

# 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)



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28 March 2008

George Eivers HCC

**By email**

Dear George,

## Royston Cycle Network

Today received a copy of your letter and plan dated 20 March 2008, forwarded by CTC head office. As a general point, please ensure that any correspondence on this or other projects in North Herts is copied directly to me. The staff at HQ in Guildford do not have any knowledge to offer on the back streets of Royston and so will always pass such correspondence to the local representative (me in this case) for action. Unfortunately it can take a while to get here.

In this instance of course you had previously sent me the plan, so there is no problem.

We do have a number of comments on the proposals and I have been trying to put aside some time to put those comments down in writing. One of the drawbacks of acting as a volunteer is that you have to squeeze campaigning work in between the competing demands of work and family.

I will try to summarise the points as succinctly as I can. With the exception of the railway, the problems for cyclists in and around Royston all result from engineering measures carried out in recent years, without regard for the impact on the safety and comfort of cyclists.

## 1 Existing problems for cyclists

With the exception of the railway underpass itself, the proposals do not address the main problems that cyclists face when traveling in and around Royston. These problems are:

- L Severance by A505 Royston bypass and the A10.** This is very bad; only the most robust and thick skinned cyclists will attempt to cycle between Royston and the outlying villages and science parks to the north and west. There are no low-traffic alternatives. This is the problem most commonly cited by our members, see attached comments. The 1999 Masterplan<sup>i</sup> identified two existing crossings which could be used, these do not appear in the current proposals.
- L Severance by the Railway line.** The proposed underpass is a welcome measure however the need for a crossing south of the station remains. The existing pedestrian crossing point should be upgraded to allow cyclists to reach the industrial area, with safety improvements such as warning lights and automatic barriers, as used on normal level crossings.
- L One way systems.** These are always a problem for cyclists, making journeys by bike longer, more indirect, more intimidating and generally unattractive. They do not just make cycling

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unattractive, one way streets are unpleasant to live in. Royston has some unnecessarily bad one way streets. These need to be returned to two way working or contraflow cycling arrangements made. In the case of streets like Queens Road / Mill Road that act as rat runs, environmental road closures should be made to discourage through traffic while maintaining permeability for cyclists and pedestrians.

**L Poor quality traffic calming and cycle infrastructure.** This is a particular problem on North Road / Kneesworth Street. This ought to be a reasonably comfortable street to cycle on, it is wide and does not carry particularly heavy traffic. Regrettably a combination of ill thought out engineering measures have conspired to make it a thoroughly unpleasant experience. Addressing these problems is a high priority. Particular faults that need rectifying are:

**L Very narrow cycle lanes** (<1m, recommended width is 2m) confine cyclists rather than protecting them. A cyclist riding as advised in the national standard for cycle training would find themselves riding outside the cycle lane. This is compounded by the way the lanes weave in and out at central islands and are frequently overrun by motor vehicles as they pass the islands. Cycle lanes must be wide enough (2m recommended) and straight, following the road centerline, not the edge - squeeze the driver, not the cyclist; reduce the threat, don't disadvantage the victim. See attached article on the hazards of narrow cycle lanes.

**L Narrowings and traffic islands.** These are a well known hazard for cyclists and are the least effective means of speed reduction available to engineers, yet North Rd is littered with traffic islands. Except where these protect a right turn these should be removed and replaced with a cycle friendly traffic calming feature. Where the islands are needed the cycle lane must be protected from encroachment and must be kept straight and of constant width. For example the islands could be relocated to protect the cycle lane from encroaching traffic, rather than deflecting traffic into the cycle lane as they do at present.

The crossing to the primary school on Burns Rd is another example of an unnecessary hazard for cyclists. Here a very abrupt build out forces cyclists into conflict with following traffic. This should be replaced by a cycle friendly feature such as a zebra crossing on a raised platform, with additional speed reduction measures (eg speed activated signs) if needed.

