



Transition Chesterfield

Pedestrian Audit of Selected Pedestrian Routes in Chesterfield

July 2010

Introduction

Transition Chesterfield is a community group aiming to make Chesterfield more resilient and sustainable. We want to create positive local solutions to the twin challenges of 'peak oil' and climate change, and make our town a better place to live.

As part of this we want to encourage more people to walk (and cycle) in and around Chesterfield. Encouraging and facilitating walking supports community health, vitality and safety, as well as decreasing car dependency and congestion; reducing carbon, air pollution and noise.

Most of Chesterfield town centre is an attractive, pedestrian-friendly environment which makes it a pleasant place to shop and visit. The attractive, largely car-free market areas are one of Chesterfield's best assets.

However many parts of Chesterfield are not pedestrian-friendly and some of the key walking routes from the main residential areas into town have a number of problems associated with them. In many cases the problem is a conflict between cars and pedestrians, with cars often given priority. Pedestrians are forced (by railings, inconveniently sited crossings) to walk out of their way and often will take risks to walk the desired, most direct route. Rather than trying to restrict pedestrians to a route that is convenient for cars, the strategy should be to make pedestrians the priority and facilitate their safe movement in the most direct, desirable route.

Transition Chesterfield also supports a reduction of speed limits to 20 mph throughout residential areas. This will reduce pedestrian casualties, particularly in deprived areas which are disproportionately impacted by road danger, and make Chesterfield a more attractive place to walk generally.

This report provides some comments on selected strategic pedestrian routes into and around Chesterfield town centre, which need improvements and offers some recommendations which would facilitate more people to walk these routes. This is not intended to be a comprehensive pedestrian audit and we would recommend that Derbyshire County Council and Chesterfield Borough Council conduct a comprehensive pedestrian community audit to evaluate the quality of streets and spaces from the viewpoint of the people who use them.

1. Pedestrian Route from Hasland

There are two main pedestrian routes from Hasland into the town centre:

1. Via Hasland Road, under the railway bridge and across the Derby Road (A61) by Frankie and Bennies. After crossing Derby Road from the east to the west side via two pedestrian crossings, pedestrians walk up Derby road and turn left onto Markham Road (A619) where there is a pedestrian crossing to the north side of the road. From here they can walk up St Mary's Gate or up Hipper St to New Beetwell Lane. Hasland Road is a quiet, scruffy road with an unused warehouse on one side and abandoned allotments on the other.



Problem: The railway bridge is dark, full of broken glass and poorly lit. The lack of human activity on the road (there are no houses or active businesses) can lead to a perception of danger, particularly at night or for women walking alone or with children.

Recommendation: In the short term provide better street cleaning (especially under the railway bridge) and improved lighting. In the longer term assess the overall Hasland St area for comprehensive improvement, including a long term sustainable solution for the former allotment area. There are plans to convert the allotment area into a car park. Transition Chesterfield does not agree with this, firstly on principle (paving over green spaces to create carparks), and secondly, because it will not encourage people to 'park and walk' unless the overall route is made safer and more attractive for pedestrians.

Problem: Derby Road is a busy, noisy road and the walk along it is not appealing. A new cycle lane/footpath next to B&Q offers a more pleasant route into town (emerging at PC world or Hipper St South). However, the section through to Queen's Park is still not completed despite being part of the Section 106 agreement. It is understood this could take several years, despite being a strategic walking/cycling route for the town.

Recommendation: Ensure that the new cycle lane/footpath from B&Q to Park Road is completed as soon as possible.

2. Via St Leonard's Drive, across the A617, along Spital Lane, and via Hady Hill (A632) under the railway bridge. There are then steps or a ramp up to an underpass to Hollis Lane which then joins up with St Mary's Gate.

Problem: If coming from Spital Lane and walking on the south side of Hady Hill, the pavement abruptly stops at a bus stop before the railway bridge. Pedestrians either have to cross this busy road by themselves or return to the crossing at the junction with Spital Lane.

Solution: Provide a zebra crossing by the bus stop on Hady Hill near the railway bridge.

2. Pedestrian Route from Boythorpe via Ravenside Retail Park

There are several routes into town from Boythorpe, including a pleasant pedestrian route through Queen's Park. However, there are problems if coming from the east side of Boythorpe (or the park) to town via Ravenside Retail Park.

Problem: Coming down Park Road past the park, and just to the north of the park exit (and an adjacent cycle path exit), there are traffic lights but no pedestrian crossing. Pedestrians wanting to access the retail park from the park or the west side of Park Road have to inconveniently walk up to the main traffic lights at the junction with Markham Road and walk back. Unsurprisingly many cross at the traffic lights near the park – which is more convenient but dangerous as cannot be seen clearly by cars pulling out of the retail park and turning left. The crossing by the junction with Markham Road is the only crossing on Park Road and is not suitable for anyone exiting the park and heading south. It is also very difficult if on the east side of Park Road to cross the entrance/exit to Ravenside Retail Park.



