



Debunking myths about the Chesterfield East West Walking and Cycling Route

Introduction

To address some of the misinformation and misunderstandings about the Chesterfield East West Walking and Cycling Route Chesterfield Cycle Campaign and Transition Chesterfield present the background to the funding and debunk some of the myths about the route to allow a more reasoned and informed debate.

In May 2020 at the start of the Covid pandemic the Department for Transport (DfT) introduced a £250 million **Emergency Active Travel Fund** to help councils reallocate road space for cyclists and pedestrians. Because public transport's capacity was severely restricted at this time, this funding was to help prevent trains and buses becoming overcrowded and roads gridlocked thus holding up emergency services, critical workers and vital supplies. This resulted in pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements, cycle and bus-only corridors and the closure of side streets to reduce rat-running.

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) received £443,000 for Tranche 1. Much of it was spent across the County but it also included funding for the closure of Crow Lane. Councils were not required to consult on these temporary measures because of the emergency.

In July 2020 the Government invited local authorities to bid for an additional £180m for Tranche 2 of the **Active Travel Fund**. The Department for Transport also made clear that to receive any funding:

"... authorities will need to satisfy the Department that they have swift and meaningful plans to reallocate road space to cyclists and pedestrians (both groups rather than one or the other), including on strategic corridors. Schemes that do not meaningfully alter the status quo on the road will not be funded. All cycling schemes, permanent or temporary, will need to include segregation or point closures to through traffic: advisory cycle lanes, and those marked only with white paint, will not be funded."¹

Derbyshire was allocated £1.68 million for Tranche 2 but **the Government made clear that the actual sums awarded would depend on how ambitious a council was willing to be**². Local authorities needed to demonstrate that the funds could be spent or fully committed in the 2020/2021 financial year. For Tranche 2 funding bids, which were submitted after the peak of the pandemic had passed, local authorities were expected to consult more thoroughly³.

During 2020 there was an unprecedented increase in levels of cycling, with the greatest year-on-year increase in post-war history. Many people started cycling for shorter journeys, saving appreciable amounts of pollution, noise, CO₂ and traffic danger. In Chesterfield over 5,000 additional residents cycled at least once a month compared to the same period in the previous year and on some key cycle routes there was a 300% increase in cycle flows. These benefits can be monetised to provide an estimate that cycling in Chesterfield contributes over £5.8 million in health and congestion benefits⁴.

¹ Department for Transport (2020) [Emergency Active Travel Fund - Invitation to bid for Tranche 2](#). July 2020.

² See footnote 1

³ Department for Transport (2020) [£175 million more for cycling and walking as research shows public support](#). News story, 13/11/20.

⁴ Chesterfield Cycle Campaign (2021) [Economic benefits of cycling in Chesterfield](#).



Debunking the myths

Myth 1: For section 1 (Chatsworth Road) the route across the fields to Holymoorside would be much safer and better and could be delivered as part of this funding

Chesterfield Cycle Campaign has been campaigning for many years for a cycle route known as Hipper Valley 3 (HV3) across the fields from Somersall Lane to Holymoorside. This has involved numerous meetings with DCC and it is a standing item on the periodic Cycle Liaison meetings that DCC has with cycle groups from across the County. However there are numerous legal issues that have proved very difficult to sort out including issues of liability for the landowners, as well as fencing (if there are livestock in the fields) and surfacing to make it suitable for cycling. However this would not be suitable as an alternative route for the East West cycle route as it crucially **doesn't meet the funding criteria to alter the status quo on the road**. And the lack of certainty that the legal issues could be resolved within the timeframe and budget of the funding also ruled it out.

A group of local residents, HSLAG (Holymoorside Somersall Link Action Group), are now working with different stakeholders to resolve the long-standing issues with HV3. They believe that if the HV3 route was subjected to a Cycle Track Order by Highways (rather than a footpath modification order by Greenways), this could reassure the landowners regarding public liability, and it would also bypass planning which would allow a fit for purpose inclusive active travel route.

We continue to support efforts to get this route in place, but believe that both a segregated cycleway along Chatsworth Rd AND a route across the fields to Holymoorside are needed, serving different communities and needs.

