



Clothall Estate, Baldock

Comments on proposals for a cycle network

In early March 2009 we were approached by Herts Highways to discuss proposals for a cycle route network to link the Clothall Common Estate on the eastern edge of Baldock, with the centre of the town. Our comments took the form of three emails and a gallery of annotated photographs, all of which can be read below.

[Herts Highways' proposals can be seen here.](#)

The proposals are very preliminary at the moment. We are taking a position that is intended to be supportive and encouraging, while steering engineers away from unsuitable routes and unhelpful infrastructure. Please channel any comments through [me](#). Let your local councillors know that you are interested in what is happening, and that you expect our advice to be taken on board.

Email 1 to Herts Highways dated 12/03/09

Could you provide the following information that is relevant to the proposals:

Speed, traffic flow and casualty data for the A507 Clothall Rd.

Some immediate observations:

The roads in Baldock are for the most part already suitable for cycling. With the exception of perhaps the Tesco and Clothall Road roundabouts there is no for engineering intervention to make them "safe" for cycling. The emphasis should be on **SUPPLEMENTING** the road network with routes that give walking or cycling a distinct advantage over driving into town, and make cycling more attractive.

Even moderately confident cyclists will find the roadway preferable to a "[pavement conversion](#)" cycleway in this sort of environment. Any proposals for road side pavement conversions will be vigorously resisted. We expect to see appropriate measures selected from the Hierarchy of Solutions. In particular, traffic volume and speed reduction, combined with traffic free links should be the preferred strategy along most routes.

The shared paths proposed remote from the carriageway (eg routes 7 and 8) should provide pleasant and attractive shortcuts for cycling, and many are already used in that way. We support those proposals.

The two roundabouts mentioned above are key barriers. Putting cyclists on the pavement here will NOT be viewed as a positive measure. Having spent £33 million on taking traffic off these roads we expect to see this dealt with properly by converting these roundabouts to a continental geometry with radial entry / exit lanes and an enlarged island and a single circulation lane.

It is regrettable that no cycling provision has been included in the ongoing [High Street / White Horse Street](#) works. Cycle lanes on the road here would have cost nothing but improved the confidence of less experienced riders. The NHDC 1999 Plan called for a two way cycle track, 3m wide the length of the High Street (Baldock route 3). We are mystified as to why this pre-agreed route has not been incorporated into the work. Our preference would have been for on road lanes, particularly now that the bypass is open. We recommend that the opportunity is taken to redress this oversight.



Cycle lanes are also likely to be beneficial on Clothall Road and North Road, with ASLs on all arms of the Royston Road traffic lights.

Note that some parts of Clothall Road have considerable amounts of on-street parking at times. Cycle lanes are not appropriate where they are likely to suffer obstruction from parking so alternative measures would be necessary here. As this is outside Hartsfield school we recommend traffic calming the road.

Several routes pass around Hartsfield School. These should link direct into the school. Children need to be able to reach the school safely and comfortably from all directions including from Royston Road.

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Some obvious gaps in the proposed network:

Clothall Common to Rail Station via Ickneild Way (NHDC route 1).

A507 Clothall Rd to Royston Rd – this section is needed by children to reach the school.

The existing stony track from the end of Wallington Rd to the bypass bridge needs to be surfaced. The path on the far side needs to be connected directly to the Wallington Road instead of switching back on itself on a pointless and unnecessary detour. Both of these are comments made before construction of the bypass that should have been taken on board at the time.

NHDC route 6 requires little physical work

Some of the proposed paths have very abrupt turns on them. Attention should be paid to the bend radius and visibility requirements in LTN 02/08 and TAL 90/05. See attached quick reference guide.

All routes should be barrier free, as required by the [Hertfordshire Cycling strategy](#). Where access barriers exist on proposed cycle routes they should be removed. If there is a perceived intervisibility problem at path junctions or crossovers then the visibility should be addressed directly.

There is the outstanding issue of the very dangerous exit of the Great North Cycle Route onto [Weston Way](#). We ask that this is addressed before there is a tragedy.



Email 2 to Herts Highways dated 16/03/09

I have carried out a photo survey of the proposed routes over the weekend. All of the photographs, together with other issues in the locality, can be found on the camcycle photo map at:

<http://www.camcycle.org.uk/map/location/16132/map.html>

Scroll the map around to view nearby photos, or use the “more photos nearby” facility. The text accompanying the photographs can be taken as our comments.

Some comments further to those given by email on 12/3/09:

1. The starting point for any network must be the [1999 NHDC Cycle Routes Masterplan](#). This was thoroughly researched, consulted upon, and enshrined in local planning guidance. The recommendations of this report should not be diverged from lightly. There are places where it can be improved upon, particularly with regard to roads that have been removed from the primary road network. There are also instances where roadside pavement conversions have been recommended, where we believe that they are inappropriate (we remind you that the Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy recommends against pavement conversion). It is nevertheless a very good framework to apply.
2. We notice that there are some significant divergences from the 1999 plan, that do not appear to bring any benefits, but instead put cyclists onto some very unsuitable paths.
3. For shared use paths away from the carriageway we expect to see 3m min wide, unsegregated paths as the standard, with at least 0.5m clearance on both sides to any poles, posts, vegetation, and 25m forward visibility etc. [LTN 02/08](#) 8.5.3, Tables 8.2 and 8.1.
4. [NHDC route 1](#) between Clothall Common estate and the rail station is a HIGH priority route. We are mystified as to why this does not appear in your proposals. As Royston Road is no longer part of the primary route network we would expect a



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creative solution to the crossing needed into [Ickneild Way East](#), and traffic calming and /or cycle lanes on [Royston Road](#) itself.