**L Roundabouts.** Large roundabouts are a well known hazard for cyclists. The roundabouts on the A505 bypass are extremely dangerous and intimidating for cyclists and have no alternative cycle crossing. They have wide circulating lanes and tangential entry and exit lanes, encouraging high speeds. This is the opposite of what is needed to make cycling acceptably safe for even the hardest cyclist.

The roundabouts on North Road and Melbourn Rd are little better. Again the circulating lane is unnecessarily wide and the entry and exits are widely flared, allowing a high speed tangential entry instead of a careful, radial entry. This is totally inappropriate for the environment - town center / residential, and contributes to an unnecessarily hostile environment for cycling. These roundabouts need to be re-engineered to reduce speeds and create a cycle / pedestrian friendly environment.



## 2 Following the hierarchy of provision

I suspect that the above measures are not quite what you had in mind for Royston, however Royston will never be a "cycle friendly" place until they have been addressed. Putting right the unnecessary problems in North Road must be a priority.

Our principal concern with the proposals on the table at present is that they have gone straight to the bottom of the hierarchy of provision (pavement conversions) without considering any of the preferred measures (traffic / speed reduction). The hierarchy is included here once again for ease of reference.

### Opportunities for traffic reduction

Bypasses are often put forward as a means by which to reduce traffic. Unfortunately they do not reduce traffic, they just displace it and in the process they fuel traffic growth. The traffic on the A505 between Baldock and Royston jumped by 26% in the first year after opening of the Baldock Bypass. This has made the already difficult and dangerous road even worse.

Constructive ways of reducing traffic usually involve removing through traffic from inappropriate routes - "rat runs" in common parlance. Unfortunately proposals for environmental road closures often meet with vocal, hostile reactions from affected motorists, and sometimes from residents who only see the loss of convenience, not the improvement to their street environment. This is not a good reason to avoid them however because the improvements in the environment are immense. Who would actually choose to live on a rat run when you could live in a quiet cul-de-sac?

It goes without saying that any closure should allow free and uninterrupted passage by cyclists and pedestrians.

Closures that give a direct advantage to cycling or walking over driving, help reduce the TOTAL amount of traffic on the road. They benefit everybody, whether or not everybody initially realizes it.

Mill Road / Queens Road is an obvious candidate for a closure, allowing a return to two way operation. It should be possible to arrange the position of the closure to allow a through route for access but making it sufficiently indirect to deter any other motor traffic.

A cycle network is a network of routes that are attractive to cycle on, which may or may not include specific "cycling infrastructure".

It doesn't have to all be painted red or have cycle logos.

<b>Hierarchy of Provision</b>			Source TA 91/05 <sup>ii</sup>
<b>b</b> <i>Traffic Reduction</i>	Particularly HGVs. Divert traffic, traffic calming, road closures.		Consider first
<b>b</b> <i>Speed reduction</i>	20 mph zones, Homezones, shared surfaces, traffic calming		
<b>b</b> <i>Junctions and Traffic Management</i>	ASLs, signalisation, re-engineering of roundabouts, freedom from banned turns, removal of dedicated vehicle left turn slip lanes.		
<b>b</b> <i>Carriageway Redistribution</i>	Cycle lanes, bus lanes		Consider last
<b>b</b> <i>Off road provision away from highways</i>	Railway paths, canal towpaths, paths across parks, new cycle paths, ROWIPs		
<b>b</b> <i>Roadside pavement conversions</i>	Rarely satisfactory. Only appropriate for busy, fast rural roads with few side roads		