Myth 2: A 2-way segregated cycle route (along Chatsworth Rd) will make it more dangerous to cycle (including for students going to school)

The Government's guidance document makes clear: **"Evidence from the UK and abroad is clear. Physically segregated bike tracks on main roads, including at junctions, are the most important thing we can do to promote cycle use."**⁵

Segregation can be provided by a kerb or lighter-touch materials which take less space, such as wands, stepped kerbs or planters. But they must be physically separated – not just on links, the stretches between junctions, but at junctions themselves, the places of greatest danger for cyclists.

Government also makes clear that the routes must be direct and continuous, and serve the places people actually want to go – often major public transport corridors – and the journeys they actually want to make. **"If it is necessary to reallocate roadspace from parking or motoring to achieve this, it should be done."**

Experienced cyclists may feel comfortable cycling on busy main roads but segregation is designed to attract new and less experienced cyclists, who are fearful of cycling amongst traffic.

Critics of the Chatsworth Rd design have suggested that having a two-way cycle route means that cyclists will be facing lorries and other traffic. However this is far safer than to be in the same lane as traffic which is coming behind you or overtaking. There are plenty of examples of two-way cycle lanes in Britain which work well including a two-way segregated cycle track in Nottingham

⁵ Department for Transport (2020). [Gear Change. A Bold vision for walking and cycling](#). June 2020.



connecting the city centre with the Queen's Medical Centre, the University of Nottingham and the west of the city⁶.

It is true that drivers will need to look both ways when exiting side roads but the give way sign will be placed before the cycle lane, there will be green surfacing of the cycle route to better highlight the potential presence of cyclists, and responsible drivers should be looking both ways in any case.

Myth 3: Chatsworth Rd is busier than the M1

At a public meeting someone suggested that Chatsworth Rd was busier than the M1 and had 200 vehicles an hour. According to National Highways, the average daily traffic at a point northbound (i.e. one way) between junction 29 and 29a in 2021 was 42,000 vehicles a day or 1,750 an hour.

That said we agree that Chatsworth Rd is a dangerously busy road with too much traffic. This scheme will not only make it safer by reducing traffic speeds from 40mph to 30mph (at the western end) but it will hopefully reduce traffic, particularly at peak hours, by encouraging more people to cycle.

Myth 4: All of the pedestrian refuges (on Chatsworth Rd) will be removed

The current plans will remove some traffic islands with no pedestrian facilities and replace 6 pedestrian 'refuges' with pedestrian crossing points (i.e. dropped kerbs). There will be a new signalised crossing for pedestrians and cyclists East of Holymoore Rd and the crossing opposite Brookfield School will be upgraded from a Puffin (pedestrian only) to a Toucan (pedestrians and cyclists).

We disagree with removal of the remaining pedestrian refuges and think these should be retained or preferably upgraded to zebra crossings.

Other safety features which will improve safety for pedestrians include tightening the Junction Radii at some side roads (e.g. Brookfield Avenue and Old Pheasant Court) to reduce the speed of turning traffic, and provision of dropped kerbs.

The reduction of speed limits from 40mph to 30mph will increase the safety of the road further.

Myth 5: Removing the central hatching area (on Chatsworth Rd) will result in gridlock due to people turning right

Currently the section of Chatsworth Road from Storrs Road to the Morrisons roundabout has no hatching and drivers are able to turn right to access side roads, St Thomas's Church and the petrol station without noticeable gridlock. There are 4 side roads to the West of Storrs Rd that will be affected by the removal of hatching, compared to 6 side roads to the East of Storrs Rd which have never had any central hatching.

Note that the East West Cycle route would leave Chatsworth Rd at Storrs Rd and follow the existing Hipper Valley Trail through Somersall Park and onto town, on a well used route that is already part of the Chesterfield Cycle Network.