Solution: Provide a zebra crossing at the exit to the park across Park Road and across the entrance/exit to the retail park.

Problem: For people accessing Ravenside Retail Park directly or cutting through it to get to town, the whole area is very pedestrian unfriendly – as are most retail parks. There are a number of zebra crossings but they are not very conveniently placed and some stop abruptly. Walking from Park Road through the retail park to get to the pedestrian crossing on Markham Road by the most direct route involves cutting across a mini-roundabout which has traffic coming in from several directions.



Recommendation: Conduct a thorough pedestrian audit of Ravenside Retail Park and ensure there is a clear, direct and safe pedestrian route from Park Road to Markham Road which gives priority to pedestrians not cars.

Problem: At Markham Road opposite the retail park there is only one pedestrian crossing within convenient walking distance. There is very little pavement space either side of the road (further reduced by the traffic light posts). The route into town is unattractive and poorly signposted, leading through a small car park (on Tontine Road), up through the bus station and onto New Beetwell St. At New Beetwell St, people tend to cross the road directly opposite the bus station rather than walking left or right to the pedestrian crossings further up/down the street.



Recommendation: ensure the pedestrian route from Markham Road up to New Beetwell St is safe and clearly marked and gives priority to pedestrians. Provide a zebra crossing on New Beetwell St opposite the bus station or make it an area of shared space.¹

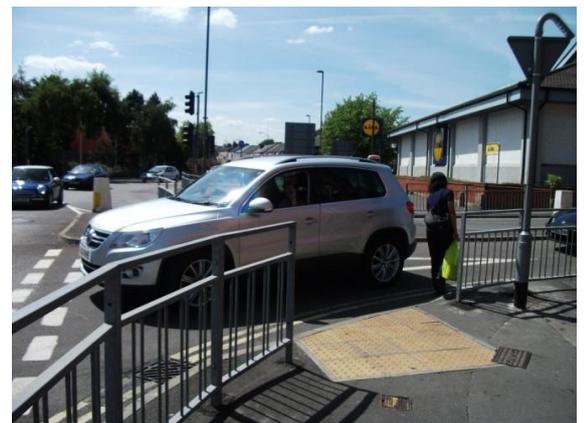
3. Across the Markham Road/Derby Road (Kwik-fit) roundabout

Problem: This roundabout is very difficult to negotiate for pedestrians wishing to access the Ibis Hotel or Bembridges from town and vice versa. The only way is via a gap in the railings on the exit to Hollis Lane which has poor visibility and is an extremely dangerous place to cross (as cars are coming quickly off the roundabout down this exit). Most people staying at the Ibis would probably access the hotel/town centre using a car rather than walking despite it being less than 5 minutes walk.

Recommendation: Ensure there is a safe, direct and well marked pedestrian access from the Ibis Hotel /Bembridges to town

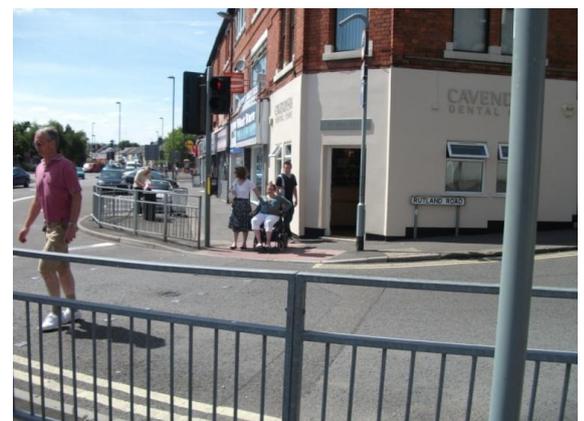
4. From Walton/Brampton via Chatsworth Road

Problem: At the West Bars roundabout there is a pedestrian refuge in the middle of Foljambe Rd and dropped pavements either side. Cars come very quickly round the corner up Foljambe Rd making it dangerous for pedestrians crossing to the refuge. Coming down Foljambe Rod, cars are often queueing to enter the roundabout. Pedestrians have to dangerously negotiate their way in between the cars to get to the West Bars side.



Recommendation: Provide a wide zebra crossing across Foljambe Road (but not so far up Foljambe Road that pedestrians have to walk a long way out of their way) giving pedestrians priority.