**Opportunities for speed reduction**

**20's Plenty**



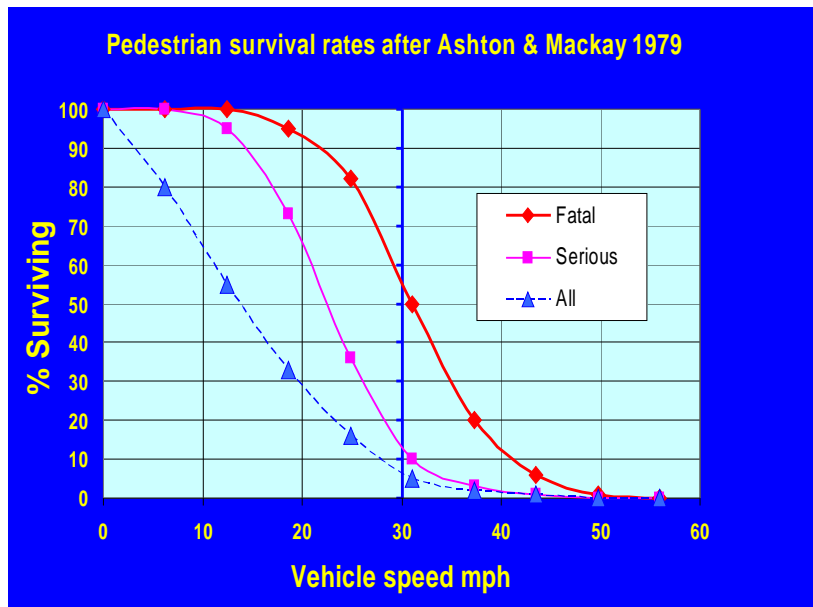
The threshold speed below which almost all people will survive a vehicle impact is 20 mph. By 30 mph your survival chances are little better than 50/50 and by 40mph you are unquestionably going to die<sup>vii</sup>. If we had carried out an evidence based study to set the urban speed limit then 20 mph would be the figure, not 30. Unfortunately the speed limit was set in 1930 when there was little traffic and less research.

**Where People Live**

Most of Royston's streets are purely residential. There is no reason whatever for people to be driving through these streets at speeds in excess of 20 mph.

Many local authorities are now looking at their speed management and putting in area wide 20 mph limits. Portsmouth, Transport for London, Cambridge, Hull, Norwich, Warrington, North Tyneside, Burton (Dorset) are just some of the areas where 20 mph zones and limits have now been applied or are proposed. You no longer have to install expensive and intrusive physical measures except where there is a proven need. See DfT circular 01/06 "Setting Local Speed Limits<sup>viii</sup>".

We see Royston as a perfect setting for trialling a 20 mph area wide limit, covering all of the residential streets bounding the major roads (which would remain 30 mph). Physical measures and / or speed activated signs may be required in particular locations such as schools.



See [www.20splentyforus.org.uk](http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk)

**Opportunities for junction treatment**

We have already detailed the main areas of concern above, namely the roundabouts on North Road and Melbourn Road. These should be viewed as a high priority.



### **Opportunities for carriageway redistribution**

The obvious candidates for carriageway redistribution are the former main roads through the town, now partly or wholly bypassed. These are wide and could easily accommodate the recommended 2m wide cycle lanes.

We do **NOT** recommend the use of cycle lanes generally through minor residential streets. These are likely to be widely abused by parked vehicles. Appropriate speed control should create conditions that are suitable for unsegregated on-road cycling for all abilities.

Unfortunately, as noted above, the existing cycle lanes on North Road are very poor and are a problem, not an asset, for cyclists. To correct these failings and avoid repeating them elsewhere, cycle lanes should be:

- b** 2.0m recommended width<sup>ii</sup>. Use advisory lanes if there is insufficient width.
- b** The cycle lane should follow the road centerline, it should NOT follow the kerb in and out.
- b** Do not use where on street parking (legal or illegal) is likely to be an issue.
- b** We also recommend removing the road centerline to reduce speeds and discourage drivers from encroaching on the cycle lane.

