



Consultation response

St Mary's Roundabout/Forest Road junction proposals

February 2018

About CycleWight

CycleWight is an advocacy group that seeks better cycle provision on the Island. We will cooperate with any organisation or individual that wishes to work towards that goal. We do not see ourselves as a “cycle interests” group, rather we aim to bring about changes that enable ordinary people to choose to cycle as one of their transport options. Our work is for cyclists, but also for not-yet cyclists. Evidence from across the UK and internationally shows that where appropriate provision is made (i.e. high quality infrastructure) large numbers of people cycle for transport.

Our consultation submission

Our submission will address our response to these proposals in these key areas:

1. The rationale for the scheme.
2. The timing of the scheme.
3. The consultation process
4. Overall scheme design, particularly in relation to people cycling.
5. Detailed design issues and potential solutions.

In some areas we have explicitly addressed walking and mobility impaired users as well as cycling. While our remit is principally cycling, we believe walking and cycling should both be encouraged through the creation of an environment that is conducive to both.

1. The rationale for the scheme.

These proposals are part of a series of proposed junction changes to increase traffic flows in Newport. The rationale appears to be that these changes are needed to facilitate growth in the Medina Valley area, essentially adopting a “predict and provide” model. We believe there is substantial evidence that this approach to transport planning is seriously flawed and

we would suggest that the Isle of Wight Council should take a more forward looking approach and consider “mobility in an integrated, holistic fashion, rather than merely as a dimension of economic growth.” (Goulden, Ryley and Dingwall, 2014)

Such an approach would look much more closely at opportunities to reduce travel demand and create an environment where walking and cycling for transport was normalised and well provided for and where public transport was prioritised. Capital schemes would prioritise, rather than marginalise, non-car modes. This approach would be in line with the council’s policies set out in the Island Plan and Island Transport Plan.

“One of our challenges is to improve our network to make the best use of our highway space. The Island has a limited transport network with often narrow roads and historic urban street patterns. The width and route of our roads means that we have very few options in terms of improving traffic priority or providing route segregation.” (Island Transport Plan A.5)

Even within the context of accommodating predicted traffic increases, we are not convinced a clear case has been made for the approach taken rather than alternative possibilities.

2. The timing of the scheme.

The St Mary’s junction changes form a part of a series of planned modifications to the highway network in the area. Our observation is that this part of the plan would not appear to be the highest priority, other junctions provide more of a capacity issue as well as more conflict between motor vehicles and other users (for example, the Riverway junctions provide a peak capacity issue but also major problems for the large volumes of pedestrians trying to cross, and for people cycling who have no choice but to use the carriageway in very difficult conditions).

Further, we are concerned that undertaking this work ahead of other junction changes is likely to create significant extra traffic on Hunnyhill. Hunnyhill was historically the main route north from Newport, but was bypassed by Medina Way. These proposals appear likely to shift more of that bypass traffic back onto the original street, which is as inappropriate for the use as it was when Medina Way was built.

3. The consultation process

For some months CycleWight has been trying to engage with the Council over these plans, aiming to have an input at an early stage so plans fully consider the needs of people cycling (including those who might like to cycle but feel unable to because of conditions on our roads). Unfortunately the public consultation has been the first opportunity for us to provide any input. We welcome this opportunity, and as you will see have gone to

significant lengths to try and engage with it in a way that brings forward a better quality approach. We strongly believe much wider, and deeper, consultation and community engagement should be a part of all further development on this project and the other Newport junction schemes. The Island Core Strategy 7.1 states that the Council should work closely with stakeholders. In regard to the present scheme under consultation we believe user groups such as CycleWight should continue to be involved as detailed design work progresses. Apparently minor details can make a huge difference to the usability of a route for people cycling, and can make the difference between people cycling there, or avoiding it completely (by using the carriageway or by using another mode).

“It is now considered best practice for transport professionals to act as facilitators of engagement – providing technical guidance, knowledge and advice on schemes – and not simply to ‘ask for your view’. While involving the public as little as possible may make professional life easier in the short term, the reason that more proactive participation is considered best practice is because it is likely to deliver better outcomes in the long term.” **(Involving the public and other stakeholders, Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, 2017)**

We also believe there should be wider consultation about the junction proposals cumulatively, and much more discussion about how they interrelate with each other and with other local streets. Increasing main-road capacity could be a useful tool to drastically reduce traffic volumes in local streets, allowing the creation of a much more vibrant, healthy town centre and more liveable residential streets. However, if each junction is discussed in isolation, these sorts of benefits are unlikely to be realised.

