

## NEWS

## TRANSPORT

# New junction gives a

Southampton junction could be a template for others across the UK

By Greg Pitcher

Contractor Balfour Beatty is re-engineering a major Southampton road junction to improve safety for cyclists.

The project will transform a notoriously dangerous roundabout in Southampton into a crossroads specifically designed to be safer for cyclists.

The junction will be controlled by traffic lights and is similar to intersections in Copenhagen. Approaches will feature advanced stopping points for cyclists, to the left of and ahead of road vehicle stopping points.

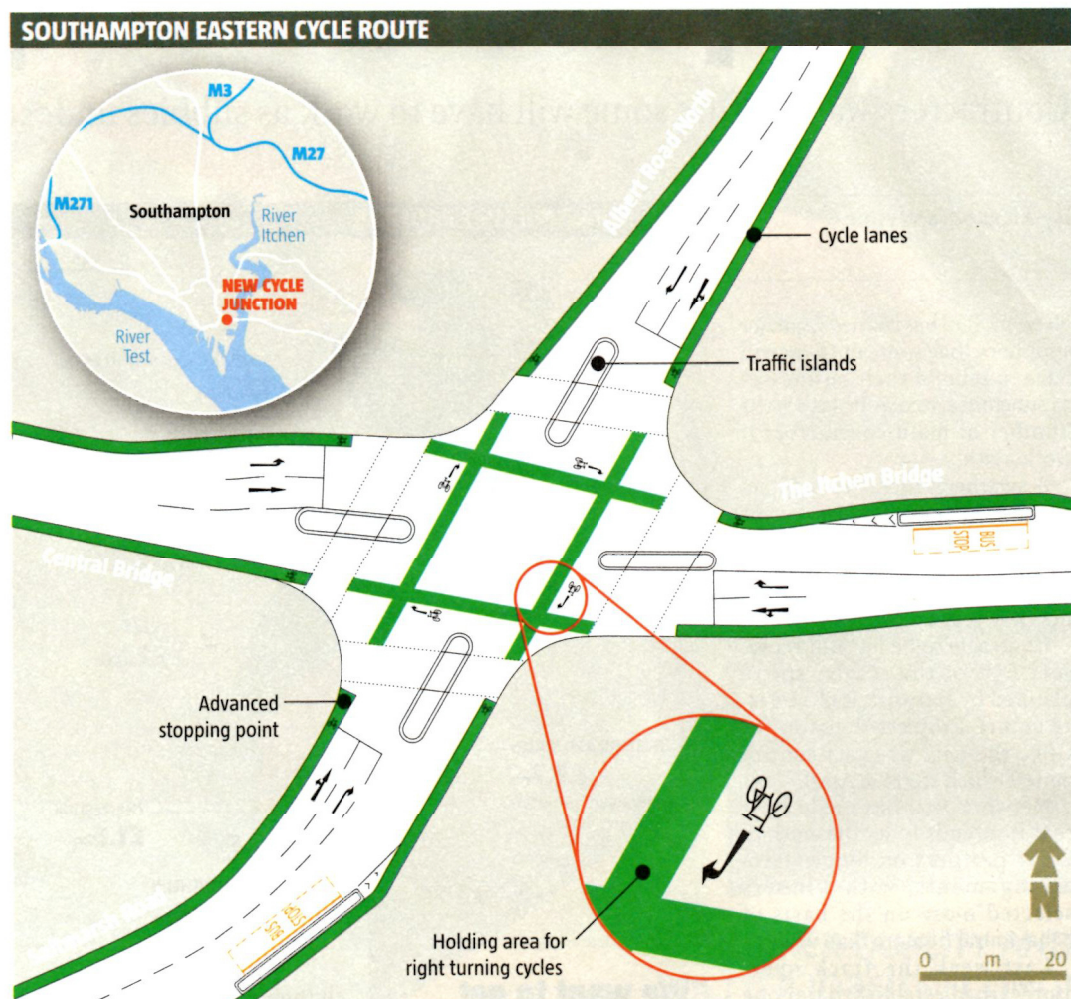
This is intended to give drivers clear visibility of those on the cycle lane.

Cycle lanes will continue onto the junction itself. Cyclists wanting to turn right will enter the junction on a green light, cross it and move to a holding area to the left of the cycle lane.

There, they will wait for a green light before completing the right turn (See diagram).

At a time when cycling safety is under the spotlight nationally, Southampton City Council hopes the junction – due to open to road users in March – will be an example for others.

"We believe this is the first junction of its type in the UK, and we



hope it will become a template," said Southampton City Council active travel officer Dale Bostock.

"We have had lots of enquiries from other councils and I expect even more once the junction comes into operation."

The project, part of the city's Eastern Cycle Route, is a critical part of a broader scheme to create a cycle route from the central railway station to the eastern boundary of Southampton.

The Eastern Cycle Route won £1M from the government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which was matched by the same amount from the council. Further funding for the junction work was secured from cycling charity Sustrans.

