

By E-mail

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Date

07 November 2008

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Dear Rob

Re: A6 Duffield Road Bus Lane

The Darley Board met on Wednesday 05 November 2008 to discuss the forthcoming review about the recent decision to make A6 Duffield Road Bus Lane permanent. The Board did not reach a consensus of opinion with regard to the issue, and agreed that individual views would be reported back. Attached are the views of individual Board members, but should not be regarded as the view of the Board.

With regards

Pop Gill
Senior Neighbourhood Manager
Stronger Communities Unit

Response from Rod Straw

I am opposed to continuation of the present bus lane layout on the following grounds:

1. The general traffic lanes are too narrow for a major road and do not permit the safe overtaking of bicycles by traffic on the outbound lane. As a cyclist I have been placed in danger on several occasions by overtaking vehicles.
2. Traffic overtaking cyclists, obstructions and parked vehicles on the outbound lane often force vehicles travelling in the incoming lane to swerve into the bus lane. I have witnessed many near misses. Whilst much of it is exacerbated by poor driving it is encouraged by a dangerous road layout.
3. The right turn by outbound traffic into Mileash Lane presents a significant hazard as motorists are often confused by the layout and lack of clear junction directions. There have been a number of near miss head on collisions and I know of a colleague who was almost a victim.
4. The junction formed by Ferrers Way and Duffield Road provides an insufficient turning radius for vehicles proceeding left into Duffield Road. Larger cars such as 4x4's and light commercial vehicles have a turning circle in excess of the road width available. Again there have been many near misses as a result of vehicles turning left into Duffield Road from Ferrers Way straying over the centre line into the incoming lane.
5. The present bus lane does not provide sufficient width for a bus to overtake a cyclist without straying into the adjacent traffic lane. I have been cycling on the bus lane when this situation has arisen and the bus has forced traffic to break heavily to prevent a collision.
6. The Bus Lane does not permit the use by motorbikes unlike Birmingham and some other cities. Cycles, motor scooters and motorbikes are simple and sensible contributors towards the solutions of traffic congestion in towns and cities and deserve more encouragement as a mode of transport. Travelling through Birmingham on a motorbike is very much safer and improved than in cities like Derby and Nottingham.
7. The bus lane on Duffield Road only addresses one traffic problem for two methods of transport, namely buses and taxis, for a very limited part of the day. This is at the expense of safe travel by other road users throughout the day and does not enhance the movement of buses, on their outbound journeys, during peak traffic flows in the afternoon and evening.
8. The narrowness of the outward bound traffic lane makes turning into and out of adjacent properties extremely hazardous.

Summary

I feel the current bus lane is an ill thought out, high risk, piecemeal attempt at solving a much larger and more complicated traffic problem and was clearly selected only for its low cost. Was it the result of some Government induced scheme and financial reward for appearing to promote use of public transport?

It is difficult to believe that a full road safety assessment was carried out prior to implementing the bus lane. If that be the case, then it would be unacceptable to contemplate that a disaster had to become the tipping point at which some notice was taken of the many complaints from users, and adjacent residents of this road, of the dangers it now holds for them. A hard winter would test this layout under duress and may have devastating consequences.

Response from Val Beech

I am in favour of retaining the Duffield Road bus lane. However, I believe that there is scope to improve the current layout.

Response from Peter Mitchell

As a Board member who (a) no longer drives (for medical reasons!) and (b) lives some distance from Duffield Road I feel somewhat unqualified to comment on the issue. (I had to cease driving six years ago but do have some knowledge of the difficulties relating to the stretch of Duffield Road in question).

Assuming that a bus lane is considered to be desirable, (and I assume that detailed surveys have been carried out that result in this conclusion being arrived at), then I fail to understand why option 'c' amongst the alternatives listed in the letter - that it be in the middle and be town-bound in the morning and out-bound in the evenings - was not adopted.

Alternatively I would have thought that option 'd' - three lanes/no bus lane/traffic lights to provide for two lanes inward in the morning and outward in the evening - would appear the most practical proposition.

Response from Lorraine Radford

The existing stretch of Duffield Road where the bus lane is in operation is dangerous and very unpopular with the Darley residents who the board represents. The most recent accident reported in the Derby Evening Telegraph (22nd October 2008) further highlights the problems the introduction of the bus lane has created.