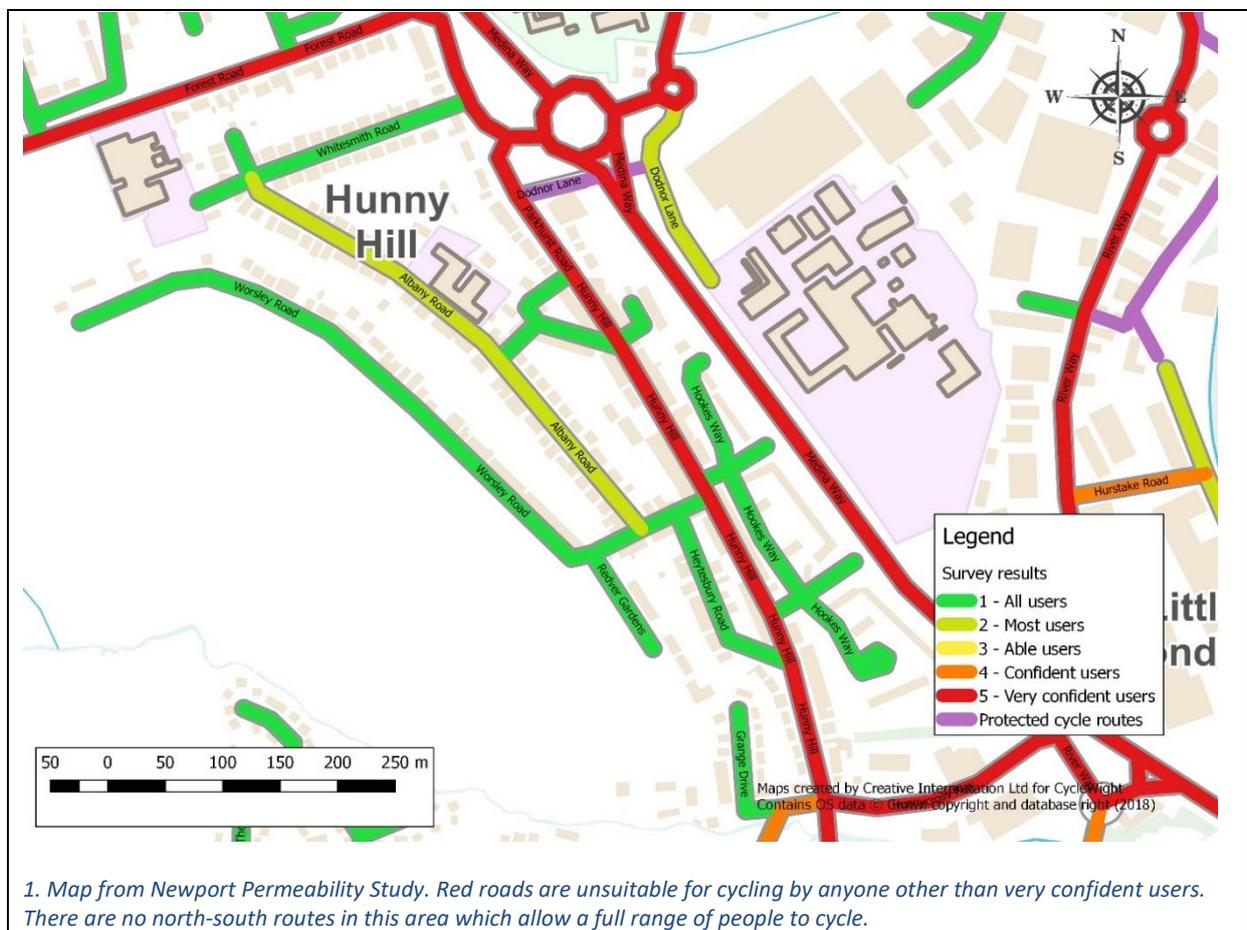
4. Overall scheme design, particularly in relation to people cycling.

If schemes to increase vehicle capacity around/into Newport are to achieve their aim of relieving congestion then it is imperative that they also support the council’s ongoing work to encourage modal shift to walking, cycling and use of public transport underpinned by Island Core Strategy DM17. In our view the plans, as set out, do not deliver the quality of environment required to foster an increase in walking and cycling. However, we believe with some design changes walking and cycling could be much better provided for, helping reduce car use and hence the congestion issues this project seeks to address.

