

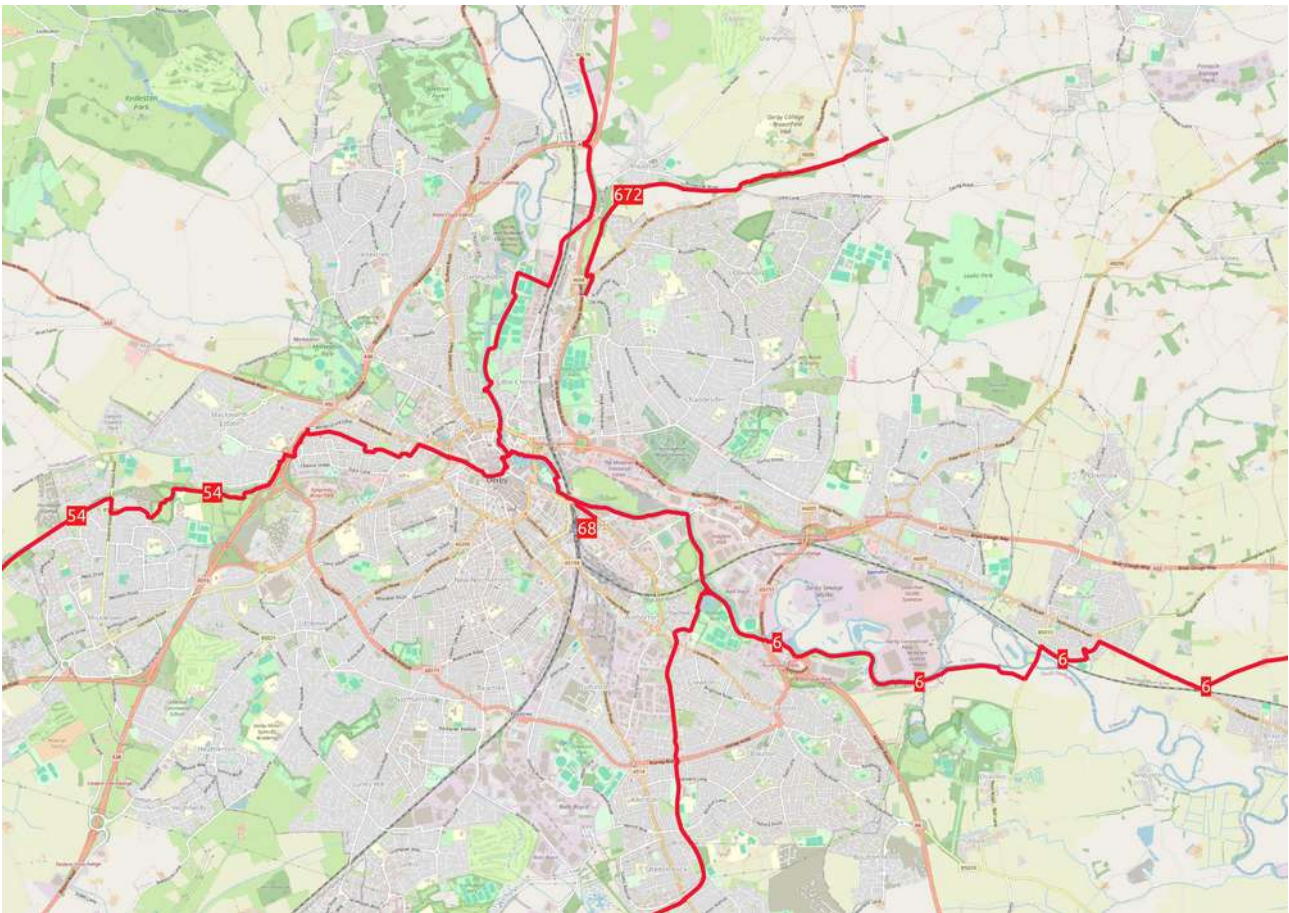
Suggestions for reconnecting NCN 672 to the network

11th July 2024, Ian Dent

Background

During 2024, Sustrans decided to remove certain Regional routes from the NCN. This decision included the removal of the RCN66 (Orbital route) around Derby which, as well as providing a circulate route, allowed connections between various “red” NCN routes.

