

NMU Audit Report – A27 Southerham to Beddingham Improvements

Brief report by Sustrans 5 August 2008

Introduction

This NMU context report has been prepared at the construction stage in relation to the proposed new road layout for the A27 Southerham to Beddingham Improvements

Scheme Description

The Highways Agency are in the final stages of constructing a new bridge and road improvement scheme on the A27 south east of Lewes. The bridge will replace the level crossing over the south coast railway line from Lewes to the east. The scheme will improve road access to Newhaven port.

Flows

NMU flow data was not available. An inductive loop cycle/pedestrian counter should be included in the scheme.

Traffic count data was not available for the scheme and is requested. In particular the current and projected HGV volumes are relevant.

Desire Lines

The cycle route is part of the National Cycle Network – Regional Route 90. This route starts in Brighton and links to Lewes via the A27. From Lewes the route is the only possible exit to the south east and provides a link to National Cycle Route 2 at Berwick. In future it is being considered to provide a link from Lewes to Eastbourne.

NMU desire lines exist to the east from Lewes to access Ranscombe Lane, the A26 southbound, Glynde Junction, The South Downs Way and The Old Coach Road.

At the Beddingham Roundabout it is likely desire lines will exist from the old A27 carriageway crossing the A26 to the west. Use of the old A27 carriageway by NMUs is also likely to be desirable as a safe and quiet alternative to the main carriageway. This will provide a link to the Glynde junction.

Strategic Objectives

Providing safe and high quality NMU routes as an integral part of new road schemes will help achieve many National, Regional and Local policy objectives based around encouraging modal shift of transport choices away from the private car.

They will also help meet many objectives related to mitigating Climate Change and improving public health. The introductory remark of the DfT's Cycling Policy Overview Document states:

The Government's Aim

The Government's aim is to encourage more people to cycle as cycling helps tackle pollution caused by motor vehicles, congestion and also promotes good health.

The Cycling Policy Overview document is part of an extensive Sustainable Transport section on the DfT website which includes reference to the Highways Agency's own site on influencing travel behaviour. The built environment is recognised as a major factor in enabling behaviour change and the trunk road network has a part to play in providing a built environment conducive to, and inclusive of, alternative transport.

HA site: <http://www.highways.gov.uk/knowledge/9561.aspx>

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence Site:

<http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH8/QuickRefGuide/pdf/English>

5 August 08 Additional note: The DfT has recently published results of its initial consultations in response to the Eddington Study as part of its work "Towards a Sustainable Transport System". These findings give strong support for the need to encourage modal shift to cycling and walking and the consultees also gave strong support for segregated cycle facilities.

Further details at : <http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/transportstrategy/tasts/>

Trip Generators

The South Downs Way Management Plan refers to 20 million visits per year. On a rough apportionment of, say, a 10 mile stretch local to Lewes out of a total length of 100 miles this suggests perhaps 2 million visits in the area of Lewes. If only 5% of these are by bike instead of car then 100 000 car journeys may be saved.

5 August 2008 Additional note: The above is not the best way to evaluate the possible use of this section of path. In fact the SDWMP estimates 20% of the use of the route is cycling which equates to 4 million visits per year. Potential cycle access via the RR90 link might be better evaluated by trips/head of population within the routes catchment area and then calculating the no. of trips the population of Lewes would be likely to make.

Other trip generators served by Regional Route 90 are Firle Place, Drusillas, Middle Farm (café, farm shop, cider centre and small animal attractions), Charleston House and the villages of Glynde and beyond.

Development Proposals of Relevance

Within Lewes there are proposals to improve the existing route from Lewes town centre along the A26 to link in with the existing Regional Route 90 of the National Cycle Network.

There will also be a new incinerator facility at Newhaven which will take refuse from Brighton and Hove. This will be supplied by a shuttle freighter service of HGV's using the A27.

Public Rights of Way Network

Regional Route 90 of the National Cycle Network currently runs along a stretch of the A27 between Southerham and Ranscombe Lane. This is the only NMU access to the South East from Lewes. There are footpaths south alongside the Ouse River and East over Mount Caburn.