### **Opportunities for cycle tracks away from the carriageway**

There are few opportunities for truly traffic free cycling in an urban setting. There is a very pleasant, but entirely purposeless cycle track around the edge of the new Fairfield Way housing estate in the east of the town. This rather surreal track goes around the perimeter of the estate without actually connecting to anything useful. Neither the school, the children's play area, the leisure center, or even several of the cul-de-sacs connect to it. It does not connect to the existing farm underpass under the A505 (NHDC route 3<sup>i</sup>). It does not connect to the A505 or to the A10/A505 roundabout, to bring cyclists using those roads a bit of relief from the traffic and a short cut into the town.

All of the above need to be connected if this existing path is to be a useful asset to Royston's cyclists rather than just a place for people to exercise their dogs. The same comments apply to the slightly vague arrows suggesting routes to the north end of Betjuman Rd.

Other priority off-road tracks would include a link to the existing farm bridge over the A505 at the western end of the industrial area (the other end of NHDC route 3<sup>i</sup>). This would ultimately open up connections to all the villages to the north of the town.

There are many existing paths connecting the ends of roads in some of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century estates. A number of these have been incorporated into the proposals and we support their use. These can make very useful links, giving a positive advantage to cycling over driving. We are however concerned that they should be brought up to standard for shared use. Simply putting up signs while leaving barriers in place and doing nothing to improve width and sight lines will not be acceptable.

### **Roadside pavement conversions**

Roadside pavement conversions are extremely unpopular with regular cyclists and rightly sit at the bottom of the hierarchy of provision. The problem of side road and driveway crossings is never addressed constructively in the UK, so any journey on a pavement conversion is slow and hazardous. Cyclists who ignore the path and continue to ride in the road often suffer harassment, abuse, and occasionally even violence.

There are very few instances where roadside pavement conversions are appropriate in an urban setting. They can be an asset alongside major inter-urban roads with few side roads, but not elsewhere. We will



robustly oppose the use of roadside pavement conversions where we feel that they are inappropriate, and that includes most, if not all, of the study area.

Places where roadside cycle tracks would be an asset are:

**b** Alongside the A505, A10 and A1198 beyond the town extremities.

We do not believe that they are appropriate elsewhere.

In this context, we do **NOT** support the proposed roadside cycle track in Burns Road as it will encourage antagonism and hostility towards people who continue to ride in the road. We believe that Burns Road should be included in an area wide 20 mph limit, with speed control measures if necessary. A parallel cycle route should be created using the existing paths and minor roads as NHDC route 2<sup>i</sup> and HCC drawing 737784/002/000/000/002. This will allow under-confident riders to use a traffic free route without compromising the rights of more confident riders who prefer to use the road.

## Other issues

### **Cycle Parking**

Royston has very little cycle parking other than at the railway station and a few other locations. Can you imagine how people would cope if there were only 20 or 30 car parking spaces in the whole of Royston? It is a **HUGE** deterrent, and sorely needs to be redressed.

Secure, good quality cycle parking needs to be provided everywhere - at public buildings, outside shops, leisure facilities, community centers, schools, libraries, factories, offices, and in residential areas, especially those without the luxury of garages or accessible gardens.

Cycle parking is cheap and easy, there is no excuse for not providing it, and cycling will always be held back if it is not provided.

### **Station Access**

The station has a rather tatty car park (no cycle parking on the north side - should be some here), backing onto a residential development and the industrial area. Although a number of streets back right up to the fence, there are NO pedestrian or cycle access points. This is ludicrous, the station should be made as easily accessible as possible by making shared paths through from all of those streets to the station car park, and then a safe and attractive route created through to the north side platform entrance.

### **“Soft measures”**

As anybody who has watched “The woman who stops traffic” will know, you can build all the cycle paths you want, but unless you give people a nudge, they won’t get out of their cars and use them.

Personal travel planning has been used very effectively in Darlington<sup>ix</sup> and elsewhere<sup>x</sup> to encourage people to walk or cycle rather than driving. There is no reason why the same tactics cannot work here. Could Royston be a model for the rest of Hertfordshire? As a compact town with good public transport links and a healthy local economy there is really very little need for people to reach for the car keys.