The effect of this RCN66 removal was that NCN672 (the Breadsall Great Northern Greenway) is now disconnected from the rest of the NCN network in Derby.

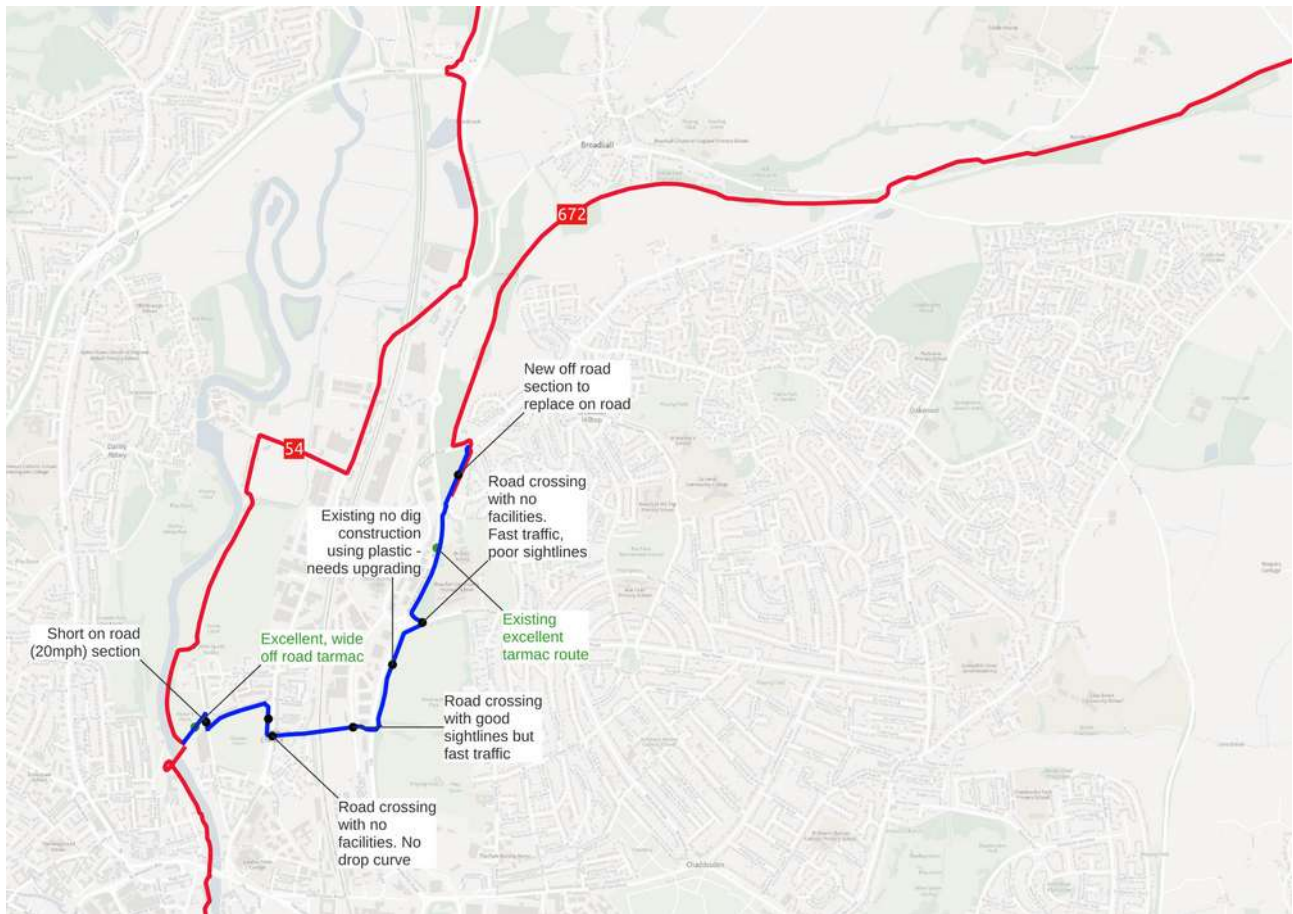


There are various existing good quality routes between NCN672 and the rest of the NCN and there are possibilities for upgrading one or more of these existing routes to NCN to allow relatively easy reconnection to the network.

