



The Fallowfield Loop Consultation:

Response from the Manchester and Salford Ramblers.

Introduction

Manchester City Council have invited views on how new investment in the Fallowfield Loop should be used to create a safe, convenient, efficient, and accessible cycling and walking network that will help to encourage greater and more widespread sustainable travel use.

This response is on behalf of the Manchester and Salford Ramblers. We are the local organisation of the national walking charity, the Ramblers, and we help everyone, everywhere, enjoy walking and protect the places we all love to walk.

We have encouraged our members and supporters in South and East Manchester to make detailed comments using the online map. This submission briefly summarises the main points of detail that our members have made and then concentrates on some wider strategic issues and highlights some of the major interventions we would like to see.

Starting Point

Our starting point is that the Fallowfield Loop, although part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) is, like the whole of the NCN, a route open to all and as with most of the NCN it is used as much by walkers as those travelling on bicycles (Sustrans: Paths for Everyone). We believe that the Fallowfield Loop it is a real asset for the community in Manchester and should be celebrated and cherished as a route for all.

Flowing from this starting point, the focus of many of our comments are on the need to enhance the appreciation of the route and encourage and enable more to enjoy and care for its features. We will make a number of suggestions on signage, legibility and connections to a wider network of routes in this submission, but first we set out some general points raised by members that are relevant at a number of locations on the route.

Path quality and experience

The surface quality is mainly good, however, there are sections where tree roots are breaking into the surface that need to be addressed, these appear to be concentrated mainly near both ends of the route; between St Werburghs tram stop and Withington Road and towards the A57 in Gorton. Flooding after heavy rain is an issue, particularly under some bridges. There are reported pinch points at some parts of the route where the way narrows, and this is particularly the case where the route runs alongside Shillingford Road near Abbey Hey. Where possible, subject to the comments in the next paragraph, the way should be widened or some degree of user segregation be introduced.

Management of the trees, bushes and vegetation alongside the path is obviously essential to keep the way clear of obstruction, however one of the great strengths of the route is as a wild life corridor and it's more natural feel is a great attraction. Therefore, the vegetation management should be consistent with the absolute need to maintain the character of the Loop and its contribution to biodiversity.

Without compromising the provision for wild life, the experience of the path could be enhanced at some points by developing informal areas for rest and recreation. The Quadrants in Levenshulme is

an area already used for community events and provides some space just to sit and relax. Perhaps this could be further developed alongside the Station South project and sensitively at other locations to provide both quiet areas to sit and potential spaces for appropriate community events.

Signage, legibility and connections.

Much of the current signage is consistent with the standards set for the NCN and contains helpful indications of destinations and distances. However, they do not convey a sense of the Loop as a route in its own right nor of its connections to a wider network and it is the case that many people interpret some of the existing signs as being for cycle routes only.

We believe that there would be value in establishing, at some key intersections and junctions leading to the Loop more significant signage, perhaps based on the Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM's) GM Connected Wayfinding project with displays that would allow image, map and text-based depiction of access, routes and possibilities. Coupled with waymarking to the Loop, this would increase legibility of ways to access the Loop from key junctions and landmarks near the route.

In addition, we believe that it will be important to have enhanced signage and information boards on the route to mark points of interest, links to other significant walking routes and the context of the Loop as a whole.

More detailed comments by location are summarised in the Annex below, they follow the route from west to east and as indicated above are focused on our view of more significant interventions.

The beginning and the End

From east to west or west to east; the Loop doesn't have particular well celebrated start and end points. If it was to be agreed that, for example St Werburghs in the west and Debdale Park in the east were the end points, appropriate celebrations and information points to and at those locations should be enhanced along with signage and information about the connections to significant other routes.

Annex: More Detailed Comments

Promoting and leading you to the Loop:

There should be significant signage, as described above, towards the Loop at these locations:

- St Werburghs Road, Wilbraham Road opp Chorlton Tram Stop, and on Mauldeth Road West
- Wilbraham Road, Athol Road junction
- Princess Road to direct to path off Mauldeth Road
- Wilbraham Road/Yew Tree Road
- Wilmslow Road/Sherwood Street/Ladybarn Road
- Kingsway
- Errwood Road
- A6 near Station South
- Longford Road West
- A57 Access to Debdale Park/ water sport centre
- Around Fairfield Station and from Ashton Canal/Yellow Brick Road

On the Loop:

The Friends of the Fallowfield Loop have researched a very useful map of points of interest that should be considered for additional information displays. We also believe that additional information boards, signage and further works would be useful at these locations:

- Withington Road to St Werburghs tram stop, the Manchester Green Trail follows the Loop and should be marked by information points and signs.
- Signs to point to and from Hough End Clough, and explanatory boards at Chelsfield Grove, Withington Road, and from Mauldeth Road.
- Route to Alexandra Park, the exit to Athol Road should be remodelled to make it more attractive looking and a significant exit to Alex Park to link again with the Green Trail.
- Link to Platt Fields – improve the look of the exit to Avian Drive, signage about Platt Fields, and then way marking onto Yew Tree Road, improve the crossing of Wilbraham Road (a Toucan) and signage into Platt Brook Close and into Platt Fields Park, and the Manchester Green Trail.
- The route to Wilmslow Road for crossing by Sainsburys is of real concern: There is scope to build an easier gradient up to Sherwood Street and then there should be better more legible route marking and pavement design to a Toucan controlled crossing of Wilmslow Road. It should be wider than the current crossing, with clearly delineated areas for cyclists and pedestrians and there is a need for a major remodelling of both the cycle and walking route across to the continuation of the Loop with clear segregation and a protected route for pedestrians between Ladybarn Road and the entrance to the supermarket car park .
- At the Kingsway intersection, there is a need for landscaping, and to improve access to the route and to shared use path and to the bus routes.
- Errwood Road Junction – there could be more public realm and also signage to Cringle Fields Park.
- The Quadrants at Levenshulme should be further developed as an informal recreation area and community space.
- There should be improved access and way marking from Broom Lane/ Cranage Road.
- Signage and access to Highfield Country Park should be improved. This could be a major recreation asset on the route. Information on accessing the Loop should be provided at the Bowler Street Entrance to the park and other access points to the Country Park.
- The Manchester Green Trail comes through Highfield Country Park and crosses over the Loop via Highfield Lane. The bridge and immediate area that should be improved – the Green Trail then continues to its start/end point in Chapel Street Park and appropriate signage/information would be useful.
- Improve access to/from Nelstrop Road – and provide more signage.
- Longford Road West – this is a key link to Reddish Vale, and more signage would be useful as would an audit of the onward route.
- As already noted, the path alongside Shillingford Road is too narrow and could be easily widened – an information board about the Loop and its wider links at this point could be helpful, given the housing development around this point.
- Improved access from Dean Road/Woodland Ave and better signage would be helpful.
- There should be significantly improved access to Debdale Park – easier gradients and better signage and legibility, clear links to the Tameside Trail and the route to the Ashton Canal – with its connections to the city centre and beyond.