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Website: www.lewishamcyclists.org.uk

About Lewisham Cyclists

Lewisham Cyclists (LC) are the local borough group of the London Cycling Campaign (LCC) with more than 3000 supporters of whom over 650 are fully paid-up members of LCC. We speak up on behalf of everyone who cycles or wants to cycle in the London Borough of Lewisham and its adjacent local parks; and we speak up for a greener, healthier, happier and better-connected capital.

Lewisham Cyclists response to Hybrid Planning Application Lewisham Shopping Centre DC/24/137871

We strongly object to this planning application on the basis it totally fails to take this unique opportunity to dramatically improve active travel for all in and around Lewisham Town Centre.

We discussed these issues extensively with the Developer at prior consultation stages and they do not seem to have taken any of our ideas on board:

<https://lewishamcyclists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Response-to-latest-Landsec-Lewisham-Shopping-Centre-re-development-plans-March-2022.pdf>

<https://lewishamcyclists.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Comments-on-Lewisham-Town-Centre-Scheme-December-2021.pdf>

We urge the Council not to approve this application without securing significant improvements from the Developer in terms of improving access for people on cycles through and around the proposed development.

First of all we would like to point out that the Developer has been highly misleading in their representation of the current cycle connectivity around central Lewisham in the Framework Travel Plan (FTP). 'Figure 2.17 Existing Cycling Connectivity and Infrastructure' talks about 'On-road Cycle Infrastructure' (marked in green) along Lewisham High St, Lewis Grove and Rennell Street. There is no such infrastructure; you just have to ride on very busy and congested roads without any protection - only very experienced cyclists will take this risk. If you remove this 'infrastructure' from the diagram you will see that the Lewisham Centre entirely dislocates the area making it nigh on impossible for most cyclists (aged 8yrs to 80yrs) to safely get from e.g. the Ladywell area to Lewisham Market. Even some of the 'Traffic Free Cycle Infrastructure' depicted in blue e.g. Rennell St, Lewisham High St is of little use being only on one side of the road, that being the opposite side to the Lewisham Shopping Centre.

Our primary objective and requested commitment from the Developer would be to agree a shared use policy for both pedestrians and people on bicycles for use of the essential access

routes W-E across the new development between Molesworth Street and Lewisham High Street.

‘Figure 2.9 Proposed Development East-West Pedestrian Through Routes’

This shows Northern, Central and Southern routes. In our view all three routes should allow cycling thereby completely removing the issues of dislocation caused by the current Lewisham Centre. The Developer needs to bear in mind that most of the people on cycles are likely to be local people visiting the shops, cafes and apartments. The availability of these routes is absolutely essential to encourage more people to use active travel modes to visit the Town Centre and generally get around locally in Lewisham more safely. These will not be primary commuting routes, but will attract leisure cyclists like families & the elderly (‘aged 8 to 80 range’), people on adaptive cycles etc.

- The Northern route links the new cyclable Toucan crossing on Molesworth St with the crossing on Lewisham High St that leads to the on-pavement cycle lane in front of Lewisham Police Station leading to St Stephens Grove. It is essential that this route is designed to be cyclable to provide a traffic-free link completely avoiding the very hostile Lewisham Gateway junction. Both the west entry point and the new Northern Square appear to be very wide and should be easily able to accommodate shared use between cyclists and pedestrians. The east end of this route appears to be a service road so this area should also not be an issue.
- The document suggests that the Southern route will be cyclable and we welcome that proposal, however talks about this being subject to a safety audit suggests to us that the Developer’s initial designs may not be providing adequate space for shared use - it is essential enough space is provided at the design stage to ensure it will pass the audit.
- The Central route is admittedly likely to have the highest footfall of the routes but serious consideration should still be given as to how it could be designed to allow cycling. The current restriction on even walking cycles though the Lewisham Centre is extremely inconvenient and a major deterrent to people from west of the town visiting Lewisham Market.

Framework Travel Plan (FTP) - detailed comments

Within the FTP, as stated above, we totally reject the characterisation of the area having “good cycle infrastructure”. In common with our 650 local members we regard the current road network that surrounds the site to be hostile and dangerous for people on cycles. It’s widely acknowledged by Lewisham Officers and Councillors that the Gateway junction redesign in 2016 was disastrous for local people walking and on cycles. As this is not the sole responsibility of the Developer, the Council should use its Section 106 powers to gain funding for active travel improvements along both Molesworth Street and Lewisham High Street that would improve connectivity with the local cycle network. Our view is this would significantly boost the local economy, as well as securing a more sustainable Town Centre.