Three possible options have been considered although other routes are also possible. Each option has benefits and all will require some enhancement of the existing infrastructure to bring the standard fully up to LTN 1/20.

Option A

This option makes use of a portion of the Orbital RCN 66 which until recently (2024) was part of the NCN, albeit as a regional route.



From the southern end of NCN672 the route runs to join NCN54 in Darley Park. The following comments can be made following the route from the southern end of NCN672:

- the first section is a short on road section (Old Mansfield Road). This could be bypassed by creating an off road route to the west of Old Mansfield Road in the waste ground that is currently derelict behind the hedge on the west side of the road. The land is owned by Derby City Council (Parks Dept.)
- There is then a section of excellent quality 3m wide tarmac.



- At Hampshire Road there is a need to cross the road. This is fairly busy with some fast traffic but the main issue is the traffic leaving the roundabout on the A61 which comes from around a bend and thus can be hard to see. The Council have improved the junction recently with some “build-out” to reduce speeds but a light controlled crossing would be best.



- Southwards of Hampshire Road the route passes through the Racecourse. This is the site of Roman remains and the route surface consists of plastic matting filled with crushed stones (believed to be as construction must be no-dig). This surface needs some maintenance and/or replacement.



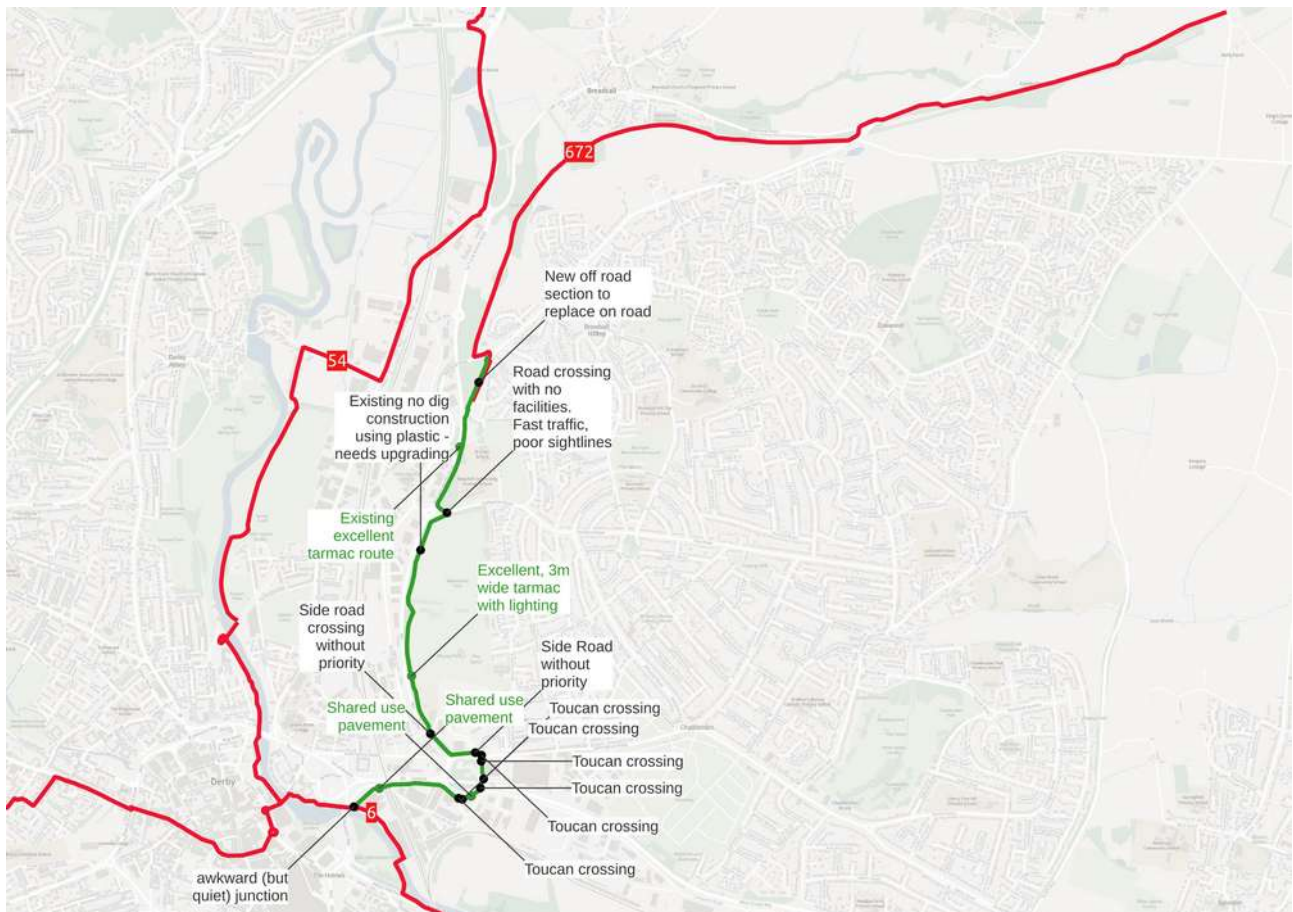
- After the plastic based surface, the route turns westward to pass under an underpass on tarmac to reach Stores Road.
- There is a painted cycle crossing on Stores Road but no other infrastructure. A light controlled crossing would be best. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/GFABumaDxJr4iPey5>
- The route then follows an off road route along Cut Lane passing under a railway line before reaching Caesar Street which is not traffic free but is a cul de sac. However there is often a lot of parked cars on both sides of Caesar Street.