Myth 6: The segregated cycle lane will increase congestion and air pollution on Chatsworth Rd

Air pollution is indeed a concern in Chesterfield, particularly for young people who are more vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution. Children with asthma are particularly affected: one in eleven UK children receive treatment for asthma, one of the highest childhood asthma rates in the

⁶ Nottingham City Council. [Improving Cycle Infrastructure](#)



world. Living near busy roads could be responsible for some 15-30% of all new cases of asthma in children. The biggest source of air pollution in urban areas is cars, particularly diesel cars which emit high levels of deadly nitrogen dioxide. However all cars, even electric cars, produce fine particulate matter (PM2.5) (e.g. from tyre, road and brake wear) for which there is no safe threshold. Every car that can be taken off the road reduces congestion and air pollution.

School traffic is generally acknowledged to be one of the biggest sources of peak hour congestion with estimates that nearly one in four cars on the road at peak hours is on the school run⁷. In 2011 70% Brookfield students walked or cycled to school while 20% were driven. If more students can walk or cycle this will take a lot of the peak hour traffic off the road and ease congestion (as well as making it safer for those who choose to walk and cycle).

Note Chesterfield Borough Council's Local Plan has many references to the need to maximise opportunities for walking and cycling to reduce congestion and air pollution. For example:

*"Ultimately the aim is to reduce congestion and carbon emissions, tackle air pollution and increase accessibility for all the borough's residents. The provision of joined-up strategic walking and cycling networks will assist in meeting this aim. To do so will allow sustainable access to key facilities such as schools, employment areas and the town centre, as well as providing recreational opportunities via greenways and the rights of way network."*⁸

And

*"Improvement of the networks for public transport, walking and cycling will allow a range of smarter travel choices to be made, to reduce reliance on the private car and help towards overcoming congestion and improving air quality on the main routes in and out of Chesterfield; the A61 corridor, **Chatsworth Road and the A619 to the east, Derby Road and the A61 to the north.**"*[our emphasis]

Improving walking and cycling networks in order to reduce congestion and improve air quality is part of every national and local transport and planning strategy and there is abundant evidence that this is an effective way to improve air quality.

Myth 7: Crow Lane (Section 5) is far too steep to cycle unless you are extremely fit

Crow Lane is a steep hill and on a normal pushbike would require a high level of fitness. However with the increasing popularity of electric or e-bikes hills like Crow Lane are manageable even for someone of low fitness. An electric bike is a motor-assisted pedal bike which usually looks like a regular bicycle but with the addition of a rechargeable battery and motor. This offers cyclists the flexibility and support of a motor between the speeds of 0-15.5mph to assist starts, difficult climbs or simply when the cyclists needs/wants the additional assistance.

E-bikes have grown in popularity in the past 20 years – predominantly in Europe – while the UK have only started to follow suit in the past few years. E-bikes appeal to people who might not be able to use a conventional bike because of age, health or poor fitness, or because they live in hilly areas. For example, in the Netherlands, 81% of e-bike distance is ridden by those aged 50 or over .

While e-bikes cost more than a normal bike, they are much cheaper than a car, and in future there are likely to be more hire or loan schemes to allow people to try them out.

⁷ Living Streets. [Let's Transform the 'School-Run' to Protect Children's Health and Their Future, Say Charities.](#)

⁸ Chesterfield Borough Council (2020) [Chesterfield Local Plan 2018-2035](#). Adopted July 2020.



Myth 8: Section 5 (Crow Lane) will result in more congestion as traffic is diverted onto the main roads and will add 20 minutes onto people's journeys

There will be some diversion of traffic from Crow Lane onto either Dark Lane or the A632. For these people there may be some added inconvenience but this has to be balanced against the need for a safe walking and cycling route for people who have no access to a car (over 40% of the lowest income households) or who choose to walk or cycle. It also has to be set against the removal of traffic due to increasing numbers of cyclists able to access the hospital safely, and it is hoped this will include some of the people who previously drove up and down Crow Lane. It is government and council policy to maximise opportunities for walking and cycling where possible.

It has been said that closure of Crow Lane will add 20 minutes onto people's car journeys.

For someone travelling by car from Manor Road, Brimington, to the rail station via different routes both googlemaps and the AA route planner suggest that a route via the A619 and Brimington Road is faster than Crow Lane at peak times (weekday, 8.30am).

For someone travelling by car from Manor Road, Brimington, to Ravenside retail park both googlemaps and the AA route planner suggest that a route via the A632 is faster than Crow Lane at peak times (weekday, 8.30am).

