

# Cyclists Touring Club right to ride network

[www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk) [www.ctcherts.org.uk](http://www.ctcherts.org.uk) [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)



Please reply to:

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**By email**

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Dear Sanjay,

## Junction at Letchworth Road / Weston Way, Baldock

Thank you for supplying the drawings requested. As a general point, we had asked for these to be supplied in Autocad format. PDFs are useful but do not allow missing information such as the width of the shared use track to be inquired, meaning that we have to keep going back to you for further clarification.

Please provide Autocad drawings in future as requested.

### **Consultation**

It is not really surprising that you had no responses from consulting 87 householders. I suppose it is possible that some of those householders would have had an understanding of and interest in cycling issues and engineering layouts, but on the whole I would think it unlikely. We, on the other hand, have a detailed understanding and a strong interest in both.

I would love to be able to personally attend every public meeting and presentation going, but even assuming that I knew about them it would hardly be practical. I have a full time job, a young family, and no free time. Most volunteers are the same, so please don't waste our time. This is the internet age, there are easier ways to reach people than public meetings. Public presentations and mailshots to residents are an important part of consultation, but you must also contact people like ourselves, Living Streets, Sustrans and so on directly because we have the interest and the expertise that Mrs Jones in number 42 lacks.

You need to target your consultation, because we can help you avoid blundering into bad designs, and I regret to say that this is a bad design.

Just as a point, I would like you all to note that these comments are being returned on the same working day that we received the drawings. Compare that with over a month that it took to pass them to us.

**A tight deadline is no excuse for not consulting us** (please pardon the double negative).

### **Underlying philosophy**

I am a Civil Engineering Consultant myself, but I often struggle to see what designers are trying to achieve in a given scheme.

Every local authority nowadays acknowledges the transport, health and environmental abyss that we are staring into, and each of those authorities has produce impressive sounding policies. We are promised that LA's are going to tackle the inexorable growth of private car use, and make walking and cycling more attractive.

Right to ride is the CTC's volunteer campaign network – working for all cyclists at the local level

Unfortunately when you look at the nitty gritty of schemes that are built, they do the opposite - adding capacity to roads and junctions, marginalising walking and cycling.

So, what are you doing here and what should you be doing ?

What you should be doing is (from TA 91/05, in descending order):

- b Reduce traffic volume.** The second bypass was supposed to do that but as we know has had the opposite effect on many streets. A more mature policy of traffic reduction is needed for Baldock and the other North Herts towns.
- b Reduce traffic speeds.** This is an unnecessarily, and undesirably fast and hostile road connecting two towns only a mile apart. With two bypasses, why do we need such a wide, fast road anymore ? Surely the time has come to restore this road to a proper 30 mph two lane single carriageway and use the space released for something better.
- b Junction treatment.** That should be what this scheme is about but there doesn't seem to be any consideration of cyclists' needs other than to push them off the carriageway. Where are the advanced stop lines ? Why divert cyclists off Weston Way instead of making a simple, safe convenient connection directly from the junction ? Why widen the road to two lanes - this is always a hazard and encourages speed ?
- b Carriageway redistribution.** There is no shortage of excess carriageway, but we don't see anything positive being done with it.
- b Cycle lanes and traffic free routes away from the carriageway.**
- b Pavement conversions.** We note that, as usual the "solution" adopted is the last resort. To be fair, the cycle track itself is reasonable, it is just that it doesn't go anywhere so it isn't really of any use. There is a nasty junction at one end, and you have to sit and wait to rejoin the road at both ends.

Consider FIRST

Consider LAST

What you should be doing then is:

- b Immediate.** Connecting the existing cycle track parallel to Letchworth Road properly into the road system. Not with some ridiculous bit of shared path meandering across a spare bit of ground to a blind corner, but by bringing it straight to the junction as a 4 way crossroads, like any other road user.
- b Immediate.** Provide a proper transition from cycle track to road so that cyclists travelling towards Baldock can do so without an unnecessary wait (as right, but with the recommended 2m width).
- b Immediate.** Provide a means for cyclists travelling towards Letchworth to get onto the cycle track (if they so choose) at the junction, without having to perform a strange and indirect manoeuvre (how exactly are you supposed to do it as drawn ?). Needs - an ASL for right turning cyclists with a protective island to the East of the junction.
- b Long term.** Dig up the dual carriageway, restore it to 2 lane single carriageway and change the alignment to discourage speed. Use the spare space to create a top quality cycle / footpath between Baldock and Letchworth.





### Specific comments on scheme

#### L Problem: Cycle track on south side

What is the point of this track ? You take cyclists off the road at a blind corner (or worse, dump them into the road at a blind corner) take them off on a zig-zag trail with no consideration for bend radii, throw down some corduroy paving and all for what ? They have to use Weston Way regardless so why take people off it ? It is a traffic calmed road.

The problems of harassment and abuse faced by cyclists who ignore poor quality roadside facilities are well documented so you **MUST NOT** create them. They are a strong deterrent to cycling.

#### b Solution: Keep cyclists in the road

There is no need or benefit to taking cyclists off Weston Way. Remove the cycle track, design the junction as a 4 arm cross roads with a pedestrian crossing over one arm and advance stop lines on each arm. Note that the logical location for a pedestrian crossing is to the **EAST** of the junction, not the west.

#### L Problem: Intimidation by two lane approach

Splitting the approach into two lanes makes it difficult and intimidating for a cyclist to position himself correctly for a right turn. Impatient drivers will use an empty lane on either side to pass cyclists in the most dangerous of circumstance, even when that cyclist is trying to make a turn.

#### b Solution: Keep all approaches to a single lane

- b Keep both approaches to a single lane.
- b Put an advanced stop line on all three general traffic arms (with lead in lane).
- b Give right turning traffic a dedicated right turn phase.

#### L Problem: Cycle track not designed in accordance with national guidelines (TA 90/05)

There is no excuse for not following the guidelines.

- L Changes in direction are drawn with **NO radius**. Would you do this for a road carrying motor traffic ? Bicycles are no different. Cycle tracks should be designed to a radius of 15m. Tight radius bends at low speed should have an absolute minimum radius of 4m. **CYCLISTS CANNOT NEGOTIATE RIGHT ANGLE BENDS ANYMORE THAN OTHER TRAFFIC CAN.**
- L **Visibility**. Where cycle tracks emerge onto the road there must be **30m** visibility from **2.5m** back. This cannot be achieved where the cycle track emerges onto Weston Way.
- L The **tactile paving** specified is inappropriate and will create hazard. Corduroy paving is **NOT** for use on segregated paths and is dangerous for cyclists. If tactile paving is needed (and this tends to be greatly over-specified), then you must use ladder (ped) and **tramline** (cyclist) paving. These must **NOT** be placed where cyclists are **turning**, or would hit them at an **angle**, or could hit them at **speed**. Any of these conditions may cause a cyclist to lose control and crash.
- b In view of the relatively low cycle use likely to be attracted to this sort of path (other than local schoolchildren) we suggest that an un-segregated shared path would be more appropriate. This would not require tactile warnings. People tend not to respect segregation on lightly used paths and this can lead to unnecessary antagonism.



A marked up copy of your plan is attached. If you send an Autocad version of this drawing as requested we can mark the comments on in a clearer, more useful way.

Yours Sincerely

**Alasdair DV Massie** Ceng MIStructE

CTC Right to Ride Representative, North Herts

Enclosure: HCC drawing M/749636/200/02

The CTC is Britain's largest cycling organisation with 70,000 members. Formed in 1878 we have actively campaigned for better, safer roads, locally and nationally since our inception. We have a large and active section for Stevenage and North Herts.