- At the end of Caesar Street there is a need to cross Mansfield Road to gain the Chester Green park. There is no infrastructure for crossing at this point and there is no dropped kerb on the western side of Mansfield Road. This junction would definitely need attention. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/vTmCX77Xe3JU44y96> Note that the direct crossing is to a bus stop where the kerb has actually been heightened (for bus passenger access reasons).
- Once in the park there is a reasonable tarmac path northwards although this should be widened for proper shared use.
- The route then turns westwards along Chester Green Road which is a cul de sac but has a lot of parked cars. There is scope for creating a new shared use path in the park running parallel to this road. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/oDGkZAzT2hDJLe278>

- At the end of the section of Chester Green Road that allows cars, there are bollards protecting a shared use section that is used to reach City Road.
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/CjuLPEXQJ21HG8Vg8>
- At City Road, the route turns right onto the road and runs for a short distance (about 60m) before turning left onto an excellent off road tarmac route.
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/ysBMkA9SYKmp5Ncx7>
- This off road route is then followed to meet with NCN 54 near to Handyside Bridge.

Option B

This option matches Option A for the first section south of NCN 672 before continuing south through the Racecourse playing fields where Option A turns westwards under an underpass.

The route then continues to Pentagon Island before turning westwards to meet with NCN 6 at Meadow Lane.



The comments above for Option A apply to this option up to and including the remarks on the plastic based surface. From this point:



- the route continues southwards on excellent, wide, traffic free tarmac. This section is also lit.



- At the southern end of the Racecourse, the route meets the shared use pavement of the A61 (by St Giles Spencer primary school).
- A minor side road needs to be crossed and there is no protection for cyclists. In particular traffic turning from the A61 (Sir Frank Whittle Way) is hard to predict.