5. The principle “cycling” network is the road network. Any off road infrastructure should complement and enhance the basic road network. It is essential that the basic road network is suitable for cycling. In particular, there is a glaring omission of any proposals for the [High Street](#), Whitehorse Street, [Royston Road](#) or the Tesco roundabout. [South Road](#) is particularly hostile for cycling and requires traffic calming measures (segregated provision here would be neither practical nor desirable).
6. The Clothall estate roads eg [Yeomanry Drive](#), do not carry a great deal of traffic, but are unnecessarily hostile. This is mostly due to the lack of “activity” with no properties fronting onto the roads. The string of central islands along their length create a series of pinch points that are thoroughly intimidating for anybody choosing to cycle. The absence of activity is difficult to address, but the islands should be removed and replaced with cycle friendly traffic calming such as [this](#). We recommend creating raised [junction tables](#), putting all cycle route and footpath crossings on flat topped humps, and implementing an estate wide [20 mph speed limit](#).
7. Permeability is the key, not defined “routes” people need as many possibilities as can be given in order to make walking and cycling the natural choice for local journeys. To do that we must remove all of the [barriers](#) and obstructions that make cycling so artificially awkward in this sort of environment.
8. [Direction signs](#) are vitally important if people are to use the cycle network. There is a near complete absence of any useful direction signs for cycling on the current “network”.
9. The Clothall estate is bisected by a “[green corridor](#)” that is absolutely begging to have a top quality shared path built through it. While Link 2 skirts the edge of it, Links 3, 4 and 5 unaccountably ignore it. This really is a very, very good route for foot and cycle access. It really **MUST** be incorporated into any scheme because it provides access to innumerable cul de sacs without any of the problems associated with off road routes. Visibility is good, there is lots of space, there are few interruptions, it would serve a large play area and open up possibilities to create more informal play areas, seating and meeting areas, exercise trails, you name it. This green corridor could become the HUB of the estate, not just a dark place that houses back onto. [Clothall estate recommended main cycle route](#).
10. The existing cycle route suffers from poor route selection and [poor interfaces](#) with the roadway. Narrow alleyways, poor visibility and regular [barriers](#) make it thoroughly uninviting. These shortcomings need to be addressed and a new main cycle route needs to be built along the central green spine.
11. Some of the proposed routes are completely unsuitable for shared use. Link 15 is very narrow and has a completely [blind bend](#). It should be left as a footpath. Link 4 and 5 contain a very [narrow footpath](#) section which is also unsuitable for shared use. There appears to be scope to widen this by using land from Hartsfield School, but unless the path is widened it must not be re-badged as a cycle path, it is much too narrow and visibility is too poor.
12. The western end of link 14 is also completely [blind](#) and far too [narrow](#). Since there is a perfectly good route only yards away using [Simpson Drive](#), cyclists should be directed that way instead (Link 9).



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13. A notable omission from your proposals is NHDC route 6 along [The Tene](#) and [Pembroke Road](#). This gives a route parallel to the High Street for little work.

14. The one way system in [Pinnocks Lane](#) (Link 10) is a real problem that **MUST** be addressed. This is the only current link between Clothall Rd and the High Street. We strongly recommend restoring Pinnocks Lane to two way traffic flow (there is plenty of width), closing the west end to motor traffic but maintaining cycle access. We do not recommend keeping one way traffic flow with a contraflow cycle lane as that lane will almost certainly be widely abused by illegal car parking in this sort of environment. People using it are also likely to suffer belligerence for being allowed to do something on a bike that is not permitted in a car.



15. We will not support the use of roadside cycle tracks for routes 11 and 13. We expect to see cycling catered for in the carriageway, and hazard at the roundabout addressed by tightening up the geometry as for a continental roundabout arrangement. The Clothall Road should be traffic calmed in the vicinity of Hartfield School, cycle lanes used and on-street parking banned opposite the school.

16. Link 12, The [Wallington Road](#) is unnecessarily wide, encouraging inappropriate speed and impatient behavior. Reduce the apparent width by removing the centerline and introducing cycle lanes on both sides. A parking strategy must be worked out with allotment holders to ensure that cycle lanes do not get obstructed.

17. There is no point in developing [link 1](#) unless the glaring shortcomings of the existing "Wallington Road" path are addressed. The following measures are urgently required if this once excellent country lane is ever to be more than a place to walk your dog. [See plan here](#).

a. Remove the dreadful access [barriers](#) (and [here](#) and [here](#)) and replace with simple bollards.



b. Realign the path to minimize the [gratuitous diversion](#) (and [here](#)), the gradient, and the [exposure to the bypass](#) on both sides of the bypass.

c. [Seal the surface](#). The rough stone surface is not suitable for cycling.

d. [Restore the width](#). This has been excessively reduced from what was once a very good facility to make it a very narrow facility. Cycling comfortably as a family group is no longer possible because there is insufficient width to pass people coming the other way when riding anything other than single file.

18. The dangerous path at [Weston Way](#) must be addressed before there is a tragedy. If there should be a tragedy here we will have no hesitation in recommending that the victim or their dependents take legal action because this path represents a clear case of "entrapment" (ie leading an unsuspecting road user into a dangerous situation) if ever there was one.





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Email 3 to Herts Highways dated 17/03/09

Some more info for you further to my previous emails. As stated yesterday, the “green corridor” that bisects Clothall estate is crying out to have a good quality, mixed use path put down the middle of it. I have plotted out the ideal route on an aerial photo [[Clothall estate recommended main cycle route](#)] together with links to the adjoining cul-de-sacs. Most of the latter already exist and only need simple improvements (barrier removal, flush kerbs, sightline improvement etc).

The numbers on the plot are photograph numbers. You should be able to open the photograph by clicking on the number.