



## A Manifesto for Cycling Provision in the Cambridge area

Cyclists need more than just cycle facilities or routes. The whole road environment needs to be suitable for them.

Speed and volume of motor traffic needs to be reduced. Conflict between cyclists and other road users needs to be minimised. Features of road design which are cycle-hostile should be avoided.

Where specific facilities are built, they need to be well-planned, well-designed and well-made. Inappropriate or poor quality facilities waste money and can be dangerous.

**Cambridge Cycling Campaign  
PO Box 204, Cambridge CB4 3FN**

01223 690718 (phone & fax)  
contact@camcycle.org.uk  
www.camcycle.org.uk

February 1996

For better, safer and more cycling in and around Cambridge

## Summary

Cyclists need more than just cycle facilities or cycle routes. These can be valuable, but they are not enough. Cyclists need the whole road environment to be suitable for them.

In this document we describe some of the ways in which the ordinary road network can be made more cycle-friendly without providing specific cycle facilities. The most important way is to reduce the speed and volume of motor traffic. Another is to design the road layout to minimise conflict between cyclists and other road users. At the very least, those features of road design which are notoriously cycle-hostile should be avoided. Cambridge has a legacy of road layouts which are unfriendly to cyclists and more are still being constructed.

In some places it will, however, be appropriate to provide specific facilities for cyclists. It is important that such facilities are well-planned, well-designed and well-made. Poor quality facilities, or facilities in the wrong place, are at best a waste of money and at worst can be downright dangerous.

In this document we describe some characteristics of “good” and “bad” cycle facilities, in the hope that we can improve the standard of cycle facilities being built.

In brief:

- Cyclists in Cambridge need to be able to go everywhere;
- Reduce the speed and volume of motor traffic;
- Provision for cyclists doesn't just mean cycle facilities;
- Provision for cyclists should cater for their “natural desire lines”;
- Reclaim road space from motor traffic;
- Go for quality rather than quantity;
- Cycle routes should be capable of being cycled on;
- Some cyclists will always prefer to use the road;
- Cycle tracks should be as convenient as the main carriageway;
- Shared paths with pedestrians have additional requirements;
- Consider personal security on quiet cycle routes;
- Maintenance matters.

## Cyclists in Cambridge need to be able to go everywhere

Cyclists in the Cambridge area ride everywhere, along all roads and through all junctions. Although cycle schemes which aim to “funnel” cyclists onto particular routes do have a value, they will never remove the need for cyclists to be able to use all parts of the ordinary road network.

The reasons why cyclists need to be able to use all the ordinary road network include:

- The start and end of any cycle journey is always on the standard road network
- The standard road network frequently offers the most direct and convenient route.

So the ordinary road network must be suitable for cyclists. In particular, it is essential that junctions on the ordinary road network are suitable for cyclists. Diversionary routes will never be enough.

Junction design should take into account that the main direction of cycle flow may be different from the main direction of flow for motor vehicles.

## Reduce the speed and volume of motor traffic

The most effective way of providing for cyclists is to reduce the speed and volume of motor traffic.

Traffic speeds can be reduced by:

- Greater enforcement of existing speed limits
- Changing social attitudes to speeding, so that speeding becomes socially unacceptable in the same way that drink-driving now is.
- Reducing existing speed limits.

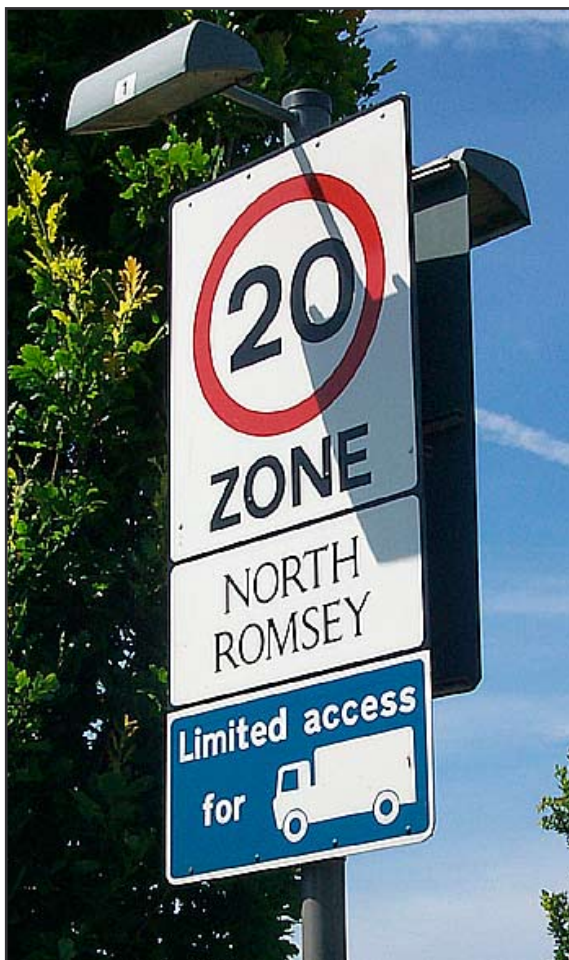
Traffic volume can be reduced by:

- Provision and promotion of other means of transport: public transport, park-and-ride, - and cycling.
- Land use policies which reduce the demand for travel.
- Bans and restrictions on motor traffic - and not just in shopping streets.

## Provision for cyclists doesn't just mean cycle facilities

Cyclists need more than just cycle facilities. They need a cycle-friendly road environment. Because cyclists need to be able to use the entire ordinary road network, the entire ordinary road network needs to be suitable for cycling. This means that roads and road schemes should always be designed with the needs of cyclists in mind.

This is not technically difficult, and need not necessarily require extra money. It simply means avoiding features of road design





which cyclists find difficult, unpleasant, or dangerous, and replacing them with more cycle-friendly equivalents.