Proposals for people cycling must be integral to the schemes and not seen as secondary. The project’s aim is to reduce congestion, and well-planned design for cycling (suitable for all abilities) can bring about major modal shift and hence make a significant contribution to the overall plan.

We believe that the scheme presented creates a more intimidating on-road environment for people cycling and walking, with extra traffic lanes and a likelihood of increased speeds and volumes of traffic in various locations. This further underlines the need for high-quality cycle, walking and mobility impaired provision to ensure these people are not squeezed out further.

CycleWight’s recent cycle permeability study highlights the area between the town centre and the hospital as a significant problem area. North-South routes are not of a suitable quality for safe, convenient cycling and are likely to deter all but the most confident and experienced of cyclists. This is a key issue given the significant commuter flows between Carisbrooke/Newport and Dodnor/Riverway/St. Mary’s.



The Provision of high-quality cycle infrastructure could mitigate the poor quality of the environment for cycling on the existing network and reverse the marginalisation of cycling. This would maximise the effect of the council’s ongoing work through the Access Fund programme to encourage people to commute by bike, by providing a safe, convenient environment for ordinary people. The funds objectives, which in the current round, has attracted £1.4 million, would be more likely to be achieved if the points made in this

submission were adopted and hence further DfT investment in the Island's sustainable transport activities is much more likely to be provided

The Access Fund bid clearly set out the importance of matching the revenue funding activities in the programme with capital investment in infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling. Newport Junction Improvements were specifically identified as an area that could contribute to the project's objectives and the bid states that "The needs of cyclists and walkers will be fully considered and included within schemes coming forward." The bid sets stretching targets, "Our forecasts for workplace engagement include a 2.2 percentage point increase in cycling mode share for commuting, taking the figure over 10% by the end of 19/20." We believe reaching (and even exceeding) this target will be significantly more likely if high quality walking and cycling infrastructure is integrated into the planned junction changes.

Creating a high-quality walking environment is also important. Walking is the main mode of travel for short trips nationally, but walking for utility purposes is relatively low on the Island, suggesting that improvement of the walking environment could shift a significant number of short car trips to walking.

Any highway improvement scheme which does not make significant improvements in these areas alongside any increases in vehicle capacity is unlikely to succeed in anything more than creating more car trips, more pollution, and further marginalising walking and cycling as modes of transport.

5. Detailed design issues and potential solutions.

Hunnyhill

The layout shown at the top of Hunnyhill allows for much faster vehicle speeds into this residential street. The layout makes no provision for transition from the fast moving environment of the dual carriageway and St Mary's roundabout itself to recondition drivers to appropriate speeds for a residential street and increased attention to pedestrians and cyclists. A greater sense of transition could be achieved by adjusting the design to one that slows drivers down through the bend at the top, adjusting to the new environment, rather than being funnelled at speed into a complex local street environment. The hatched area on the inside of the bend would appear to be redundant highway and could be removed, with the kerblines following the edge of the nearside lane, tighter geometry and narrower lane widths used.

The straight section of road included in the plan appears to have lane widths of ca. 4m, which is excessive for this sort of street and likely to encourage inappropriate speeds for a residential street. Figures in Manual for Streets (p89 Figure 6.3.22) suggest narrowing the carriageway width from 8m to 7m could see a speed reduction in the region of 7mph. This would free up width for additional footway provision and would ensure the character of Hunnyhill as a residential street is reinforced. 4m wide lanes are also likely to encourage unsafe overtaking of cyclists. Narrower lanes are more likely to create an environment where drivers to wait until a safe overtaking manoeuvre can be carried out. A narrower carriageway would also tie in with the character of the street further south, where the carriageway narrows below 6m wide in places.

The bus stop on the southbound carriageway appears to narrow the footway to around 1m in front of the shelter, which would be very difficult to negotiate in a wheelchair and impossible in some mobility scooters or for accompanied pedestrians. Extra width could be provided here through narrowing the carriageway. (Manual for Street P68 6.3.20 -6.3.23)

Additional waiting space could be provided for the proposed crossing if the carriageway was narrowed as suggested earlier. This would allow people to wait more easily without obstructing through travel on the footway.

The footway alongside the northbound carriageway bus stop is narrow, appearing to be under 1.5m. Manual for Streets specifies the minimum footway width in a purely residential road should normally be 2m. Given this area will be used by people waiting for the bus as much width as possible should be provided. Once again, reduction of the carriageway width would allow for widening here, without losing the bus layby, which is important to maintain visibility of the crossing when buses are stopped.

