

Cycle Winchester Response to an Application for Planning Permission at Bushfield Camp

To: Winchester City Council

Application Ref: 23/02507/OUT

Bushfield Camp, Badger Farm Road, Winchester, SO23 9RZ

6th December 2023

Cycle Winchester's recommendation

Cycle Winchester does NOT support this application in its present form and recommends deferring until the application includes satisfactory provision for access by cycle and pedestrian routes. Given that the application requests to set Access outside of Reserved Matters, if unconditional approval were given at this stage, we are sceptical that connectivity with areas surrounding the site would be improved in a timely manner. .

We note that the applicant has an obligation under the Local Plan (Policy WT3):

- *Promotion of non-vehicular access to and within the site, to ensure integration with the surrounding areas and to minimise and mitigate its impact on the strategic highway network;*

We recognise that the application facilitates movement of pedestrians and cyclists within the developed site. We also recognise that a suitable development proposal, with good non-vehicular access, will be beneficial in establishing cycling routes in a poorly-served part of the city.

However, establishing non-vehicular connectivity in the surrounding areas requires collaboration between the applicant, Winchester City, and Hampshire County Councils. The two authorities each own land which must be crossed to establish effective connections between the Bushfield site and adjacent destinations. It's disappointing that the application lacks evidence of agreements between the parties on non-vehicular access changes, especially as there has been obviously been close collaboration on road layouts. The development should not be approved until these agreements are in place.

Given the very large scale of the development, and the projected 8,399 trips per day (Transport Assessment, section 5.4), we feel that an environmentally-responsible applicant ought to be motivated, and should be mandated, to increase the number of daily trips by cycle beyond the 212 (2.5%) anticipated in the application.

Cycle Winchester does not comment on the broader issues around desirability of a large development at the fringe of city; we restrict ourselves to ensuring that *if* such a development is approved, it is designed to facilitate and encourage cycling as a means of transport and travel.

Within the site

Route to the north

We welcome provision of the proposed cycle route from the St Cross roundabout to the north of the site, to facilitate travel between Bushfield Camp and western parts of the city, especially the railway station, University, Hospital, etc.

A high-quality route would have a sealed surface and environmentally-sensitive lighting (to allow year-round use) and be sufficiently wide to avoid conflict with pedestrians. While the application does specify that the path would be lit, which is reassuring to us, and promises compliance with LTN 1/20 (Transport assessment 4.4.4) we don't see any commitment to a sealed surface, only "all-weather", nor a description of the width of the path or means for avoidance of conflict with pedestrians.

Any permission for development of the site must be conditional on meeting LTN 1/20 standards for the main cycle path.

Whiteshute Lane bridleway

The proposed cycle access point onto the Whiteshute Lane bridleway is potentially useful for off-road leisure cyclists, but will not encourage cycle commuting by any but the most dogged cyclists unless the surface of the bridleway is upgraded and overhanging branches are regularly-maintained. We address this further in the next section.

Cycle parking

There is a welcome attention to providing on-site cycle parking and other facilities for cyclists. We would need reassurance that these warm words are adhered-to in the eventual development.

Suitable planning conditions would reassure us.

With the provisos above, we have a generally positive view of the facilities described within the site, but our more major concern is with lack of connectivity for cyclists beyond the perimeter of the developed site. Unless these off site connections are addressed the effect will be the creation of a isolated development only accessible by car or bus (not 24/7) even though it is less than a kilometre from Winchester's suburbs.

Connectivity outside of the site

Usage estimates

Figure 5-4 of the Transport Assessment (p120) shows estimated cyclist trip distribution. The distribution here is based entirely on the predicted motor vehicle distribution, which in turn is based on 2011 Census travel-to-work data. It completely overlooks the effect of multi-modal transport and the fact that, at present, this side of the city is a hostile environment for cycling and walking, suppressing any potential for active travel to work.

For example, a commuter from Eastleigh would arrive from the south if driving. If instead they chose to take the train then cycle, they would be likely to arrive at Winchester station and cycle to the site from there, so would be approaching the site from the north.