- Avoid high-volume, high-speed roundabouts and circulatory schemes. (e.g. Mitcham's Corner, A14/A10). Consider using traffic signals instead.
- Avoid multi-lane roads, especially lanes that join on the left (e.g. Grafton Centre/East Road) and left-turn-only lanes (e.g. Jesus Lane/Victoria Avenue/Maids Causeway).
- Avoid measures which make the road so narrow that cycles cannot be overtaken safely, particularly when designing traffic calming schemes and when extending the pavement into the road.

### **Provision for cyclists should cater for their “natural desire lines”**

Cyclists should not be expected to make excessive diversions away from the natural desire line. It should be recognised that the ideal route for a cycle is a straight one between origin and destination.

Cyclists shouldn't simply be diverted away from a difficult junction, if this results in a longer journey. If anybody should be forced to make a long diversion it should be the motor traffic. After all, cycling requires physical effort; driving a car doesn't!

### **Reclaim road space from motor traffic**

If, in order to provide for cyclists, additional road space is needed, then this should be taken from motor traffic rather than from pedestrians. Current practice is usually the opposite.

### **Go for quality rather than quantity**

When cycle facilities are to be provided, we believe it is more effective to spend a given quantity of money on a smaller number of high-quality schemes rather than on a larger number of lower-quality schemes.

The Cambridge area already has a large number of low-quality cycle facilities. Many simply represent a waste of money. We don't want our local councils to waste any more. In particular, most shared-use footway schemes are unsuitable and of poor quality, and as a result are poorly used.

It would be a mistake to aim for “x km of cycle routes” each year, since this would encourage quantity at the expense of quality.

### **Cycle routes should be capable of being cycled on**

Remarkably, many “cycle routes” cannot actually be cycled on for their entire length. A cycle route which requires a cyclist to dismount is not a cycle route. (For example, the route to avoid the pedestrianised Burleigh-Fitzroy Street route actually crosses the pedestrian zone itself, so a dismount is still required).



In addition to being capable of being cycled on, a good cycle route should be physically convenient to use. This means that:

- Cycle routes must have a smooth road surface (which need not always mean tarmac).
- The cyclist should not be asked to dismount at places along the route. (e.g. cycle track on A10/M11 roundabout).
- The route should have suitable gradients, curvatures, widths and visibility to accommodate a steady pace of 30km/h and to allow two bikes, or a bike and a pedestrian, to pass easily.
- The route should require as few stops, turns and awkward manoeuvres as possible.

A good cycle route should be capable of attracting cyclists to use it, and a convenient cycle route will be more attractive than an inconvenient one.

## Some cyclists will always prefer to use the road

It should be recognised that there will always be cyclists who will prefer to use the road rather than an off-road cycle facility.

The provision of a cycle facility should never compromise such cyclists. In particular, provision of an alternative route for cyclists should never be regarded as an excuse for rendering the original road or junction unsuitable for cyclists.



## Cycle tracks should be as convenient as the main carriageway

By cycle “track” we mean a segregated cycle path alongside a road, possibly shared with pedestrians.

Where cycle tracks are provided alongside roads, the cyclists using them should have the same (or greater) priority at junctions with side roads as is enjoyed by traffic using the main carriageway. Cyclists should not be penalised for using a cycle track. This means that cycle tracks alongside roads must have priority over side roads. This can be reinforced by continuing the cycle track across side roads on a raised level.

Cycle lanes on the carriageway (as opposed to tracks) should simply continue straight across a junction with a side road, to emphasise their existing priority over side roads.

Cycle tracks alongside roads can be valuable if they are of high quality, but can be useless if they are not.

Cycle tracks are frequently totally unsuitable for cyclists because:

- of the need to give way to side roads
- they are invariably less well-maintained than the road itself
- they are frequently overgrown
- they are hard to turn right (or rejoin the traffic) from
- they are often poorly lit (sometimes being behind the street lamps)
- they are often blocked by parked cars

- they are often blocked by street furniture, road signs and trees
- they are rarely gritted in icy weather

However, in places where these problems can be avoided (such as rural and semi-rural locations) cycle tracks can be valuable.



## Shared paths with pedestrians have additional requirements

In addition to the points in the previous section, cycle tracks should only be shared with pedestrians if:

- they are wide enough
- both cycle and pedestrian traffic is low enough

This is not the case with many such facilities in Cambridge.

## Consider personal security on quiet cycle routes

When considering off-road cycle routes, or cycle routes away from main roads, issues of personal security must be considered.

Routes across open spaces, through subways and along back streets can be scary in the dark, even if the actual risk of assault is low and such fears are not justified. After all, the Police do consistently advise people to avoid such places after dark.

This has two main implications:

- Cycle routes in quiet areas may require additional measures to make users feel safer, such as improved lighting. This was recognised when the cycle bridge over the railway was built; TV cameras were installed to alleviate the fears of people using the bridge at quiet times.
- Even though quiet routes can make ideal cycle routes during the day, many people will prefer to use the main road when it is dark. This is yet another argument for keeping the ordinary road network cycle-friendly despite the existence of alternative routes.

## Maintenance matters

Cyclists are more sensitive to a poor road surface than the occupants of motor vehicles or pedestrians. This means that standards of road maintenance are particularly important to cyclists.

A poorly-maintained road surface is at the very least uncomfortable, and can be dangerous. A pothole or badly-filled trench can be enough to throw a rider off their bicycle, possibly into the path of a following motor vehicle.

Particular attention should be paid to the edges of the carriageway, since although this is where cyclists ride for most for most of the time. Unfortunately this is also the part of the carriageway where most of the hazards tend to be - in particular, sunken or badly-maintained drain covers.