It is possible that Crow Lane may be slightly faster by car at certain times on some days due to traffic conditions elsewhere. However in general alternative driving routes to Crow Lane are generally faster even if slightly further.

Myth 9: For Section 5 (Crow Lane) the bridleway and Dark Lane would be a better alternative cycle route

This alternative route would not fit the Department for Transport funding criteria "***Schemes that do not meaningfully alter the status quo on the road will not be funded.***"

Crow Lane is a single lane country road which is not suitable for 2-way traffic in any case. It provides a safe, direct route to the hospital for walkers and cyclists.

Myth 10: The public were not properly consulted – either when Crow Lane was initially closed (in June 2020) and when the East West cycle route was proposed (in March 2021)

As noted in the introduction, due to the national covid emergency Crow Lane was closed initially for a period of 18 months as part of an emergency measure which did not require consultation. This was partly designed to give key workers to the hospital a safe route to cycle if they did not have a car and did not wish to use public transport.

For the Tranche 2 funding and the proposed East West Walking and Cycling route the consultation period was truncated due to local elections and purdah. While it is unfortunate that more time was not available, it should be noted that all Councillors were made aware of the consultation and over 600 individual people responded (some people provided responses to more than one section so there were over 1000 responses). Over 60% people were in favour of the scheme overall and around three-fifths of people who responded on the Chatsworth Rd and Crow Lane sections either lived or worked in the area. This is far more than any other council consultation we are aware of and contrasts with say around 300 responses to the Borough Council's Station Masterplan consultation which affects large numbers of residents. There have also been occasions where the Borough Council has not consulted at all on cycle infrastructure (e.g. the walking and cycling route from the station past the Chesterfield Hotel which was not built to accepted standards).



The report to DCC about the consultation was over 150 pages long and contained large amounts of details on the consultation responses, the consultees, the levels of walking and cycling in the area and other relevant data⁹. It appeared to be a comprehensive and fair report.

We understand that Toby Perkins MP has made a complaint about the consultation to the Local Government Ombudsman. If the latter rules that the consultation needs to be repeated we will accept that but if the Ombudsman rules that the consultation was adequate then we hope that the route opponents will also accept that with good grace.

Myth 11: The County Council are deliberately hiding evidence from the public

This allegation was made at the public meeting organised by the Civic Society though it is not clear what evidence they suggest is being hidden. The consultation results were clearly publicised on the DCC website and in the Officers Report. The consultation was done through a 'Commonplace' consultation website which included information about the project and design options for people to comment on¹⁰. This software has been used by many other Councils

Myth 12: The Department for Transport will accept major changes to the scheme or even part-fund the scheme and this will not affect any future funding for DCC

It is our understanding that DfT will not accept major changes to the scheme, particularly those that remove the sections that alter the status quo on the road.

"Schemes that do not meaningfully alter the status quo on the road will not be funded"

Councils which prematurely removed new schemes have had their funding cut with local authorities in Brighton, Leicestershire, Liverpool and Portsmouth, among those whose active travel funding was halted. When the Government announced a new Capability Fund with 59 local authorities allocated an average of £230,000 each to promote cycling and walking, 13 Councils were excluded due to their failure to reallocate road space in previous funding rounds.

Derbyshire County Council is currently applying for Tranche 3 funding from the Active Travel Fund as well as being one of the 59 local authorities granted funding for a new Capability Fund. DCC has shown enormous ambition with the Chesterfield East West Cycle Route and this has been rewarded by further funding. It is our understanding this will be placed in jeopardy and could affect funding across Derbyshire if the East West Cycle route does not go ahead.

We understand Toby Perkins MP is in dialogue with the Minister for Cycling about the implications if funding of the agreed scheme does not go ahead and we await the outcome of those discussions with interest.

[Chesterfield Cycle Campaign](#) and [Transition Chesterfield](#), November 2021

⁹ DCC (2021) [Chesterfield East West Walking and Cycling Route](#). Report to Cabinet, 14/10/21.

¹⁰ <https://chesterfieldcycleroute.commonplace.is/overview>