There is a very well used shared-use route from Hunnyhill through an underpass to Dodnor Lane. This should be linked in to the proposed new shared use path along Hunnyhill and Medina Way. In addition the existing route could be widened at the Hunnyhill end, narrowing as it gets closer to the underpass. This will reduce conflict on this section, provide more space for people cycling as they climb the incline and provide a transition to the narrow underpass section of route, helping cyclists adapt their speed to the changing conditions without the need for barriers, which restrict accessibility. Segregation of the underpass should be removed, painted segregation, particularly on narrow routes creates more problems than it solves. At the other end of the underpass a transition to the carriageway needs to be provided.

Forest Road Junction

The two left-turn slip roads used here are likely to encourage higher speeds than would be ideal in an area where people on foot, on bikes and in cars will interact, thanks to a combination of large radius curves and wide lanes (London Cycling Design Guidance 5.1.4, Manual for Street 7.4.1, 7.4.4). Removing these and widening the main junction mouth to accommodate left turns would enable a simplification of the junction, remove two sets of traffic lights, reduce the dominance of the road, ensure traffic turning into Forest Road undergoes a transition as drivers move into a residential area (also containing a school) and allow for a revised shared path layout that would make the route safer and more convenient and locate it further away from neighbouring houses. This change may create minor delays to some motor vehicles turning left towards Cowes, however it would not appear likely to reduce junction capacity.

Modifying the junction along these lines would allow the removal of the separate toucan crossing, with the crossing relocated in front of the stop line for traffic exiting Forest Road. This would also enable the crossing to more tightly integrate with the junction, potentially reducing delays for all users. It would also enable much larger waiting areas and crossing width to be created, reducing conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Push buttons could also be located further back from the carriageway to allow cyclists to access these without having to overhang the carriageway.

Proposed Shared Use Path

CycleWight have various concerns regarding the shared use path, which we are led to believe has not yet been fully designed. We believe the route needs to be created carefully, rather than simply designating a stretch of footway as shared use. Concerns exist over all transition points between carriageway and off-carriageway routes; both toucan crossings (limited waiting and turning space); the crossing of Whitesmith Road; and the area around the bus stop opposite the hospital entrance. We would request groups such as CycleWight are consulted over these sorts of design details.

We have outlined on the attached maps a modified approach to provision of this route, which we believe would lead to fewer delays for people cycling, safer access to/from the route, and inclusion of a greater range of turning options than the current layout allows for. This also highlights additional changes we would like to see, such as a bus stop bypass to reduce conflict around this area.

Transitions between the carriageway and shared path should be completely flush, ideally without any kerb or channel line. A direct tarmac to tarmac transition allows a smooth

movement; dropped kerbs or even flush channels (which often do not remain flush) have the potential to grab wheels of bicycles and mobility aids and can cause falls. Sharp turns should be avoided as these can be uncomfortable and hazardous, and particularly disadvantage disabled cyclists.

Medina Way Toucan Crossing

We were pleased to be informed that this crossing will be redesigned as part of the project. It is currently sub-standard for pedestrians, and certainly not able to accommodate cycles. From a cycling perspective a single phase straight through crossing would provide a significantly better option than a staggered arrangement which is always difficult on a cycle, and even more so for disabled cyclists using non-standard cycles (handcycles, recumbents, trikes etc.). We appreciate that the current carriageway width is such that guidance suggests a staggered crossing should normally be provided (though in some areas longer straight-through crossings have been used successfully). This location may need a creative solution to ensure all users can be accommodated effectively. We would be happy to contribute further to development of an appropriate solution here.

Active Travel on the eastern side of Medina Way

While provision has been made for a shared path on the western side of the road, no provision has been made on the eastern side. Given the environment the main road provides for cycling we believe there is a need for separate cycling facilities on both sides of the road. At present the proposal appears to retain a footway on this side to the same width as currently provided, which at 1.5m is sub-standard even for pedestrian use. It would appear to be relatively straightforward to widen this section to a minimum of 3m and create a shared-use path on this side of the road. In some areas some carriageway width may need to be lost, however this could be accommodated through creation of slightly less generous lane widths, while still providing adequate width for HGV and bus use. We have illustrated this proposal on the attached map. We would suggest this route could be created from Hewitt Crescent (or at the very least from the hospital) to the entrance of the underpass adjacent to B&Q/IW College as part of this phase of the Newport junction improvements, with the opportunity to extend the route to Riverway/Little London at a later stage, possibly in conjunction with the remodelling of the Riverway junction. Once completed this would provide a useful link between the town/NCN 23/22 and the hospital, prison and industrial estates, inducing modal shift for commuting and other trips in line with the Island's Local Transport Plan and the Transport Infrastructures Task Force Report. It would also provide a significantly improved pedestrian route, encouraging more walking trips.

