# Push Bikes' response to the consultation

Push Bikes is Birmingham's cycle campaign group, and we have been heavily involved in responding to the plans for the cycle infrastructure built as part of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution, including the initial cycle track along the A38 from the city centre to Selly Oak.

We are broadly supportive of the proposals for an extension of the cycle track from Selly Oak to Northfield, but while there are many good points about these plans, there are some areas where we feel improvement is needed.

In particular, we feel that the numerous uncontrolled turning points through the central reservation will be dangerous and put off potential users. In this response we outline an alternative that we think would reduce the number of crossings to increase safety without significantly altering the routes of car drivers accessing minor side roads. It is important, however, that major flows of motor traffic are routed through the traffic-light controlled junctions that give motor and cycle traffic separate light phases.

We agree with and support the response to this consultation made by Better Streets for Birmingham, which makes numerous good points about the plans. In addition, the outstanding snags they highlight for the existing A38 cycle track are important issues that need addressing.

## Positive aspects of the designs:

- The plans have a good level of continuity for cycle users, which will help cycle users to move swiftly between the local centres on this route, and help them connect to the city centre.
- The numerous upgrades to existing crossings of the A38, introducing traffic light controls, will help both pedestrians and cycle users to cross this busy road.

- The introduction of a new traffic-light controlled crossroads where Middle Park Road and Bournville Road meet the A38 will improve safety for all road users.
- The introduction of traffic lights to control the junction of South Road and Bristol Road will improve safety at this blackspot, where there were 11 collisions recorded between 2019 and 2023.

# Areas for improvement:

## (1) Passing points:

- The passing points on the cycle track at the steep section are too short to provide any opportunity to overtake. If there are concerns that the 3 meter width of this section of the cycle track is too narrow for cycle users to overtake safely, then the width along the whole section should be increased.

## (2) Northfield local centre:

- There is a break in the quality level of the cycle route through Northfield local centre, when cycle users will be directed to use shared-use pavements. Further plans should be developed to address this gap in the route.
    - At the north end of the local centre, the island in the middle of the staggered toucan crossing is too narrow to be safe and comfortable for cycle users. The tightly constricted middle of the island will significantly hinder passage by cycle users such that an increase in cycling numbers could lead to cycle traffic jams at this location and cycle users potentially being stuck in the carriageway when the lights change. This is a hazard that urgently needs addressing in the designs of this scheme.
    - Although there are traffic light controlled crossings for Bell Lane, the other side roads and car park entrances through the local centre present breaks in continuity for the shared-use pavements. At a minimum, these breaks in the pavement need to be addressed, to provide more continuity for cycle traffic on this route.

    - Herbert Austin car park entrance: This presents more risk because of the uncontrolled right turn into the car park, where car drivers rely on the nearby pedestrian crossing to create gaps in the flow of motor traffic. There is a risk that car drivers will not pay attention to cycle users on the shared use pavement when they are turning into the car park. With no clear indication that there is a cycle route here, then car drivers will not expect there to be more cycle users crossing here.

# (3) Central reservation turning gaps:

- The 22 uncontrolled turning gaps in the central reservation along the length of this route present a hazard to both cycle users and motor vehicles. Having an average of over 4 turning gaps per kilometre of cycle track introduces numerous points of conflict where road traffic collisions may occur.
- On the original A38 cycle track, there is a similar uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Eastern Road, which is a heavily trafficked rat-run. There were 5 road traffic collisions recorded there from 2019 to 2023, 2 of which involved cycle users, and cycle track users report commonly seeing car drivers ignoring cycle priority. It is important that we are designing cycling infrastructure which parents will feel happy to let their children cycle to school on, but these numerous uncontrolled turning gaps will create points of danger that could have a significant impact on the attractiveness of this cycle track.
- We propose that the 22 turning points are rationalised into a set of gyratory systems, each roughly 800 meters in length, which will make driving less direct than cycling without being unreasonable or significantly altering the routing of other transport modes.

## Design principles:

1. Separation of motor vehicle turning movements:
    - Central reservation cut-throughs should only permit U-turn movements, not direct access into and out of side-roads.
    - Separating turning movements makes them simpler and safer, reducing the cognitive load on drivers. When drivers are crossing the cycle track,

we want them to be focused on that as much as possible rather than trying to rush through a gap in several lanes of fast moving traffic.

- If it is impossible to separate the turning movements, then traffic lights must be installed to make the junction safe for all road users, as is proposed at the junction of South Road with the A38.

2. Discourage rat-running:
    - The placement of the cut-throughs should focus on turning movements to reach streets and facilities that are only accessible from Bristol Road, such as New Farm House Drive and the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital.
    - Cut-throughs should be placed so that rat-runs, such as Griffins Brook Lane and Hill Top Road, are difficult to reach. The heavy flows of motor traffic along rat-runs need to be re-directed through the light-controlled junctions on the A38, so that motor and cycle traffic are given separate light phases.
3. Provide deceleration lanes:
    - Motor vehicles queuing to use a U-turn facility block the right-hand lane, encouraging other drivers to weave between lanes unpredictably. Where rat-runs flow through a turning gap, the queues can be substantial, but queues can sometimes form at even lightly used turning facilities. The current designs only provide space for 1 motor vehicle to queue off the right-hand lane at most of the cut-throughs.
    - Deceleration lanes allow drivers to come to a safe stop and wait for an opportunity to turn, improving safety for all road users.
    - If the predicted flow of motor traffic would be too great for a deceleration lane, then traffic lights should be considered to permit queuing motor traffic to U-turn more quickly.

