Ferry leading to the river front.

Some objectors stated that the existing cycle lane is rarely used and/or that cyclists prefer to use the road.

In response; Wirral Council has received complaints regarding the functionality of the existing cycle lane and it is not up to the standard expected within the latest DfT design guidance. Whilst a more confident cyclist may choose to cycle in the carriageway, many people opt to use cycle lanes. A more functional design will encourage greater use of the cycle lane and consideration of active travel as a more feasible mode of transport.

Some objectors stated that they do not feel safe in the dark and so use their car to travel.

In response; Wirral Council understands that not everyone is able to, nor wishes to cycle or walk (whether for leisure purposes or as part of a commute). However, the provision of adequate facilities for all road users (vehicle drivers, pedestrians and cyclists) allows residents to make a choice on their mode of transport, whilst enabling those that do wish to walk or cycle, to be able to do so safely. As part of the proposals the condition of all existing street lighting along the route will be reviewed and repaired where necessary.

Some objectors stated that Birkenhead Road should be not be changed for the sake of a questionable political agenda, that Wirral does not want or need a “15 minute cycle city”, that Wirral should stay a fabulous and free forward-thinking place to live, and that Wirral Council should think more holistically in place of obvious pro-cycling bias.

In response; The Traffic Management Act 2004 and Traffic Regulation Act 1984 lists pedestrians and cyclists as ‘traffic’. The Highway Code’s ‘Hierarchy of Road Users’ places pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and motorcyclists as the road users most likely to be injured in the event of a collision. Wirral Council therefore has a duty to manage its highway in a way that ensures and facilitates safe movement for all traffic. There is already an existing cycle lane along Birkenhead Road and the “end product” of the proposals will be a resurfaced carriageway for motor vehicles (with the same number of lanes as existing), approximately 297 metres of space on the highway along Birkenhead Road suitable for parking motor vehicles all day, improved footways for pedestrians, and a single bi-directional cycle lane. This financial year alone

Wirral Council (as part of its Structural Maintenance Programme) has spent approximately £3.8 million on resurfacing carriageways across the borough. Rather than a cycling bias it is a fit-for-purpose section of highway network that is suitable for, and enables, all highway users.

An objector stated that that pedestrians and cyclists are being considered given priority over other road users, despite their already being a footway and cycle lane in place, so why should such a large amount of money be spent on something that offers little improvement to anyone who drives a car.

In response; The Traffic Management Act 2004 and Traffic Regulation Act 1984 lists pedestrians and cyclists as 'traffic'. The Highway Code's 'Hierarchy of Road Users' places pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and motorcyclists as the road users most likely to be injured in the event of a collision. Wirral Council therefore has a duty to manage its highway in a way that ensures and facilitates safe movement for all traffic. Nevertheless, this financial year alone (as part of its Structural Maintenance Programme) Wirral Council has spent approximately £3.8 million on resurfacing carriageways across the borough. Furthermore, as part of this proposal the carriageway along Birkenhead Road will also be resurfaced, to the benefit of car drivers.

An objector asked if using the opposite side of the road for the cycle lane had been considered so that a wider carriageway along with the existing parking bays would be maintained.

In response; If the cycle lane was to be placed on the opposite side of Birkenhead Road it would remove parking along the side of the road on which residential properties and businesses are located. It would also result in a greater loss of overall space for permitted vehicle parking.

An objector stated that if we are trying to reduce car use, we should add on extra buses that are reliable along the route.

In response; Wirral Council is not responsible for the provision of bus-services on Wirral and such matters should be raised with Merseytravel or relevant bus service providers in the area. However, as a result of the proposals the existing conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists at bus-stops will be removed.

An objector stated that Wirral Council had failed to provide a detailed plan of the route and asked how policing of these high crime areas will be improved.

In response; As part of the public consultation process, notices of proposed traffic regulation order amendments were erected on site, traffic regulation

order advertisements were placed in the local press, letters were delivered to residents and the proposals were publicised on Wirral Council's social media channels. The letters provided written detail of the proposals, along with a map and 3D visual, whilst also directing residents to Wirral Council's 'Have Your Say' webpage where more detailed plans were available for viewing. The letters and Have Your Say page advised that large scale plans were available to view at Wallasey Central Library and that should residents have any problems viewing any documents they could contact Wirral Council who would be happy to provide further assistance. Incidents of crime can be reported to Merseyside Police who have the powers to deal with such matters.

An objector asked that the design is reconsidered so that pedestrians are on one side of the road and cyclists are on the other as this will prevent loss of parking.

In response; such a proposal would not be in line with current design standards and would be extremely difficult to enforce.

EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT (86 NO INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS)

Expressions of support are detailed below:

Supporters stated they supported the proposals for the following reasons:

- The proposal offers an improvement along an existing poorly designed cycle route.
- The proposal would offer a safe transition from the promenade to Birkenhead Road, through to Birkenhead Town Centre.
- They would like to see more segregated cycle lanes, wider pavements and more double yellow lines.
- The proposal would encourage more sustainable travel.
- They would like to cycle but lack confidence to cycle on the road and the proposal would give them the confidence to cycle.
- The proposal will make the road safer for pedestrians and cycling.
- The proposal promotes active travel, which is better for the environment and gives a safer more pleasant street scene.
- The current route along the prom is not suitable for commuting or running errands and shopping by cycle.
- It would be very useful for those who work in Liverpool to cycle from Birkenhead to Seacombe Ferry.
- Keeping cycling on main routes prevents pushing cyclists into space that is extremely busy in the summer, or very quiet and therefore presents risks to vulnerable people.
- The existing cycle lane is not suitable for children to use, but the proposed cycle lane will be.
- Because they do not own a car and a safe way of moving around.

- The proposal will enable families to travel to and from Eureka Science Museum, New Brighton and beyond, and The Soccer Dome.
- Use of the proposal will increase physical health.
- The proposal supports cheaper transport costs and so provide costs of living benefits.
- Walkers and cyclists spend more money locally.
- The proposals fit with The Wirral Plan and Local Plan.

In response; Noted.