Travel Plan (Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4)

In our experience of similar new large scale developments, the number of people who would cycle from their front door is often underestimated. The FTP's travel plan figures show small modal shares of cycling (2% for residents, 2% for students & 5% for employees) likely to result from the development, but this doesn't take account of the significant uplift improved infrastructure could have on participation rates. Figures elsewhere across London show that modern urban development can have much higher usage rates once appropriate infrastructure is in place. This is relevant in this application as the vast majority of residents will have no car parking space, and many would choose to cycle to and from work, and for a variety of other activities including leisure visits, education and shopping. The section 4 Objectives and Targets are also desperately unambitious for increasing the proportion of residents cycling. With a decent active travel vision, and the removal of the barriers to movement we have recommended, this modal share could be dramatically improved. After all, two of the section 4.2 Objectives are:

- Encourage residents, employees, and students to increase their use of active travel modes, rather than public transport; and
- Increase the awareness of the environmental and social benefits of using active travel.

Cycling Section 6.13

On a more detailed issue, we note the apparent paucity of short-term cycle parking facilities planned for visitors with only 50 Sheffield stands. We would expect significantly more short-term parking on a development of this scale and it to be located throughout the development, not just on the outside edges so people can park their cycle near their final destination. Consideration should also be given to providing rain protection for the short term parking wherever feasible.

Figure 2.10 Proposed Toucan Crossing - Molesworth Street

The proposal to move the Toucan (parallel) crossing for pedestrians and people on cycles is potentially encouraging as it does connect with the Waterlink Way route (National Cycle Network (NCN) route 21) which is popular with many on cycles. However it effectively stops at the eastern kerb of Molesworth Street and should be connected with the cycling network in and through the town centre. Like any other form of active travel, people on cycles need signposting to local points of interest along safe or shared designated routes, and LBL should make this a condition of planning, if appropriate in conjunction with TfL.

It's also not clear to us why the northbound cycle lane on Molesworth Street terminates at this Toucan crossing rather than continuing northwards over it?

FTP (para 2.38) says "Cycling improvements have already been made to a section of the A21 between Lewisham and Catford.....along Molesworth Street, this includes an on-carriageway cycleway, enabling cyclists to travel northbound in a separate lane (currently suspended for



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Lewisham Town Centre works). Moreover, a shared footway/cycleway on the western side of Molesworth Street permits cyclists to travel southbound, segregated from the traffic.” This conveys a misleading impression of adequate cycling infrastructure which is not born out by reality. We classify it as barely adequate and potentially unsafe for anyone new to cycling and/or cycling with children. Yet these are absolutely the type of people that need to be convinced of the safety of urban cycling to be tempted to take to the roads on two wheels.

Figure 2.12/2.13 Molesworth Street Cross Sections 1,2 & 3

We are strongly opposed to the outline plans for Molesworth St with much space seemingly being given up to extensive planting. Obviously we would welcome greening of the public realm but first of all we need to see the detailed plans for this road including proper fully segregated cycle track(s). The current arrangement of lanes as described in para 2.38 is not a long-term acceptable arrangement and a proper holistic road design needs to be brought forward by the Developer in collaboration with Transport for London (TfL) and London Borough of Lewisham. Properly designed cycle tracks along Molesworth St are an essential link in the proposed ‘Lewisham Spine’ segregated cycle route from Deptford to Downham (along the A21) which should enable many potential visitors on cycles to the new Lewisham Centre and also give residents there safe routes to other parts of the borough.

FTP (para 2.39) continues in this vein...” Lewisham High Street / Rennell Street, Molesworth Street / Rennell Street, and Molesworth Street / Lewisham High Street / Engate Street junctions all feature advanced cycle stop lines”....we classify advanced stop lines(ASL’s) as no replacement for a safely designed junction which we are fortunately now seeing being constructed in the Borough e.g.at Deptford Church Street (DCS). Safely designed junctions cater for active modes of travel by ensuring protection throughout the various phases.

Figure 2.17 continues this theme of portraying a misleading impression of the town centre’s cycling infrastructure. Lewis Grove is classified as an “on road cycle route” which is inaccurate. In fact it is very dangerous for cyclists sandwiched between buses on this narrow spur of the High Street, and it’s simply a matter of time before there is a serious accident.

We also understood from Lewisham Officers that as part of this development there was going to be funding for a new Toucan Crossing on Lewisham High Street from the area outside the current Boots store across to the area east of Lewisham Police Station. This is an essential link in the cycling network and there doesn’t seem to be any evidence that this has been allowed for in this planning application.

Conclusion

In conclusion we urge Lewisham Council to reject the planning application as it stands and call for far more consideration to be given to improving cycling in and around the



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Town Centre. The Council has made good improvements elsewhere in the Borough (notably Deptford) and they clearly have the expertise and commitment to make effective sustainable travel improvements. The Council, the Developer and TfL must use this once in a generation opportunity to secure the future of Lewisham Town Centre for a healthier and better environment for all.

Tim Collingridge pp LC Committee 25/11/2024