## Example of our proposals:

Here is an example of how we would propose implementing a gyratory system in the area immediately to the south of the new traffic light controlled junction with Bournville Lane, Middle Park Road and the A38.

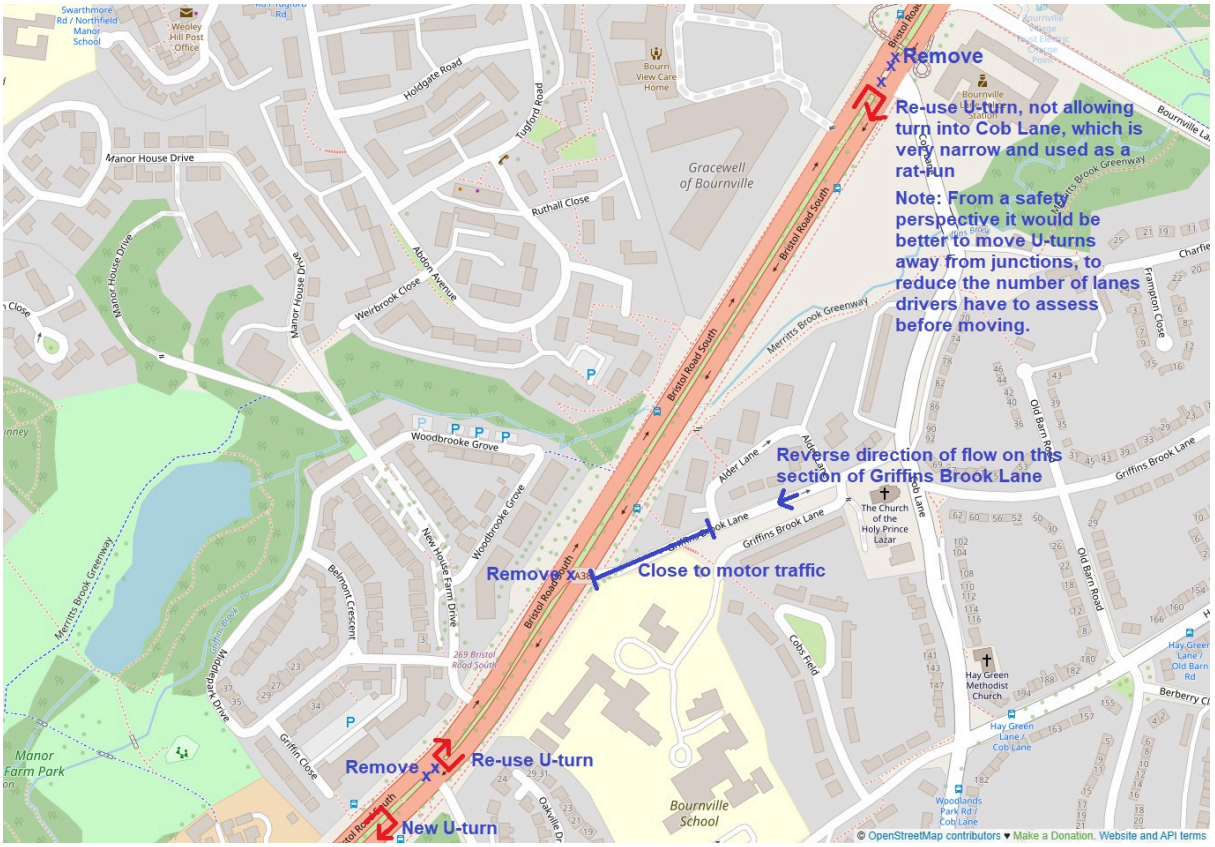
Cob Lane, Griffins Brook Lane and Hole Lane all have substantial volumes of motor traffic using these side roads as rat-runs. Griffins Brook Lane has already

been reduced from two-way to one-way motor traffic to attempt to reduce the motor traffic outside the school. Our proposals would maintain access to side streets such as New House Farm Drive and College Green while reducing the amount of motor traffic that can access the rat-runs.

Cob Lane and Hole Lane would still be accessible for motor traffic travelling south on the A38, and motor traffic exiting these two roads would still be able to turn north, although they would need to travel south before doing so. Motor traffic travelling north and wanting to turn into these side roads would be able to do so, but would need to travel further to do that. For example, north-bound motor traffic heading to Hole Lane would need to use the u-turn facility just before Cob Lane, rather than turning directly into Hole Lane. This would reduce the utility of these roads for rat-runs while still allowing access for residents.

We suggest closing off to motor traffic the section of Griffins Brook Lane between the A38 and Alder Lane. Push Bikes has made this suggestion before in response to another consultation, receiving support from Councillor John O'Shea. Restricting that section of Griffins Brook Lane to active travel modes would have a very positive impact for the school.

Our proposals here would reduce the number of cut-throughs on this section from 6 to 3, none of which would be crossing directly into a side road, separating the turning movements into simpler manoeuvres.


Remove
Re-use U-turn, not allowing turn into Cob Lane, which is very narrow and used as a rat-run
Note: From a safety perspective it would be better to move U-turns away from junctions, to reduce the number of lanes drivers have to assess before moving.
Reverse direction of flow on this section of Griffins Brook Lane
Close to motor traffic
Remove
Re-use U-turn
New U-turn
Bristol Road South
Griffins Brook Lane
Merritts Brook Greenway
Manor House Drive
Woodbrooke Grove
Bournville School
Gracewell of Bournville
Hay Green Methodist Church
The Church of the Holy Prince Lazar
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