There are several obvious target groups:

**b** **Rail commuters.** The next station is less than 10 minutes away by bike. Rail commuters generally have NO reason to drive to the station, and they would be much better off walking or cycling. Some will already have environmentally sympathetic attitudes, but may lack the confidence or imagination to try something new. Do we need a bigger station car park? No, we need more of those people to walk or cycle.



- b** **The school run.** Most schools now have travel plans, but if my personal experience is anything to go by, they don't necessarily involve the parents who are doing the transporting. Engagement is the key.
- b** **Local employers.** More employees cycling means a healthier, happier, longer lived work force, and less valuable space wasted on the staff car park. Many employees will live within a 15 minute cycle ride of their work place - you can cross Royston from one end to the other in only 5-10 minutes.

We must not forget the importance of **Cycle Training**, for adults as well as children. Few adults of new driving age will ever have learned how to ride a bike properly. Training will give them the skills and the confidence to cycle in traffic, removing the demand for costly and unhelpful segregated facilities.

Yours Sincerely

**Alasdair DV Massie** Ceng MIStructE

Former CTC Right to Ride Representative, North Herts

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<sup>i</sup> North Herts Towns Cycle Route Network Masterplan NHDC 1999 [http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/planning\\_policy\\_and\\_projects/supplementary\\_planning\\_guidance.htm](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/planning/planning_policy_and_projects/supplementary_planning_guidance.htm)

<sup>ii</sup> DMRB Vol 5 Sect 2 [TA 91/05 Provision for non-motorized users](http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/vol5/section2/ta9105.pdf) Annexe 3 Table A3.2 <http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/vol5/section2/ta9105.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> "Cyclists at road narrowings" TRL report 621, DfT TA 01/97 <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/cyclefacilities/cyclistsatroadnarrowings>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/documents/A.03.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> TA 09/97 Cyclists at Roundabouts <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/cyclefacilities/cyclistsatroundaboutscontine4078?page=1#a1000>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/documents/A.13.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> Ashton and Mackay 1979

<sup>viii</sup> DfT circular 01/06 "Setting Local Speed Limits" <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/dftcircular106/dftcircular106.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.dothelocalmotion.co.uk/WhatIsLocalMotion.htm>

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/documents/SM02.pdf>

# Royston cycle network plans



## Feedback from local CTC members

I would put in a plea for better and safer crossings for cyclists and pedestrians over the A10 and the A505, both of which have become noticeably busier since the opening of the Baldock By-Pass. If it wasn't for the Foxton level crossing the A10 would be impossible to cross safely at peak times. There is only one safe crossing point on the A505; at Whittlesford Bridge.

*Anthony J Cooper, PhD*

I have some interest in Royston as I live near it but rarely cycle in it due to the poor routes (the A10) available between Melbourn and Royston. Royston is badly served by good cycle routes as it is bisected by the A10 and A505 which are too busy for cycling. I have tried to get the path on the A10 upgraded to a cycle path without success. The junction at the A505/A10 is dangerous.

I have looked at the proposed cycle routes for Royston and don't really see how much more provision could be made within the infrastructure. I would expect people to ride on road in most of the locations shown. Generally the roads shown other than the industrial estate are relatively quiet. The Industrial Estate is not too bad for people working in it.

*Mike Stapleton*

I cycle in Royston mainly from the station to Melbourn Road (on my way to Melbourn) and back. I have to say I was unconvinced by the need for this underpass as presented. I tend to use the roads around Mill Road/Queens Road for my journeys.

For what it is supposed to do - provide links to the schools etc, the new link brings you out on the A10 which is not a road that caters well for cyclists. There is a shared use pavement but it is interrupted by a large number of entrances and driveways which are known to create significant hazard for cyclists. Using Mill Road - Stamford Avenue means you only need to deal with a short length of A10 before turning off for the schools.