In my opinion Duffield Road is not wide enough to allow the safe overtaking of cyclists when the existing three lanes are occupied. To safely overtake cyclists, vehicles must cross into the adjacent lane, the problem is there regardless of the direction of traffic. A vehicle heading northbound that is attempting to overtake a cyclist or avoid a car trying to get off its driveway is forced head on into oncoming traffic. A similar scenario happening southbound will make buses or taxis cross into the adjacent lane and collisions with vehicles using the middle lane are bound to occur. At a busy time of day when all three lanes are occupied the only safe option for all concerned would be for drivers to overtake cyclists when there is sufficient room, that opportunity is really only available when the road reverts back to two lanes. A further problem for drivers is when residents wish to turn across the bus lane into their drives, they currently block the single lane whilst trying to cross two other lanes.

The unpopularity of the bus lane with Darley residents is undeniable, a survey carried out in July of this year showed that over 60% wanted it removed altogether and the majority of the

remainder wanted to see significant changes to its layout (source conservative connect leaflet July 2008). The Duffield Road Action Group have had numerous messages of opposition to the bus lane, and hundreds have signed its on-line petition for the bus lanes permanent removal.

Response from Rev. Helen Watson

The bus lane finishes right outside our house. Cars pull over to the left too early (before the end of the bus lane) making it difficult, dangerous sometimes for us to turn into our house from the Duffield direction. This is due to misuse of the bus lane by drivers, rather than anything wrong with the bus lane itself, which does seem to have improved traffic flow. I don't know what to suggest to minimise the danger to us and the people turning into the houses around us, except that a lower speed limit as cars approach the end of the bus lane might help. They should be slowing down anyway then as they approach the roundabout. Any measures taken would need to be very well signposted.

Response from Chris Wynn

I speak as a Chartered Highways Engineer and past Cabinet Member as well as a Member of the Neighbourhood Board. My view has been unchanged since even before I introduced this bus lane in March 2007.

A 1.2m wide outbound cycle lane is needed alongside the Western kerb line between Broadway and Mileash Lane, and the existing three lane road configuration moved over by taking up to 1 metre off the Eastern Verge. That would not only provide a safe route for cycles, it would also reduce traffic delays, reduce irresponsible overtaking and conflict with opposing traffic, move vehicular traffic away from that busy footpath and would greatly assist access for residents. There are only two downsides to that proposal. Firstly, cost (for which Section 106 monies were available at the time) and secondly, the loss of one tree in the Eastern Verge (which should be replaced).

Whatever happens to the bus lane, the wearing course along the western channel between the Mileash Lane and Ferrers Way junctions should be reshaped to eliminate ponding and the northern kerb line of the Ferrers Way junction should be re-aligned to facilitate traffic turning left out of Ferrers Way.

My personal views expressed above are already a matter of public record so I have no problem should you wish to publish them. I understand that they also have had the support of the Cyclists Groups and the Green Party.

I do not believe the current Cabinet properly consulted with residents at the end of the experimental period, in contrast to the extensive consultation exercise carried out before its introduction. The reliance on ad-hoc responses by some pressure groups and by the political parties in election literature can hardly be deemed to be an objective consultation.

The previous configuration, with unrestricted parking on both sides of the road and a 40mph speed limit, was not without its own problems. What the current configuration has achieved is a significant increase in highway capacity, an advantage in journey time for public transport and a significant reduction in the risks of high speed collisions. Circumstances have now changed, and if parking restrictions were to be lifted in whole or part now, the road would rapidly become clogged with parked cars for the University, St Marys and St Benedicts. In

my view therefore, both the current speed limit and the parking restrictions must be retained, whatever happens to the bus lane.

Peak hour bus lane operation is possible, however, the road markings and traffic flows could well be confusing to off-peak drivers, for example, outbound drivers could easily mistake the solid white line of the bus lane as the road centreline and believe they had two dedicated outbound lanes. Some would be aware of the part-time operation, but experience elsewhere shows many are not. There is, in any case, negligible advantage to be gained off-peak, as traffic flows are so light.

A contra flowing central lane would be dangerous and costly. It would involve interactive signs and perhaps even overhead gantries all along the Duffield Road. If it were to be a bus lane there would be difficulties in setting down and picking up passengers.

Response from Anne Morgan

It seems to me that the overall strategy disregards the blockages caused by buses that have to turn right into the school, and it disregards blockages caused by cars that have to queue to turn right. Bus lanes may be a good thing; increasing the use of public transport a very good thing. Should traffic lights with priority for blocking vehicles be compulsory where bus lanes are introduced? Other towns have bus lanes for only a few hours, why make it 24hour?