Accident Data

Accident data for the stretch in question has not been evaluated as part of this report.

Views of User Groups

A) Cycle Lewes

This group, which aims to promote cycling and improve conditions for cyclists in and around Lewes town, would welcome the improvement of the A27 eastbound route. There is no alternative, even off-road, for cyclists leaving Lewes eastbound. If it is a wider government policy aim to encourage cycling, and the substitution of cycling for car journeys, the path should be made as attractive as possible and not simply the minimum required by the Highways Agency's safety policies alone. So a broader path, proper maintenance of the surface and vegetation, and the provision of barriers should be considered on wider public policy grounds.

As an example, the A27 westbound path from Lewes to Falmer (see photos below) feels minimum and second-rate, in strong contrast to the multi-million pound scheme at Beddingham. There is a strong perceived danger from traffic, heightened this year by an accident in which a car crossed the cycle path and smashed into a wall just before the Kingston roundabout. While statistically the chances of a cyclist being involved may be slight, the perception is that the path is dangerous and unpleasant to ride, and it only appeals to committed and confident cyclists. It is narrow, feels unpleasantly close to the oncoming traffic when riding west, and poor maintenance/repairs have left parts of it are crossed by some 50 cracks some 10cm across and 2cm deep, making it uncomfortable even on a mountain bike.



We would also welcome the creation of a cycle route link to the A26 (Beddingham to Newhaven) and ideally the creation of a cycle route along the A26. Although a major road, the A26 is used by cyclists. Cycle Lewes is increasingly receiving comments about cyclists feeling unsafe on the alternative route from Lewes to Newhaven, the C7 (via Rodmell) and knows of a number of cyclists who prefer to use the A26 for their regular commuting because of its width and better sight lines. Moreover continental cyclists arriving in Newhaven from the ferry often find themselves using the A26 because it is the dominant route on maps and signage.

However heavy traffic and freight use on the A26, particularly at ferry unloading times, is a deterrent and a danger to less confident cyclists.

There is also a desire for a direct continuous cycle route eastbound along the A27 beyond Beddingham roundabout to provide an alternative to Ranscombe Lane for regular utility users, and for less strong cyclists who find Ranscombe Lane too hilly.

5 August 2008 Additional Note: Following a site visit 29 July 08 the above mentioned cracks have been treated with a tar coat. However this has not solved the problem of the hard edges.

B) Bricycles

From: Tony Green [mailto:greentony@btinternet.com]
Sent: Mon 14/07/2008 09:07
To: Chris Boocock
Cc: 'Becky Reynolds'; 'Debra Rolfe'
Subject:

Hi Chris

I rode out along RR90 yesterday morning. It was very disappointing to see that much of the altered bit of track from Southerham to Ranscombe Lane (A26/27T) has been narrowed by approx. 25% (i.e. from 2m wide to approx 1.5m wide). it's now too narrow for cyclists to comfortably pass pedestrians or others on bikes. See attached pics.

Regards
Tony

From: Tony Green [mailto:greentony@btinternet.com]
Sent: Fri 18/07/2008 09:12
To: Chris Boocock
Subject: RR90

Chris

More people, especially those with children, would use this very useful cycle route if there were some protection from the nearby fast moving traffic. A crash barrier between the road and the track seems the obvious solution. If a crash barrier is not possible then at least some picket fencing.

As part of the current A27 work the HA is extending the cycling facilities from Ranscombe Lane to Beddingham roundabout, this is something we very much appreciate. It would be beneficial if there could be a continuation of cycle facility eastward from Beddingham Roundabout to join with the western end of the Firlie Straight cycle track: if this was not possible then at least a continuation as far as the Glynde junction.

Tony

<http://www.bricycles.org.uk/>

C) Ramblers Association

From: chris smith [mailto:chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk]
Sent: Thu 10/07/2008 14:56
To: Chris Boocock
Cc: Malcolm McDonnell (Malcolm Mc Donnell)
Subject: RE: A27 Works at Southerham

So far as I know there was no consultation with the RA, although I have copied this email to Malcolm Mc Donnell just in case. My feeling is that the RA would not be particularly

interested as the cycle route at Southerham along the A27 is almost never used as a walking route to my knowledge. At its east end it finishes at Ranscombe lane, which has no footpaths coming off it until Glynde and at its western end there is only one path on the side road at Southerham, which is before the cycle route along the A27 starts. Walkers would normally use the route over Malling Down instead as this is a fine and dramatic route away from the main road.