If its going to happen you really need to make that stretch of A10 a 20mph zone (on the basis you can't shut off all the drives and entrances to make the pavement safe) and I doubt you would be allowed to do that on an A road.

*Tony Raven*

I've cycled between home and Royston quite a few times and there are several nice routes to take along country roads for the majority of the distance. However, the reason I'm writing to you is to suggest an off-road cycle route between Melbourn and Royston. The A10 is pretty unpleasant to be honest, but I'm not aware of any way of avoiding it (unless one goes through Melbourn onto the A505 - equally bad - or through Meldreth onto the A1198 - ditto). I have no figures to support my next assertion, but I believe a significant number of people commute from Royston to the Melbourn Science Parks, and the train is of little help to them. Is such a cycleway on a short (or long) list of possible ways of spending the lottery cash?

*Robert Mann*

We are pleased to see some consideration given to cycling in Royston but wonder if it would be possible to provide safe cycling from the Little Chef to the Littlington turning on the A505? A tarmac path on existing verge/s would suffice so the expense would not be huge. There is already a bridge crossing the Royston bypass but it cannot be used as there is no path to it. A cycle path would open opportunities to cycle safely into Royston from the surrounding villages to connect with the current Sustrans route from the Little Chef to Therfield. This has a very dangerous approach involving crossing the A505 at the Littlington junction and negotiating the roundabout on which there is a drain (North side) which forces cyclists into the path of fast moving traffic at the end of the bypass. Royston is a virtual island as far as cycling is concerned. We know of several clubs with experienced riders who try to avoid it and to take one's children for a bike ride out of Royston is frightening to contemplate. There is certainly a much renewed interest in cycling in surrounding towns but not in Royston. The reason is obvious.



*Bob Norman*

I am looking for plans which will enable cyclists to safely cross the A505 bypass at

- a) the A10 /505 roundabout and
- b) at the Tesco roundabout. It seems to me that the A505 bypass presents quite a barrier to go north, especially if you are inexperienced or have taken up cycling after 40 years!

Would I be alone in thinking that the marking of cycle lanes in Royston does not mean more safety. I am thinking of The Old North Road, where it seems to me that the narrowness of width means adopting an ambiguous road position. Keep to the cycle lane and you are cycling in all the kerb crud, and it encourages motorists to think they can safely pass; don't keep to the lane and you bring down the wrath of some motorists. I wonder if the money would have been better spent on a sort of "Think Bike" Courtesy to All road users" campaign? It seems to me, as a returning cyclist, that the provision of inadequate and erratic, narrow cycle lanes may fill some tick box in a Council Provisions List but do little else. Do any of our councillors use the cycle paths in Royston?

*Robert Brookes*

## Recommended Cycle Lane Widths from published Guidance



Document	Published by	Section	Cycle Lane Widths		Notes and Quotes
			Recommended	Minimum	
<a href="#">TA 91/05 Provision for non-motorized users</a> DMRB Vol 5 Sect 2	Department for Transport	Annexe 3 Table A3.2	2.0 m	1.5 m	
Cycle Friendly Infrastructure 1996	Institution of Highways and Transportation, CTC, DoT	11.3.2	2.0 m	1.5 m	Widths below 1.5m give cyclists very little room to manoeuvre around debris, potholes and drainage grates which tend to be concentrated in this part of the carriageway. Widths down to 1.2m may be valuable in specific circumstances, for example where queuing traffic blocks the cyclist's route, <b>but for short stretches only.</b>
<a href="#">The National Cycle Network - Guidelines and Practical Details issue 2 : 2006</a>	Sustrans / Arup	Figure 4.3	2.0 m	1.5 m	
<a href="#">Cycling by Design</a>	Scottish Executive	Table 5.1	2.0 m	1.5 m	Widths down to 1.2m may be valuable in specific circumstances where available width is restricted. For example <b>where queuing traffic blocks the cyclists' route</b> to an advanced stop line.
<a href="#">Lancashire Cycling Design Standard</a>	Lancashire County Council	Table 4.2.2	2.0 m	1.5 m	<b>The absence of a cycle lane is nearly always preferable to a cycle lane that is too narrow i.e. below 1.5-2.0m .</b> This is principally because motorists tend to drive right up to the line, which may be too close to cycle traffic. They also direct cyclists too close to the kerb, often a hazardous and uncomfortable place.
<a href="#">London Cycling Design Standards</a>	Transport for London	4.2.7	2.0 m	1.5 m	4.2.8 The exception to this is in congested situations where a narrower lane may be <b>useful to allow cyclists to pass slow or stationary motor vehicles</b> , particularly on the approach to junctions.
Designing for Cyclists	Essex County Council / Building Research Establishment	Box 10 p 36	2.0 m	1.5 m	
<a href="#">Providing for Cyclists</a>	Lincolnshire County Council	Table 3	2.0 m	1.5 m	Note identical to that in "Cycling by design" and others



