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24 July 2012

WDC
Development Policy Manager
Development Services
Riverside House
Milverton Hill
LEAMINGTON SPA CV32 5QH

Dear Manager,

I understand that there are plans to create a cycle way across Abbey Fields, Kenilworth, between Bridge Street and Forest Road or Castle Road.

I am not anti cyclist. I am a member of Friends of the Earth and I support Sustrans.

However, Abbey Fields is a special piece of open country in the middle of a town. At the moment cycling is not allowed but cyclists do ride there, as they ride on pavements, knowing that they are beholden to the tolerance of the pedestrians.

If the cycling rule is changed, the cyclists will have the right to cycle anywhere on Abbey Fields. A special lane will be no restriction on their roaming at speed.

I enclose a list of objections to which I subscribe.

Yours sincerely,



WDC PLANNING
Ref
Officer
25 JUL 2012
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Objections to Official Cycle Tracks Through Abbey Fields

- Currently **By Laws** exist that prevent cycling within Abbey Fields which enable all the general public to move freely in a safe area. It is the largest open space in Kenilworth and attracts people who can enjoy being able to have their children run around in safety; adults and pensioners to take daily walks at their own pace and dog owners to let their pets have freedom. Many walkers use the Fields for regular exercise, possibly far more than the number of cyclists. Cyclists would endanger the walking public particularly as their speed could not be safely policed.
- The act of removing the By law preventing cycling along the proposed route would by inference mean that ALL the footpaths would become cycle ways, which again could not be policed. All the footpaths would have to be improved to meet the minimum 2.5m width. By doing so two of the footpaths would become particularly dangerous:- from High St to the St. Nicholas cemetery and from the War Memorial down to the Swimming Pool.
Both these footpaths are extensively used by pedestrians.
It would also make the Fields an open play ground for all types of **off-road cyclist**; again increasing the danger to users of the Fields.

- **Bridge Street entrance to Swimming Pool.** This is a controlled vehicle access enabling service and disabled motorists access at a speed of 5mph to the Swimming Pool. At its road junction it is also the vehicle access/exit into the heavily used St Nicholas car park. Entering the car park is already both difficult with pedestrians using both the Bridge St. footpath and the Swimming Pool roadway. The meadows on both sides of the Bridge St entrance and road to the Swimming Pool are used annually as a Fair ground. It is very popular and the fairground stalls encroach to the roadway and have covered cables running across it.

Approach to the Swimming Pool. This is a particularly heavily used area by parents and children using the Children's Play area with the roadway splitting the play ground from the café and swimming pool. There is no way that this area could be safely policed to ensure that children were not put in danger. It could well become an even greater issue as there are proposals to improve the Play area thereby increasing its popularity and use. At present children are quite safe to walk/run to the café to purchase drinks or to use the public toilets etc... this would be denied them if a cycle path was allowed. During the Summer months the disabled car park at the side of the Swimming Pool is used for bands providing concerts during the afternoon... the band would be separated from their audience by the cycleway.

The Swimming Pool is the focal point of Abbey Fields with all the footpaths converging to it. Therefore there is the highest concentration of people in this area.

- **Bird Feeding Station.** At the end of the Swimming Pool building are two blind corners where the footpath is too narrow, sometimes even for pushchairs and prams. Again this is too dangerous for consideration as a cycle way and could become a hotspot for provocation between pedestrians and cyclists. The Feeding Station is popular throughout the year with children and adults wishing to feed the ducks and swans, becoming very congested at weekends and holiday times. There is insufficient room to extend the pathway to make it safe.
It should be recognised that this part of Abbey Fields is a **Nature Reserve** approved by Warwickshire County Council.

- **Footbridge.** Directly past the Feeding station the footbridge is itself not wide enough for two prams to pass each other. Another probable area of provocation.

Footpath to Castle Rd. Despite other comments this narrow footpath is extensively used at all times of the day not only by walkers but also adults with children in prams and pushchairs, dog walkers and as a route to and from the town centre, avoiding the steep incline up to the War Memorial. The pathway would have to be extended to 2.5m in width which would require approval from English Heritage

- All of Abbey Fields has **Ancient Monument** status from English Heritage who would have to approve any alterations to paths.
- **Estimated usage.** I know from experience that Abbey Fields is widely used by many people of all ages. No quantifiable number of cyclists has been established to warrant consideration, let alone sanction, of cycling. Nor have the Kenilworth residents been directly asked whether they approve or not.
- **Annual events.** As mentioned previously, Abbey Fields is central to leisure activities held each year by Kenilworth. In addition to the annual Fair events in the Fields include Kenilworth Festival, The Lions Show, Town Carnival, Peace Festival plus regular band concerts. All would impact adversely with any cycling through the Fields.
- I believe that the proposal for a cycle route in Abbey Fields is an insidious move. It would be far more suitable to route the cyclists round the outskirts of Kenilworth and not prejudice the tranquility and peace of Abbey Fields. What is far more important is that cycles could be a danger to children, people and dogs. It should not be a thoroughfare.
- **Abbey Fields** is a protected treasure in our Town; an area with many features and facilities that do not lend themselves to being used as a short cut for cyclists.
It is not merely a "park". It has far greater significance than that. It is a nature reserve; has a wealth of species trees; many varieties of wildlife including most native English bats; animals and insects; a newly planted Wild Flower Meadow. It is the breathing space for many residents and visitors who do not have that facility at home.
A playground for the young and not so young; tranquility and recreation for the elderly.
Unique in its setting and well balanced between the people who enjoy it and the flora and fauna that make it such a special place.

Alternative routes. There is no need for a cycle way to go through Abbey Fields. Various alternatives are available, without any cost to the taxpayer, among others one from Station Rd via Hyde Rd onto Albion St and Rosemary Hill. Then along Abbey Hill and into Forrest Rd/ Castle Rd