Section 5-5 notes that arrival via Shawford station is much less likely as there are fewer train services to that station, but it takes this factor into account only when considering bus travel, not cycle travel. This also highlights an apparent failure to approach Network Rail and SWR to broach the possibility of increased use of Shawford as a commuter stop for the development.

The predicted proportion of cyclists arriving from the north should be much higher than shown, something that reinforces the need for a well-designed cycle route from the northern edge of the development.

Any estimate based on current trips also fails to identify the potential of new routes such as the potential route from Badger Farm or an improved route from Otterbourne.

In short, it appears that very little thought has been put into predicting non-motorised traffic levels and accommodating them.

Access from station and city centre

The main site cycle path terminates at the northern site boundary, near the railway footbridge to Whiteshute Lane. There is great potential for onward travel to the station, but this is thwarted by a number of obstacles. We find it very surprising that the applicant has not reached agreements with Hampshire County Council, or Winchester City as a relevant landowner to propose and fund mitigations to these obstacles, given the evident collaborative work on the Bushfield roundabout. We need to see the following obstacles addressed:

- From site to Stanmore Lane: There is no proposal for an LTN 1/20-compliant, legal route. Options include surfacing the grassy footpath behind the Ivy Close houses, and alongside Stanmore Primary School, or reworking or replacing the footbridge over the railway.
- Through the railway tunnel to Lower Stanmore Lane. This is narrow and dangerous, so we would expect to see a proposal for signalling it, or making it cycle-safe in some other form, such as diverting motor traffic.
- From Lower Stanmore Lane to the rail station. We can imagine a potential cycle route e.g. Christchurch Road, Peninsula Barracks / St James Terrace, Clifton Terrace, or alternatively Kings Avenue, Stuart Crescent, Airlie Road and an upgraded footpath to the west of the railway line. But we need to see a proposed route, with existing shortcomings addressed, such as missing dropped kerbs to Peninsula Barracks, obstructive barriers on St James Terrace, and the difficult crossing of Romsey Road.
- From Lower Stanmore Lane to Kingsgate Road. This is a potentially attractive route into the city centre; however safe crossing of St Cross Road is currently an issue.

We feel that a collaboration with the Hampshire active travel team, and Winchester City, to make this connection truly cycle-friendly, has great potential to increase the modal share of cycling trips to site, with benefits to the applicant in terms of reduced environmental impact, reduced cost to provide on-site parking, etc.

It should be a condition of planning approval that funds be provided by the developer and agreements in place to provide these onward links.

Access from Badger Farm and Olivers Battery

As the application makes clear, these suburbs host a wide range of essential facilities, including a major supermarket, doctors, dentists, post office etc. They also house a highly-skilled population who might be attracted to Bushfield Camp as employees or as users of leisure facilities. It's disappointing therefore that the cycling and walking links from the site to these suburbs are mostly absent.

Pedestrians may exit onto Whiteshute Ridge, but direct access from there to Badger Farm is muddy and steeply-stepped, and this would be a deterrent to anyone using the paths at night or in working footwear. For cyclists, the only legal option is to proceed along Whiteshute Lane, but there is no onward connection to either Badger Farm or Olivers Battery – and again, Whiteshute Lane is a narrow unsurfaced bridleway, muddy in winter and overgrown to the point of unusability in summer.

This deficiency cuts off a large number of potentially-willing active travellers from commuting to or using the site, and also those who live or work on-site from accessing local services such as Sainsbury's, the GP practice and Oliver's Battery shops.

We propose that an additional cycling and pedestrian route be established. This should not come as a surprise to the applicants as we discussed it with them in initial discussions and they displayed it as a route in their public consultation sessions. The Transport Assessment mentions it as a possibility but it seems it has not been agreed with Hampshire County Council, who as both highway authority and landowner of the linking section, would need to be closely involved.

The route might cross the Hampshire County Council land beyond the western edge of the Bushfield site, or be routed (segregated) alongside Badger Farm Road for a short stretch, before connecting, via ramp, with the existing surfaced path from near the pedestrian footbridge that crosses Badger Farm Road. The onward path to Sainsbury's should be designated as shared use, and lit, as should the footbridge, and the footpath on the other side of the bridge towards Olivers Battery primary school.