### ***Note on the use of Sub-standard Cycle Lane widths***

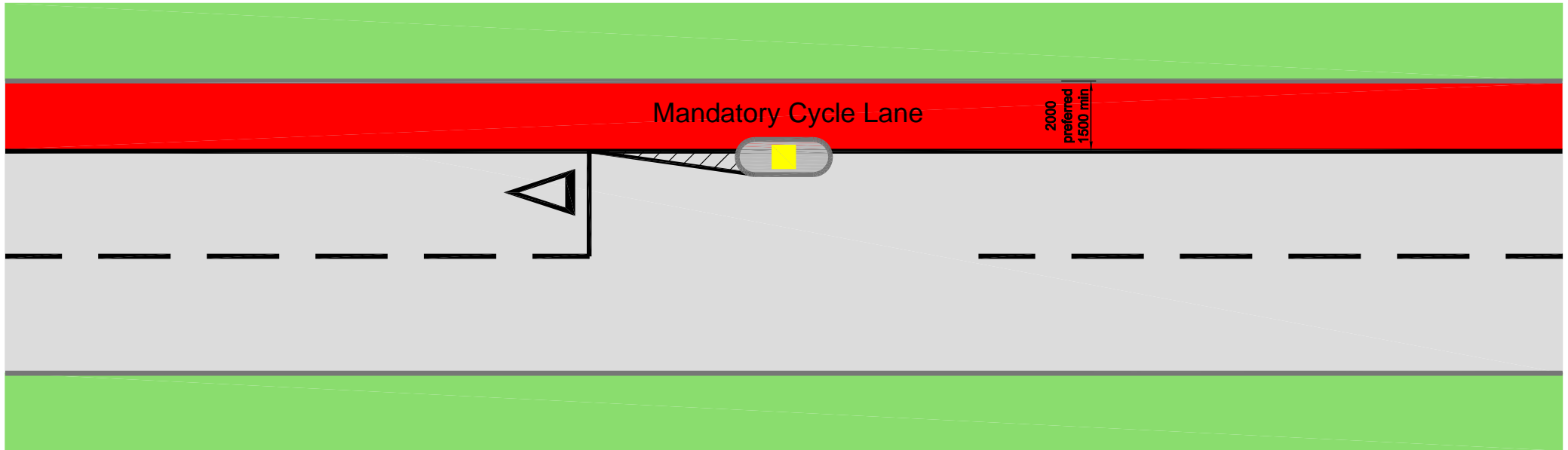
A number of design guides make reference to cycle lanes with less than the recommended (2.0m) and absolute minimum (1.5m) widths. In all cases it is made clear that sub-standard lane widths are **NOT** for general use, but only for use where:

1. There is insufficient physical width to accommodate the recommended lane width.
2. There is a clear advantage to **CYCLISTS** in having a lane, in spite of its reduced width.

The only situations where this is likely to apply are where cyclists need to pass stationary or queuing traffic, for example approach lanes to Advanced Stop Lines or bypass lanes to traffic calming features. Sub standard width lanes should not be used where the motor traffic is passing moving cyclists.