B&Q roundabout

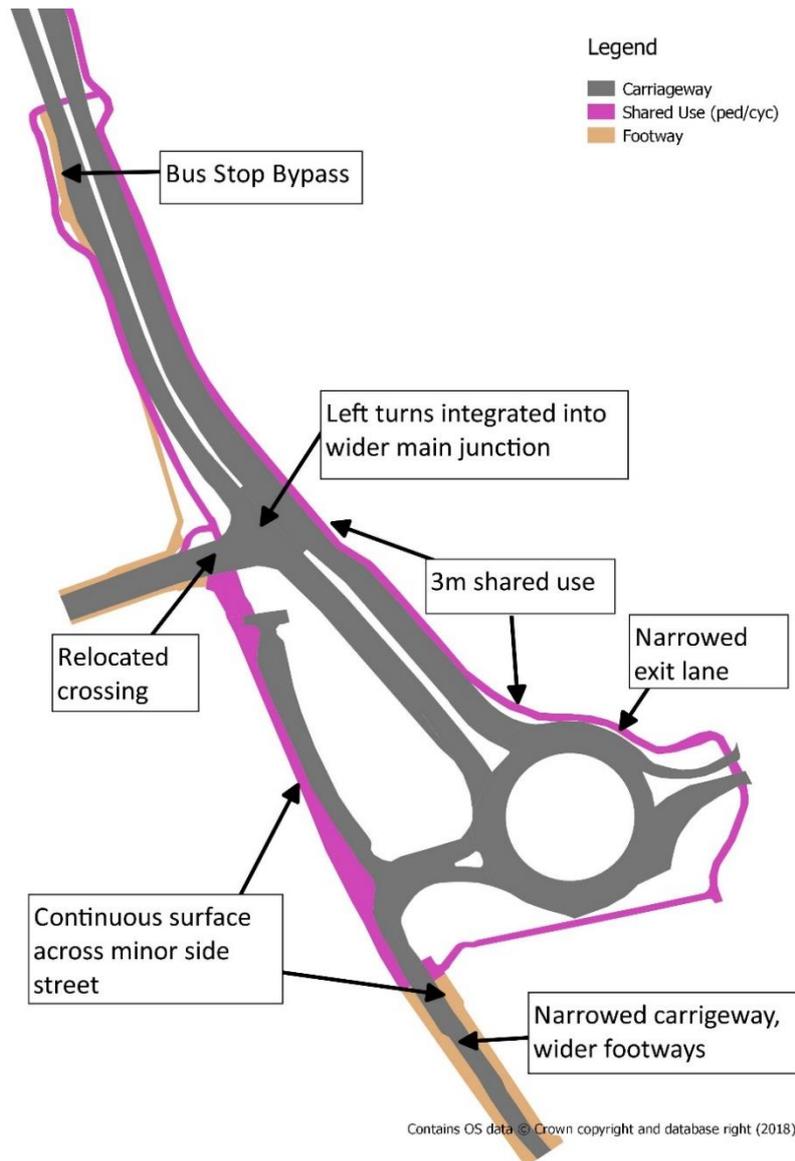
Traffic leaving the St Mary's roundabout towards the smaller B&Q roundabout does so at speed, with no little sense of transition from a high-speed to low-speed environment. The pedestrian crossing at this point involves a wide road crossing and fast-moving vehicles whose attention is focused on other vehicles rather than pedestrians. Minor remodelling of this short section of road would enable traffic to be slowed as it exits St Mary's roundabout and focus attention more onto the crossing point. It is clear that HGVs need to be accommodated to service the Industrial Estate, but some road narrowing could take place without detriment to HGV movements, and further narrowing of the main carriageway could be undertaken with an overrun area added for HGVs. The crossing point could be narrowed, and the central refuge widened. These improvements would increase safety and comfort for pedestrians, allow for the creation of a cycle crossing and have minimal or no reduction of vehicle capacity.