This would clearly require collaboration with Hampshire and Winchester authorities, but establishing a safe, legal route for cyclists between these suburbs and Bushfield Camp will be beneficial to all parties in meeting environmental objectives and improving the commercial viability of the Bushfield Camp development. The route from the site boundary would be approximately 600m long and easily walked or cycled.

Additionally this link would provide a safer route for all cyclists travelling between Badger Farm / Olivers Battery, and Compton / Otterbourne and all points south. Currently only the bravest tackle the fast and dangerous Badger Farm Road.

It should be a condition of planning approval that this important link be provided prior to first occupation of the site.

Access from the South

It's clear the applicant has given a lot of attention to access from the south. While we don't agree with all the decisions, we welcome the specificity of the proposal.

Connectivity with the NCN23 'Viaduct Way' is enhanced, and this will allow some residents from the eastern part of Winchester city to access Bushfield Camp via a largely traffic-free route.

We also note that, if the connectivity deficiencies we have noted at the north of the site are rectified, then a low-traffic loop can be formed from Domum Road, Viaduct Way, Bushfield Camp, Christchurch Road, Kingsgate Road / Street, College Street and College Way. This could be an attractive and family-friendly leisure ride. Once again, close collaboration with Winchester and Hampshire active travel teams to define a funded proposal would be welcome. There are benefits for all parties.

We have two major concerns with access from the south however:

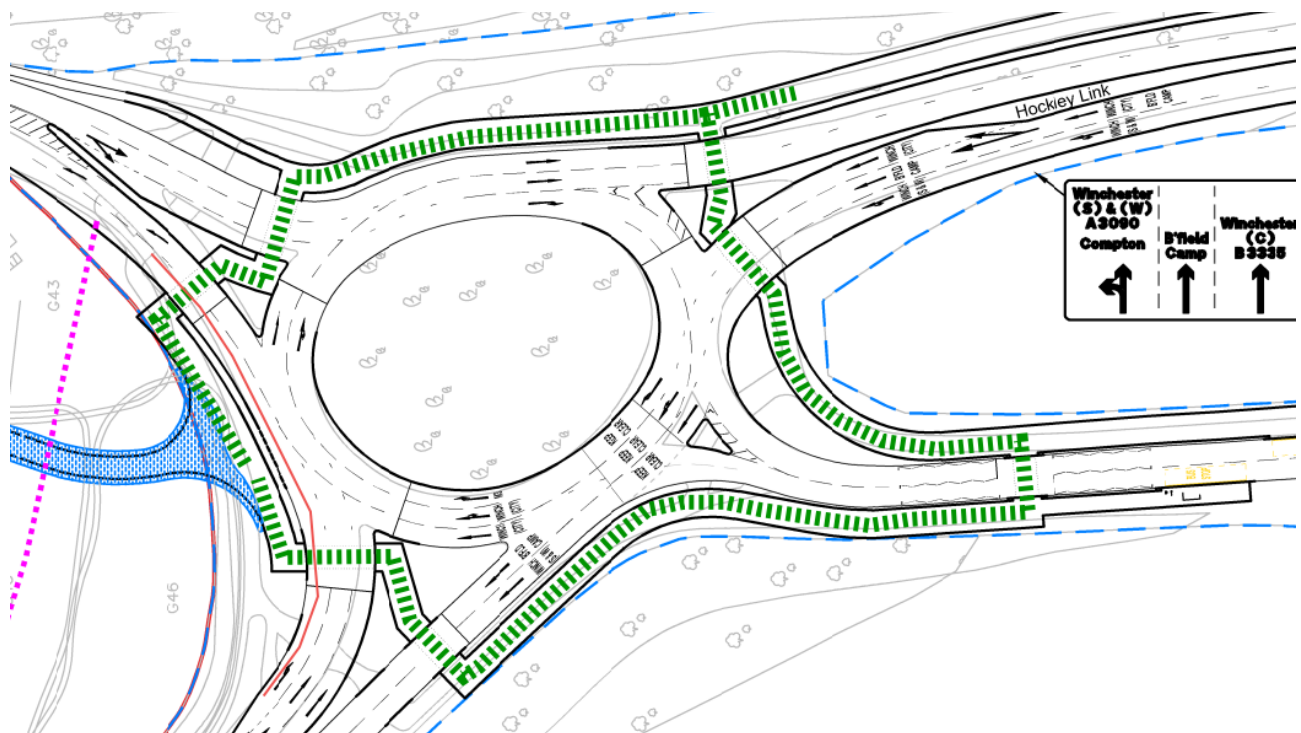
The St Cross Road roundabout

Signalised crossing of the major roads around St Cross roundabout is not ideal for cyclists in principle, though it may be the pragmatic choice. Our main concern is that the design of the crossing points is needlessly indirect, with many right-angled turns, and does not conform with LTN 1/20.

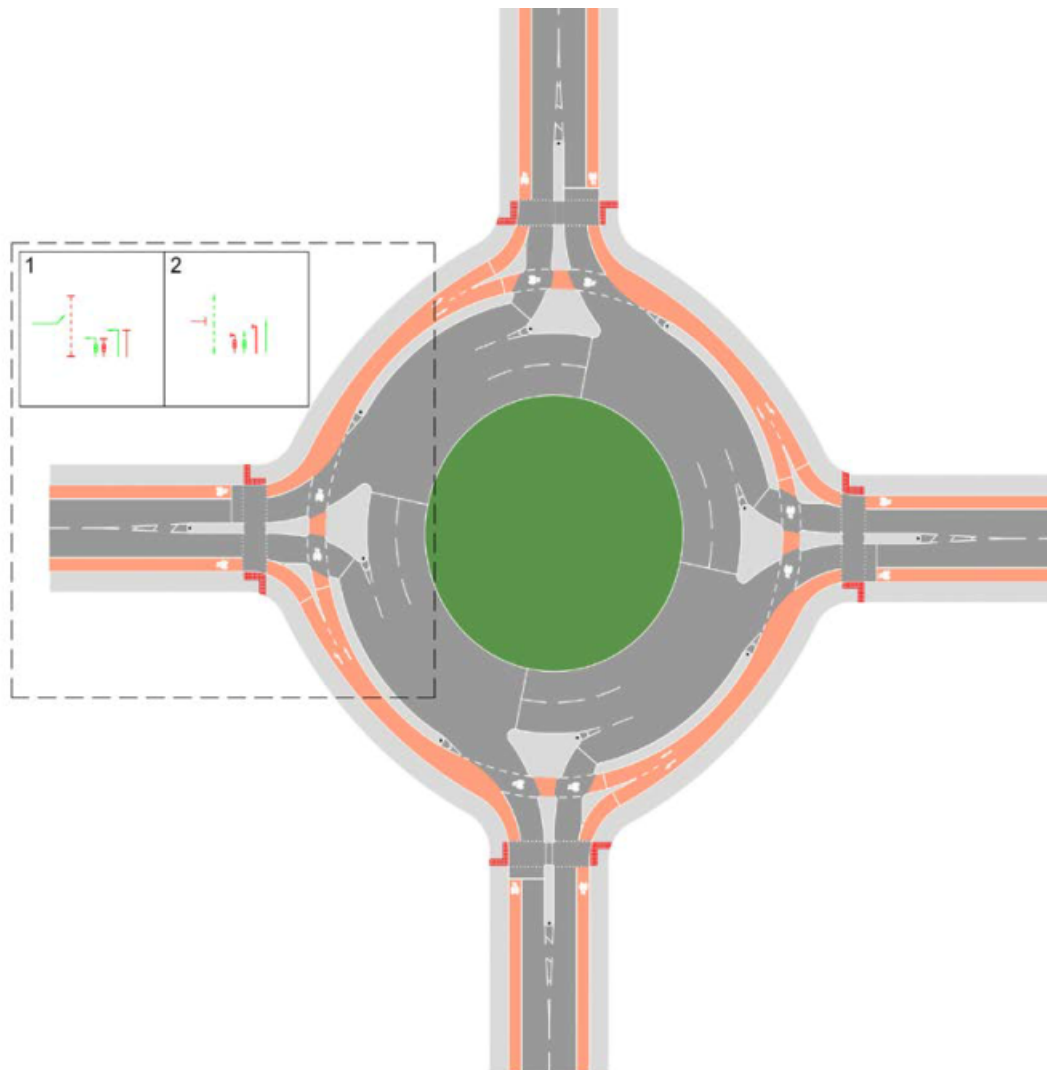
See LTN 1/20 section 10.7 on roundabouts, 5.9 on horizontal curve radii, and Summary principle #18:

18) Cycle routes must flow, feeling direct and logical. Users should not feel as if they are having to double back on themselves, turn unnecessarily, or go the long way round. Often, cycling schemes - when crossing a main road, for instance - require cyclists to make a series of ninety-degree turns to carry out a movement that a motor vehicle at the same location could do without turning at all. Schemes should be based on a proper understanding of how people actually behave rather than how they might be expected to behave.

The proposed roundabout design does almost exactly the opposite of this. The diagram below highlights the tortuous and hazardous route the cycleway around the roundabout takes (green dotted line) compared to the on-road route.:



Contrast this with the example design shown in LTN 1/20, showing a safe cyclepath on a large roundabout, with smooth, flowing curves and good visibility (orange lines):



We note also that the proposed design increases the number of entry and exit lanes on some arms of the junction, as well as on the west side of the roundabout. For vehicular cyclists (of which there are currently many) this greatly increases the risk involved in traversing the roundabout. A 2018 statistical study concluded that *“The probability of a serious [cyclist] casualty increases by approximately five times (odds ratio 4.97) for each additional number of lanes on approach.”*¹

The crossing should be streamlined for cyclists, including attention to signal sequence, otherwise the painful crossing of this junction will become a major deterrent to a group whom the applicant is keen to persuade to cycle.

The Otterbourne Road cycle route

We would like to see the off-road cycleway alongside Otterbourne Road extended at least as far as the turning towards Shawford station. This would open up potential for mixed-mode train / bike commuting for those from the south. It would also facilitate cycle commuting from the populations of Shawford, Twyford, Compton, Otterbourne, Chandler’s Ford and Eastleigh. Planning policy requires the applicant to take steps to minimise and mitigate the effects of additional vehicle traffic, and this is an obvious way to do so.

¹ Nurten Akgün, Dilum Dissanayake, Neil Thorpe, Margaret C. Bell: Cyclist casualty severity at roundabouts – To what extent do the geometric characteristics of roundabouts play a part?, Journal of Safety Research, Volume 67, 2018

Access to the bridleway at Bushfield Farm

At the moment this bridleway is almost unused as it terminates at the busy Badger Farm Road with no crossing and no continuation route on the north side.

The proposals would provide a crossing at this point, with a link to the paths and roads within the development. (Transport Assessment 4.75-4.78, appendices C and G2.) This has the potential to provide a leisure route connecting to Oliver's Battery and Compton via existing bridleways and byways, so is welcome.

However, the plans show the crossing as a refuge island built to "HCC Standard Detail HCC11/C/075 Type 8a". According to HCC's standards, this type of crossing is only suitable for pedestrians and only on roads with a 40mph speed limit or lower. It's not appropriate for a shared-use crossing that connects a bridleway to a shared-use path, crossing a 60mph road.

The crossing needs – at the minimum – to be wide enough to accommodate cyclists, and the speed limit would need to be lowered on this section of the road.

As it connects to a bridleway, the crossing should also be appropriate for use by equestrians. The British Horse Society (BHS) should be consulted for guidance on this.

This may seem like a minor detail but it shows again that the detail of proposed non-motorised facilities has not been thought through sufficiently.

The application seeks to exclude Access from the Reserved Matters, meaning that, if the application were accepted, there would be very limited scope for correcting errors and inadequacies introduced at this early stage. We believe that the plans for active travel are at present far too sketchy and unformed for the application to be accepted.