

Two-Way Cycling in Sheep Street - 12.11.24

I'm a Disabled person for whom cycling is easier than walking, and less difficult than driving. When I first came to Bicester I found the restrictions in Sheep Street problematic. Under the current arrangement, with a blue badge, I can get someone to drive me to the shops I use but I can't legally cycle there by myself. From my point of view this situation is ridiculous - but it appears that to most people, I'm the problem because I don't drive.

Observing what goes on in Sheep Street I became aware that if I worked or lived there I could also drive through it but would not be allowed to cycle to or from my home or my place of work. Which says to me that we value and trust people when they drive, but we don't value and trust the same people when they cycle.

We can't unpack here how we've become conditioned over years to distrust people when they cycle, but the outcome is we hold them to such a high standard of behaviour that it puts many people off doing it in the first place. And those that do are regularly chastised for finding a safe way through an environment designed primarily to accommodate motor vehicles. It's a vicious cycle that justifies not trusting them in the first place. The anonymity of driving is the safest option.

That gives the District and County Councils a massive problem in achieving their joint aims. Where I live in Northwest Bicester both the planning and the highway authorities are counting heavily on shifting people out of cars and onto buses and bikes. The bus that takes me to Bicester Village Station is hourly, doesn't run after 7pm, doesn't run at all on Sundays, and doesn't match up with the train times when returning. That means cycling is the best option, but the cycling ban in Sheep Street, my preferred route, has me fuelling the view that people who cycle can't be trusted.

So I support the County's view that permitting cycling in Sheep Street is a necessary step. However, I'm not sure the consultation process as it currently stands is the best way to engage with people on topics like this, and wonder if better ways can be found in the future?

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