

Westbury Transport and Place-making Group
Response to Falcondale Road/ Henbury Road Junction engagement

Who we are

We are a group of residents who are considering potential transport and place-making improvements in Westbury village. We are doing this because the Council will at some future date be revisiting its proposals for Westbury village through the A4018 scheme, mitigating the impact of traffic flows from the new housing developments in South Gloucestershire.

General comments

We are generally supportive of the proposals, but we would have welcomed more explanation of the reasoning behind the proposals.

We ask for assurance that the proposals complement the work of the A4018 scheme, and in particular the impact on traffic flows in the Village. Whilst we understand that these proposals come from the Traffic Signals team, we would expect there to have been some liaison with the A4018 project team. These proposals should not be seen in isolation a) because of potential unforeseen consequences and b) the logic of the A4018 system being seen as one, both along its route and its interface with the Village. We would like to engage with you so that we can understand this better, for instance to understand any traffic flow modelling that has been done.

Specific comments

Upgrading the lights: we welcome the improvement to the traffic lights as they fail regularly, causing problems when out of action.

Banned right turn for outbound traffic: The proposal seems sensible. It cuts out a significant safety risk of cars outbound turning right into Henbury Road, thus encouraging vehicles behind them to push into the nearside lane. This would also allow vehicles to choose the outside lane to turn right at Greystoke Avenue. (We support the dropping of the 2019 A4018 scheme proposals to ban other turns at this junction.)

Pedestrian safety. The proposal for a larger safety island (enabled by making the RH lane coming into town for turning-right traffic only) is to be welcomed. We observe a lot of pedestrian traffic crossing from E to W and W to E, particularly at school entry and exit from WoT Primary and Bristol Free schools. The very nature of young teenagers unaccompanied by parents is that they will take risks in crossing carriageways, so a safe crossing is particularly important here.

It is plainly a compromise to have a safety island on one of the crossings of Falcondale Road, but not on the other (where it is proposed that the existing “sub-standard” island is to be removed). <i>Both</i> crossings should have safety islands.
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Reasons for retaining the crossing on the out-of-town side of the junction are:

- it is used more than the other crossing.
- it is the natural crossing for anyone walking to the Village from Northover/ Westover/ Southover Roads (including schoolchildren) – a large catchment area.
- the pavement on that side of Henbury Road in the Henbury direction continues at the top of the hill, whereas there is no pavement at the top of the hill on the other side of

Henbury Road. Retaining the crossing on the out-of-town side of the junction enables a continuous route from the Village to eg the Blaise estate, without adding extra road crossings.

There is an extra traffic lane on the out-of-town side of the junction, which constrains the space available for a crossing, so perhaps the pavement build-outs would have to be reduced to accommodate a wide island. Or the "substandard" island could be retained: arguably this is safer than having no island at all. At off-peak times, it is possible to cross without calling the pedestrian phase, but this will be discouraged by not having an island or will result in more risk to those choosing to cross without using the pedestrian phase.

As for the detailed operation of the lights, we assume that:

- the pedestrian lights will have sensors so that they stay green until the last person has crossed the road, so that people do not get stranded on the traffic island
- the pedestrian green phase will, as at present, be on all four arms of the junction simultaneously.

The current pedestrian phase does not activate unless the button is pressed well before the end of the Falcondale Road phase, which leads to a very long wait for pedestrians: we ask that this be remedied.

We support the proposed pavement widening at the junction. Ideally the pedestrian pavement widenings could be a bit wider still, and the pedestrian crossings at the junction narrower. As always, the provision for vehicle swept paths tends to override this, prioritising the needs of motor vehicles over pedestrian needs.

Bus lane. The reasoning for the proposed short bus lane on one side of Falcondale Road is not explained in the consultation, and we expect many respondents will think it is unnecessary. It would have been helpful if the Council explained its reasoning. On reflection, we could support a bus lane for the following reasons:

- as a group we support in principle protecting space for buses to make them more reliable and encourage modal shift
- inbound traffic is constrained to a single lane before the Greystoke Avenue junction, so the restriction to a single lane after the junction should not add to congestion
- whilst the frequency of buses may not be high currently, it will increase over the years as the new housing in South Glos gets built
- whilst this appears to be a short isolated section of bus lane, we are told that the TRO for the section from Crow Lane to Charlton Road will be published soon.

It is proposed to make it a 24-hours lane. The reasoning is not explained in the consultation, and we expect many respondents will think it is unnecessary. It would have been helpful if the Council explained its reasoning.

We are told that the reasons for a 24-hour bus lane may include:

- you can paint the bus lane red, which makes self-enforcement better
- a 24-hour bus lane does not impede traffic outside of peak times, but it does help bus flow during peak times
- the stretch of road is residential, so is not used for commercial deliveries.

One might add that a red bus lane is also a very visible statement of support for buses, an advertisement for the priority being given to making buses reliable.

The counter-arguments include:

- there is not an enforcement problem if the bus lane is not 24 hours
- to reserve the nearside of the carriageway for 4 buses per hour (none at night) for 24 hours a day is poor use of road space.

The group is not unanimous on whether the bus lane should be 24-hour. The Council will have data on the enforcement question, which the group does not have.

We are however concerned that, if the bus lane slows down traffic flows, it may give rise to more rat-running down Passage Road, going through the Village and up Westbury Hill to avoid the queues at the traffic lights on Falcondale Road. This is already a problem, leading to safety issues on a road heavily used by schoolchildren, congestion in High Street in the Village, which has a negative impact on its attractiveness as a place for shopping and other services - and this will only get worse with the additional traffic expected from the new development, so it is important not to add to the problem. We request that this be monitored at the very least. This is one of the primary issues in the Village that the A4018 scheme needs to address.

A key question will be exactly where the bus lane ends ahead of the junction. Close enough to maximise the benefit for buses, not so close that it impedes the flow of private motor traffic through the junction.

Inbound traffic turning right into Henbury Road: we support the dedication of the right-hand lane for right-turning traffic.

Bus stop: There is an issue with the inbound bus stop on Falcondale Road just before the M&S garage to the west of the junction, as buses stopping there reduce the width of the main carriageway, causing delays and potential collisions with traffic that cannot use the two lanes. The layby needs to be widened to remove this.

Two lanes outbound: Two lanes are needed outbound leading up to the junction with Greystoke Avenue, but there are no markings to indicate this. We suggest that they could be added. If they are not added now, they will presumably be added when that junction is signalised.

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