Side Road treatments

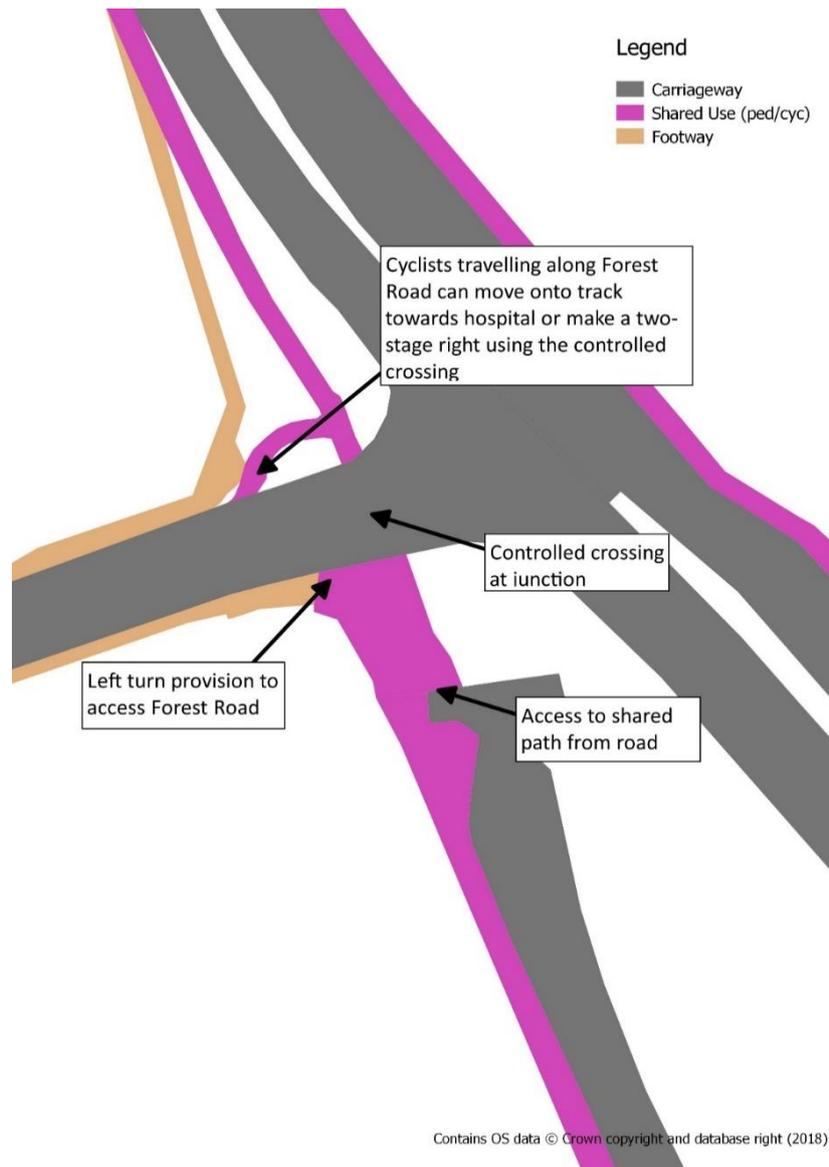
Whitesmith Road and Dodnor Lane should be modified to a continuous footway arrangement, or at very least have an entrance treatment with a raised crossing. This allows pedestrian/cycle crossings to be level and (in the case of continuous footway) to give clear pedestrian priority and is more suited to the nature of these streets than the proposed arrangements. Dodnor Lane in particular serves very little purpose as a vehicular highway having been truncated by Medina Way, but has a high pedestrian footfall, which will be increased by the proposed changes to crossing and bus stop arrangements.

Continuity of cycle routes

For cycle routes to be a success they must be continuous and involve the least interruption to progress. Cyclists dismount signs should not be used in any section of the proposed route. We would also suggest that "end of route" signs are unnecessary. Where a route re-joins the highway this can be made clear in other ways.



Outline of an alternative approach, with improved access to/from shared route, fewer conflict points and more direct routes for people cycling and walking. Provision is also made on the eastern side to accommodate a much wider range of trips and ultimately provide a continuous all-ability route to Newport. **N.B. Diagram is illustrative only.** We would be happy to discuss the concept further.



Closer view of Forest Road/Medina Way junction. Reintegrating left turns into the main junction (further widened to accommodate HGV turning) allows removal of the Toucan crossing with substandard waiting areas and poor cycle access and creation of a more direct cycle route, integrated with the main traffic lights at the junction. This arrangement also creates proper access to/from Forest Road. **N.B. Diagram is illustrative only.** We would be happy to discuss the concept further.