- The route then continues on the shared use pavement to reach Pentagon Island. There is a slip road from the Island to reach Derbyshire County Cricket Ground and this requires crossing. Travelling eastwards requires looking behind for turning traffic and requires addressing.

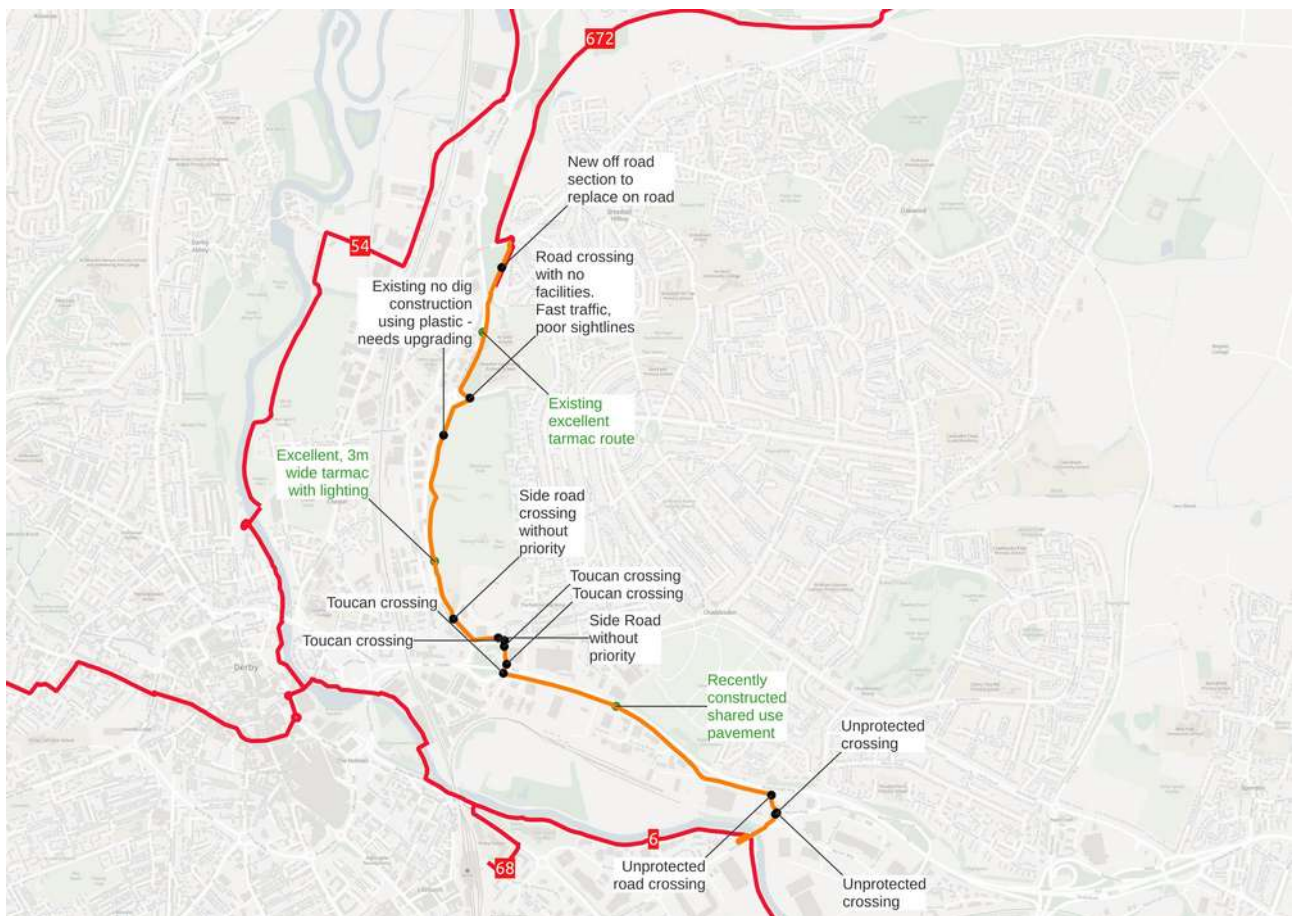


- At Pentagon Island it is necessary to reach the far side of the island and requires crossing 6 slip roads. Each of these are protected by Toucan crossings but waiting for the lights can take a while. Traffic is very busy on the roundabout so avoiding using the Toucan crossings would be dangerous.
- After leaving the Island, the route runs westwards along a shared path alongside Eastgate before joining a shared pavement alongside a minor one way road that provides access to the bus garage.
- When the route reaches Meadow Road it meets NCN 6. NCN 6 can be followed westwards on an off road section to reach Derby City Centre or can be followed eastwards to reach a pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Derwent to reach Bass Recreation Ground. This section of NCN 6 is on road and not good quality requiring cyclists to mix with bus traffic and traffic using the businesses off Meadow Lane.
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/2bbmzoYh4CSBoMCw8>

Option C

This option matches Option B to reach Pentagon Island but diverges from Option B after four of the six Toucan crossings on the Island. It then proceeds eastwards on a recently constructed shared use pavement before reaching the Wyvern Retail Park. The Park has shared use pavements but not all

road crossings are light controlled. The route uses the shared pavements to cross the Derwent and then joins NCN 6 (the Riverside Path).



The comments above for Options A and B relate to Option C as far as Pentagon Island. From the Island:

- the route follows a good quality shared use pavement alongside Chequers Road



- After reaching the end of Chequers Road, the route follows the shared use pavements but requires crossing some non light controlled roads which are often busy. In particular, outside Tim Hortons.



- The route then goes south west for a short distance to pass over the river (and NCN6) on the shared use pavement before a link (with a sharp 180 degree turn) can be used to descend to the NCN 6 Riverside path. <https://maps.app.goo.gl/qzBVQAmNWCpedYf57>

Pros and Cons of the options

All of the options detailed could be used to provide a link from NCN672 to reconnect the route to the NCN network.