The route is designed to encourage more cycling into the centre of the South Coast city from its eastern suburbs, which

are hilly and cut off by the River Itchen.

"In 2011 we conducted a major survey using 60 people stopping cyclists at key locations in the city from 7am to 10pm," said Bostock.

"The survey team handed out a map for people to mark their route that day and a questionnaire to get cyclists' views on issues with their journeys.

"We had a good response. We created a cycle map and used it as a template for bidding for funding."

The Eastern Cycle Route was devised in response to the survey and funding secured for its first phase, which includes the reconstruction of the critical junction.

The new junction replaces a previously hazardous roundabout, to the west of the road bridge across the Itchen River. The roundabout had poor visi-

bility and had a cycle lane around its outer perimeter, which motorists had to cross when leaving or entering it.

The survey said that people were put off cycling into Southampton because of the junction.

A "champions group" was formed including representatives from the council, Balfour Beatty, the NHS and cyclists themselves to develop plans for the scheme.

To the east of the roundabout, space for cyclists is being created on a one-way section of road bridge to make it easier for them to reach the city centre.

A two-way cycle path is being created on the one-way road into which the junction feeds, to speed the journey for cyclists into town.

For segregation, the cycle path will be raised by 50mm, and the pedestrian zone flanking it by a further 50mm.

# boost to cycle safety

Balfour Beatty senior engineer Hiong Ching Hii said: "We had designers from Urban Movement as part of the champions group, and they have spent quite a lot of time travelling around Europe and the Americas to look at the latest developments in cycle schemes.

"We looked at lots of options and in the end we all settled on this one."

To create footpaths around the junction, the space for cars will be reduced, the roundabout is being removed and replaced with a crossroads controlled by traffic lights.

"We decided we had to control the flow of traffic," said Bostock.

"Then we thought about how cyclists change direction.

"We looked at the so-called Copenhagen Left, which is the equivalent of our right turn as they drive on the other side of the road."

This is effectively the solution chosen, although the road markings will be different.

Arrows are to be used instead, along with the green cycle lanes on the junction.

The plan is to use the first completed element of the junction as a showcase for how it will work when completed.

"We will get the local paper and TV involved, put information on our website and get some hoardings up," said Bostock.

"We have followed a European style that works.

"The Americans use it in Salt Lake City and it works. It is only a crossroads with lights and cycle routes – you see that every day and you will just be using it in a slightly different way.

"In fact a lot of people – especially in London – are informally turning right in this manner already."

Although the junction may slow traffic progress slightly, the impact is expected to be minimal, and modelling suggests it will even out over the length of the Eastern Cycle Route.

Hii said he hoped that if the route was successful, more people would get on their bikes, reducing congestion.

## Economic case is key to getting cycle schemes green light

By Greg Pitcher

Proving the economic case for cycle safety schemes is the key to getting them built, according to Balfour Beatty Living Places urban design manager Simon Taylor.

He said that with local authorities' budgets under huge pressure, contractors have a critical role in helping them win funding for infrastructure projects from external sources.

The Copenhagen-style junction in Southampton is being built with funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and charity Sustrans as well

as some money from the city council.

But competition for funding is fierce and schemes will rarely succeed on cycle safety grounds alone, according to Taylor.

"When you put in a bid there are a number of criteria you have to satisfy and one may be cutting road deaths but another might be creating jobs," he said.

"All your projects have to look at all these criteria – they can't have an isolated focus."

Balfour Beatty Living Places works closely with Southampton Council to understand residents' and businesses' infrastructure problems and work out ways to solve them.

For one scheme, the contractor

paved a section of the city's Oxford Street, creating a "shared space" for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.

"We took away the barriers, the signs and the lines," said Taylor.

"Traffic comes through at a slower rate now but we haven't changed the speed limit."

This cycle safety measure has also had a direct effect on the economy, with six new businesses setting up on the street due to its more attractive nature.

Taylor says "urbanism" departments are becoming increasingly common as civil engineers, landscape architects and transport experts come together to make more of the tight spaces in modern cities.

## Materials producers seek to raise cycle safety awareness

By Greg Pitcher

A construction products chief was expected to tell MPs this week how materials suppliers can help make roads safer for cyclists.

Mineral Products Association director of economics Jerry McLaughlin was due to give evidence to the Transport Committee on Monday.

The cross-party committee is holding two evidence sessions on cycling safety this week.

Fourteen cyclists have died on the roads of London alone this year – nine of them were hit by heavy goods vehicles.

"I will be telling them that we have a policy for our members that involves specific driver



training and fitting of additional equipment," McLaughlin told NCE ahead of the meeting.

Such equipment can include cameras or sensors to alleviate blind spots; bars to stop people falling between the front and back wheels; and audible warnings when vehicles are turning left.

McLaughlin added: "This policy should be taken up more widely across the industry. Contractors have to manage these issues in a sensible way."

He said he would warn MPs off seeking a ban on construction vehicles at peak times, saying such a move would be impractical.