

Norwich Western Link (NWL): NLAf response

To [REDACTED]

The Norfolk Local Access Forum (NLAf) is responding to the pre-planning application public consultation on the Norwich Western Link in the following terms. **We would request feedback on how our response has been taken into account and affected your plans.**

- 1 NLAf recognises that the current proposals include a number of measures intended to improve non motorised access, and welcomes this intention and those proposals.
- 2 NLAf has previously submitted comments at an earlier stage, but it is not evident that these comments have been incorporated in the latest proposals. These current comments are submitted under Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, requiring Local Access Forums to advise as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.
- 3 The consultation documentation available does not, in many cases, provide sufficient detail to understand the exact intentions, so some comments have to be made in general rather than specific terms.
- 4 It is accepted that the road as planned will be a major intrusion into the landscape, affecting the environment and wildlife habitats physically (structural and through vehicle emissions), visually and through raised noise levels. NLAf is primarily concerned with impact on access to walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers, but the other intrusions will also impact negatively even where physical access continues or is improved.
- 5 Improvements should be made to access and connectivity with the wider Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network, together with strong traffic calming measures to protect non motorised users of all routes.
- 6 Wherever possible, access routes and new PRoW should not parallel and be close to the new road - this hardly provides a pleasant experience.
- 7 A negative impact on those using PRoW after the road is built will be unavoidable, so the strongest possible mitigation measures should be adopted; in particular, all possible measures should be taken to screen the road from PRoW users in terms of sight, sound, smell and vehicular emissions.
- 8 New and improved rights of way should be open to the widest range of users, with due consideration given to the width, surface, gradient and nature of the routes affected.
- 9 Provision for carriage drivers is limited: it would be useful for green bridges to be available for them, connecting to restricted byways at each side.
- 10 While Ringland Road remains open to all traffic, specific measures (including segregated lanes) should be taken to ensure the safety of non motorised users; we note these are provided under the bridge under the NWL but propose they be applied throughout Ringland Road.
- 11 The closure of Weston Road would remove a popular cycling route, necessitating a detour on a new path alongside the new road to get to an alternative bridge, and then via Blackbreck Lane to get back to Weston Road. Walkers might use it although walking alongside the new road will not be a pleasant experience, but we believe cyclists will not use it as the proposed paths it connects with are not metalled and only fit for mountain bikes at best.
- 12 It is suggested that Morton green bridge be replaced with mature planting either side of the dual carriageway and in the central reservation. (This is being considered as a

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bat friendly crossing option instead of the green bridge at the northern end of the route.) Weston Road could be closed to motorised vehicles and a green bridge would provide for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders. This would provide a much better cycling route and it would preserve Blackbreck Lane as a footpath and wildlife corridor. It would also be cheaper!

- 13 Currently there is no traffic free cycle route to cross the River Wensum and we have been informed that there are local residents who want to cycle to work at locations to the north of Norwich using the cycleways built alongside the Broadland Northway. We propose a walkers and cyclist crossing over the Wensum and see an obvious route by using the access routes underneath the new viaduct. If these were joined by a bridge over the Wensum (subject to a satisfactory Environmental Impact Assessment) there would then be a continuous traffic free route that will link up with the Broadland Northway and Marriotts Way.
- 14 The grade separated crossings of the A47 are essential, but beyond the scope of this scheme: steps should be taken to guarantee their inclusion should National Highways fail to provide them.