All of the options will require work to bring the sections that are proposed to be upgraded to NCN up to LTN 1/20 standards.

The upgrade of Old Mansfield Road to make use of an off road option alongside the road (separated by a hedge) should be considered for all options and also as an upgrade to NCN 672 within its current limits.

Option A has been part of the NCN (in its current state) for a long period. It was retained as NCN after the NCN Quality Audit and a case could be made to just redesignate it as NCN 672 in its current state. However, the issues around Chester Green in crossing Mansfield Road have been long standing and should be addressed.

Option B makes use of some excellent non NCN routes in The Racecourse. However passing around Pentagon Island requires a lot (six) Toucan crossings to be used. This Option is completely off road although it requires crossing a couple of side roads which will need attention.

Option C requires some usage of Pentagon Island (4 Toucans) and then makes use of a good quality, recently constructed shared pavement. When reaching the Wyvern Retail Park, the need to cross roads not controlled by lights is a drawback. There may be other, longer routes around Wyvern Retail Park that can make use of Toucan crossings but will be less direct.

Summary

The “orphaning” of NCN 672 from the NCN should be addressed and plans should be put in place for reconnecting the route to the network. There are existing long term plans for the north eastern end of NCN 672 to be extended towards Ilkeston (linking with Bennerley Viaduct) and as these come to fruition connecting the route to the rest of the network in Derby becomes even more important.

Each of the options proposed could be quickly implemented through use of signage if the existing shortcomings of each route can be accepted. Longer term plans can be put in place to address the shortcomings over time. Paint could be used on crossings of side roads to provide at least some indication to drivers to beware of and to give priority to cyclists.

Discussions should be held with Derby City Council as all the suggested options make use of existing Derby City Council routes. Their views on upgrading these routes to NCN should be explored. The Council may also have other plans for enhancements to the cycle network that may provide additional options.

From a personal point of view, Option B provides the safest way of linking NCN 672 back into the NCN network.

I'd be happy to discuss the details of the ideas with interested people.