Problem: Further along West Bars there is a pedestrian crossing across Rutland St. However the road is not particularly busy – there are more pedestrians than cars generally, and the signal takes a long time to change so most pedestrians ignore the signal and cross at anytime.



Recommendation: Replace the pedestrian crossing with a zebra crossing which gives pedestrians priority.

¹ a street or place accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles that is designed to enable pedestrians to move more freely by reducing traffic management features that tend to encourage users of vehicles to assume priority. *DfT Shared Space Project*. November 2009. <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/sharedspace/stage1/pdf/stage1.pdf>

5. From the railway station to town

From the railway station there are two main routes into town:

1. Via Corporation St, across the footbridge over the A61 and up Corporation St (next to the Pomegranate Theatre).

Problem: The walk up Corporation St and across the footbridge is a very unimposing and unattractive entrance to the town. Despite signage a visitor unfamiliar with Chesterfield would not assume this was the main route from a railway station into the town centre. There is no crossing opposite the Chesterfield Hotel to get to the footbridge. The footbridge goes across the busy and noisy A61 and would feel unsafe to anyone with vertigo.

Recommendation: The Chesterfield Borough Council's Town Centre Master Plan recommends decking over the A61 and providing a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists. This is an excellent idea which Transition would fully support. There should be a zebra crossing across Corporation St to access the Chesterfield Hotel and footbridge safely.

2. Via Brewery St (popular with the many students walking to Chesterfield College).

Problem: At the entrance/exit to the station, there is no crossing to the other side of Crow Road. There is a 'refuge' at the top near the junction with Corporation St but it has a high kerb and is unsuitable for pushchairs/wheelchairs. Turning right onto Corporation St and walking down to Brimington Road there is another 'refuge' which only allows a few people to cross safely at a time (as well as squeezing the road space for cyclists). However given the large numbers of pedestrians, particularly students, this should be a zebra crossing which gives priority to pedestrians.

Recommendation: There should be a zebra crossing opposite the railway station to the other side of Crow road. There should be a zebra crossing to replace the inadequate refuge across Brimington Road. The mini-roundabout on Brimington Road/Brewery St should also be moved slightly south away from Brimington Road.

6. In the town centre

Other areas where improvements are needed for pedestrians include:

Corner of Town Hall Rose Hill with Rose Hill East

Walking from Ashgate/Newbold into town along Saltergate many people use the footpath/cycle track running along the north of the Town Hall.

Problem: Crossing Rose Hill East from west to east is very difficult. There are many cars slowing down looking for parking spaces and not indicating, cars pulling out of the carparks etc. It can be very confusing and busy.

Recommendation: Put in a zebra crossing on Rose Hill East. Remove car park spaces to improve visibility for people crossing and narrow the road to one lane at the crossing point.

Corner of Knifsmithgate/Stephenson Place/Cavendish St

Problem: The pedestrian crossings on Knifsmithgate and Cavendish St are not well sited (as well as taking a long time to change lights) to meet pedestrian needs, particularly the many numbers of people wanting to cross diagonally to RBS. As traffic is not particularly busy and is often travelling quite slowly pedestrians tend to cross diagonally in many different directions.



Recommendation: This needs to be an area of 'shared space' or wide zebra crossings running diagonally where pedestrians have priority even though there is bus and vehicle access.

7. Pedestrian Crossings in general

There are many pedestrian crossings in Chesterfield which have very slow response times. This means that people will press the button and then cross when there is a gap in the traffic regardless of the signal. This is not helpful for pedestrians or drivers alike – the drivers will then have to stop at a red light when there are no pedestrians. The signals need to be adjusted to ensure that pedestrian waiting times are not excessive.

Transition Chesterfield supports the provision of zebra crossings which give priority to pedestrians rather than light controlled crossings which give priority to cars. In Europe zebra crossings are the norm, even at large junctions, as shown below left in Geneva.



Photo courtesy of Charles Brown



Photo courtesy of Charles Brown

The photo above right from Aachen, Switzerland, demonstrates the continental wide rule that turning vehicles give way to pedestrians, even when traffic lights are green, for traffic going straight ahead.

The images below show the priority given to pedestrians and cyclists in Copenhagen and the wide style zebra crossings.



Photos courtesy of Copenhagen Cycling Chic www.copenhagencyclechic.com

Conclusion

Transition Chesterfield has highlighted just some of the examples where pedestrian improvements are needed to encourage more people to walk into Chesterfield. However we reiterate our recommendation for a comprehensive review of pedestrian needs throughout the town, which involves the local community. There needs to be a shift in thinking towards giving pedestrians priority on non-trunk roads. This will facilitate Chesterfield to become a healthier, greener and more pleasant place to live.

www.transitionchesterfield.org.uk