It is not acceptable to provide narrow cycle lanes in order to give motor traffic more room or greater priority. As made clear in the [Lancashire Cycling Design Standard](#), narrow cycle lanes increase the level of hazard and intimidation to which cyclists are exposed, and are almost always worse than providing no lane at all.

In all cases it is better to provide a **WIDE ADVISORY** lane (which motor traffic can legally encroach into, providing it is safe to do so) rather than a narrow mandatory lane (from which motor traffic is banned, although in practice enforcement is rare).



**CYCLE LANE PROTECTED BY  
TRAFFIC ISLANDS**



**Scheme:**

**Title:** CYCLE LANE PROTECTED BY  
TRAFFIC ISLANDS

**Sheet no:** 01

**Revision:** -

**Date:** Oct 06

**Drawn by:** AM

# Narrow Cycle Lanes – Dangerous and Unnecessary

By Robin Field, CTC Right to Ride Representative, Lancashire

*“Cycle lanes should be a minimum of 1.5m wide and 2m wherever possible “*

- Cycle-friendly Infrastructure (11.3.2)

In common with most European countries, 1.5m has always been the UK minimum for cycle lanes, long before Cycle-Friendly Infrastructure was published in 1996. But even this figure is only safe in 30mph traffic. At progressively greater speeds more space or separation from traffic needs to be provided, but other factors such as the number of cyclists and preponderance of wide vehicles should also be taken into account.



Photo: Robin Field

Unfortunately, narrower cycle lanes - typically 1.2m, but often even less - have become very common in recent years and are a cause of great concern amongst cyclists. Instead of guaranteeing safe roadspace to cyclists, what they do in practice is force them too close to the kerb and encourage traffic to brush past with only

inches to spare. In most cases, they do more harm than good. In very specific situations, such as to pass queuing traffic at junctions or for cycle by-passes, lesser widths can perhaps be tolerated, but in general proposals for cycle lanes narrower than 1.5 - 2m should not pass the Safety Audit process. So why are so many being built?

Often it seems to be partly due to the mistaken belief that *“something must be better than nothing”*. In practice with cycle facilities it rarely is. Generally drivers give cyclists more space and overtake at lower speeds if there is no cycle lane at all. A narrow one just lets them go straight ahead without delay or deflection.

Perhaps engineers are also tempted sometimes just to be seen to be doing something to satisfy political demands, or even to deliberately give cyclists as little as possible to leave the roads freer for others?

But the main reason must be that there is no more space left at the edge of the road after other greater priorities (alas) have been fully allowed for, such as the dreaded refuges, extra traffic lanes or car parking. In practice cycling usually comes very low down the ‘Road User Hierarchy’, not near the top where most Local Transport Plans claim it to be!

This however is based on a widespread misunderstanding of the role of advisory cycle lanes (as opposed to mandatory) and their potential both to help cyclists and to calm traffic. Instead of providing exclusive, but very limited ‘leftovers’ for cyclists, advisory cycle lanes should be used to

indicate the full space cyclists need, even if the road is so narrow that vehicles must normally drive partly within the cycle lane. Because this encroachment is allowed, there is no need to leave the usual 3m plus outside the cycle lane for general traffic which so limits engineers. The effect on drivers is to indicate that there is insufficient room to overtake until they can pull out beyond the cycle lane. And it does work not just in Holland, where it is now standard practice on the approaches to most towns and villages, but also in the few places it has been accepted in Britain, usually on narrow roads or to make pinch points less hazardous.

Once this is understood, the case for pushing cyclists into space-starved lanes at the kerbside largely disappears.

Cycle-Friendly Infrastructure, 1996 (DETR/CTC/The Institution of Highways and Transportation/Bicycle Assoc., costs £15 (£7.50 to CTC members) and is available from CTC. Tel 0870 873 0060.



Photo: Sustrans