Chris Smith, HBHelp
email chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk

Conflict Points

Southerham Lane exit and temporary traveller site exits are potential conflict points with the cycle lane. Appropriate lining and signing should be provided.

Recommendations

A) Barrier Protection.

Due to the predicted increase in heavy goods vehicles (outlined in '**Development Proposals of Relevance**') as well as the existing high level of traffic as observed during the site visit), this report recommends that a barrier should be installed along the length of the existing shared use path and along the proposed shared use path.

The current barrier – a raised kerb – is deemed inappropriate for the following reasons:

1. It does not provide adequate protection to NMUs from vehicles that veer off the road.
2. It does not provide adequate protection for vulnerable NMU users that we would expect to be using the route, especially for recreational purposes.
3. As the only route south east of Lewes that can be used to access the local countryside and in particular the South Downs AONB it is vital that the perception of NMU is one that the shared use path is safe to use. For instance, parents cycling with children may wish to avoid using the road as it would be very easy for children, especially when they are learning to cycle, to veer off the path and into the line of traffic with serious consequences.
4. Sustrans has already raised the issue of barriers with the Highways Agency and have been given a number of reasons as to why barriers should not be installed:
 - a) There is a requirement for a 'crash envelope' – the existing space does not allow for this envelope, especially as space is required to provide a drainage ditch.
 - b) Clearance is required for the barrier from the running lane.
 - c) There is a power cable located – this will make installation of the barrier difficult.

Whilst we agree that the reasons given are valid, they are not insurmountable, and the degree of protection given by the barrier, the improved perception of safety and in providing for the needs of the most vulnerable NMUs, the barrier would still be a desirable aspect of the scheme if we wish to improve upon the existing provisions for NMUs.

B) Additional points

5. The scheme shows a number of new access roads and links. Consideration should be given to access for these links to NMUs.
6. A signing schedule for NMUs should be drawn up with Sustrans and the Local Authorities
7. Overall the width allowed to the shared use, un-segregated path is minimal – 2.0m reducing to 1.5m.– this is in the context of a total of 5.5m being available in places. We recommend that more of the 5.5 m is made available to NMUs wherever possible.

The minimum recommended width for a shared use path is 3.0m “ref: National Cycle Network Guidelines and Practical Details.”

8. Bridge crossings could also be protected by barriers –There is sufficient space to provide both parapets and segregating safety barriers across the bridge.
9. Vegetation is encroaching onto the path shared-use path along the A27 between Southerham and Ranscombe Lane – this is in some places reducing the overall width below 2m. We recommend that the vegetation management of this stretch forms part of the overall maintenance schedule for the A27.
10. Cleaning and maintenance arrangements for the access path alongside the Glynde Reach River should be robust as the volume of cattle using the path could be high – the auditors noted a high level of manure on the path. This could become off putting and in extremis even impassable. These should be in addition to the cleaning and maintenance arrangements for the route as a whole.
11. New roundabout at junction with A26 (Beddingham). Little consideration seems to have been given to southbound NMUs. The proposed at grade refuge crossing at Beddingham is an estimated 250 m from the junction. For NMUs this is a round trip of 500m, which is inconvenient and well away from the desire line of cyclists travelling from the west and making a right hand turn at the roundabout. We recommend that flush kerbs are incorporated into the splitter island to allow those not wishing to use the at grade refuge to do so.
12. Path on the Eastern side of the A26 should be widened to allow shared use and on the Western side a ramp should be provided from the southern end of the safety barrier to the lane.

Please also see: *Report Appendix – DMRB HD40.25 February 2005 Annex A A27 EDIT*

Report written by Chris Boocock and Paul Hilton (Sustrans) 21/07/08, 5/08/08
Site visit conducted by Chris Boocock and Paul Hilton (Sustrans) 26/6/08

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