



Policy on paths shared between cycles and pedestrians

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1. Summary

1.1. Pavements alongside roads (“footways” in the jargon) shared between cyclists and pedestrians are sometimes a solution to a particular problem. But more often especially in urban areas they are poor quality facilities which:

- are inconvenient
- are uncomfortable
- do not address the particular problems, especially junctions, of the streets where they are placed
- are used to avoid taking space from motor vehicles
- make conditions less safe and comfortable for those who choose to remain on the carriageway.

1.2. Therefore, Cambridge Cycling Campaign believes that in urban areas:

- Shared-use footways are a provision of last resort.
- The first priority in providing for cyclists should be to make the normal road environment safer rather than by building separate facilities, targeting the source of the problem - the motor vehicles
- That when separate facilities are desired, space should be taken from motor traffic to provide them, not from pedestrians.

1.3. Provision for cyclists shared with pedestrians may be more appropriate in some circumstances:

- In rural areas, where there are very few pedestrians and few obstacles. However, in these circumstances, the standard of construction is important, especially with regard to width, surface quality, curve gradients, lighting or edge-marking and what happens at either end.
- When providing a short link, for example from a road junction to a nearby signal controlled crossing. Again, we consider a high standard of design and construction most important, especially to limiting conflict with pedestrians which is potentially high in this kind of arrangement.
- Paths away from roads - across commons, alongside rivers etc. - can provide invaluable links and much more pleasant cycling. Once again, however, poor surface quality and inadequate width often cause problems.

2. Pedestrians

2.1. Pedestrians feel threatened by the close proximity of cyclists. This threat may be more perceived than real. Casualties caused by motor vehicles are statistically more common and more serious. Collisions that do happen between cyclists and pedestrians are usually minor. Even so, pedestrians continue to feel threatened.

2.2. Footways are pedestrian “territory”. Pedestrians resent this limited space being invaded by cyclists. This leads to hostility and resentment by pedestrians towards cyclists. We know of cases of pedestrians verbally abusing Cycling Campaign members cycling legally on

shared-use footways. Pedestrians often react badly to being alerted to a cyclist's presence by a bell.

- 2.3. It is sometimes suggested that courtesy is the answer to this problem. We do not believe this. On the whole, pedestrians resent the presence of even well-behaved cyclists in their areas. People seem to behave worse when they become road users, whether on foot, on a cycle or motorised. If courtesy were the answer, then action needs to be taken to reach the discourteous. It is not clear how this could be done.

3. Cyclists

- 3.1. Most shared-use footways in Cambridge are just footways on which cycling has been permitted. Typically the only work that is done to support this status is to provide lowered-kerbs where cycles are expected to join or leave the path or cross a side-road. Often that has not been done properly - kerbs have not always been constructed flush even in recent examples. As a result most shared-use is extremely poor quality provision.

Discomfort

- 3.2. Most shared-use footways are very uncomfortable to cycle on. With the notable exception of the Barton to Cambridge City boundary path, even those recently and specially constructed or surfaced are undulating and punctured by tarmac cones formed by weeds. Repeated cycling on such surfaces loosens and damages parts on bikes. Rough and undulating surfaces mean that cyclists cannot travel at their natural pace - it requires increased effort.

Obstacles

- 3.3. Most shared-use paths are far too narrow. They were not intended to take cyclists. It is often not possible to pass a pedestrian who is walking in the middle of the path, groups of pedestrians or other cyclists. Unlike the road, there is usually nowhere to go to avoid them.
- 3.4. Obstacles block many shared-use paths. Cars and delivery vans frequently pull up onto a path instead of parking in the road. Maintenance vehicles and contractors often completely block paths (inconveniencing both cyclists and pedestrians). Lighting columns, traffic signal controllers, wheelie-bins, trees and street furniture are commonly scattered along a path making it even narrower or blocking it totally.

Case in point:

Barton Road, January 20, 1997. Dustbin day, two wheelie bins blocking path completely, many other partially; contractors vehicles carrying out hedge maintenance, blocking verge and path totally; road surfacing contractors partially blocking path with road works signs; gardener blocking path with wheelbarrow. All in a space of 400 m on a single journey.

Side Roads

- 3.5. Shared-use footways are punctuated by side-roads at which cyclists are expected to give way to other traffic. Cyclists lose the right to priority that they would naturally have on the road. They have to

continually stop and start, which takes significant physical effort. They also must bump up and down. Frequently, crossing side-turnings involves two very sharp left and right turns, either because of the sweep of the kerb, or by design in order to provide visibility. It also makes it harder for the cyclist to look, requiring 270 degree vision.

- 3.6. If motor traffic is waiting to turn out of the side road, it obstructs cycle movements.

Hazards

- 3.7. Shared-use footways often abut hedges and walls so that visibility is limited at the frequent driveways many of them pass. This is hazardous. Because they are at the edges of the street, they often suffer from hedge-clippings (leading to punctures) and accumulation of leaves in the autumn (which become slippery). They are rarely salted in winter.
- 3.8. As a result of all of these, shared-use footways are inconvenient and uncomfortable. While casualties on shared-use footways are uncommon, we are not convinced that they contribute significantly to safety since most accidents do not occur when simply riding along a road. They may, however, give a false perception of safety.

4. Motorists

- 4.1. Motorists are significant beneficiaries of shared-use footways, to the detriment of cyclists and pedestrians. This should not be the case in an age when cycling is to be encouraged and motor traffic limited for environmental reasons.
- 4.2. Motorists have fewer cycles to get in their way on the road, so can drive faster. Shared-use footways encourage some motorists in their opinion that cyclists should not be on the road at all. Motorists gain priority over cyclists at side-roads.
- 4.3. If, as has sometimes been suggested, courts take the view that cyclists are to blame in the event of a collision on the road where shared-use is permitted alongside, this further disadvantages cyclists who choose to use the road.

5. Knock-on effect

- 5.1. Less confident cyclists may feel more secure when using a shared-use footway. In Cambridge, however, it will never be possible to provide an environment for cyclists which is entirely separate from cars. We consider that the minimal separation provided by shared-use footways may put these cyclists at greater risk when they *must* mix with other traffic because their lack of confidence is reinforced by mixing less. In some cases they lose confidence using the road at all and may either stop cycling, or feel limited to the small area where they are confident to cycle.
- 5.2. For some cyclists, widespread conversion to shared-use may have increased their perception that cycling is allowed on *any* footway, or they know it is not but choose to ignore this, in order to avoid obstructions or

Case in point:

Queen Edith's Way. The roundabout at the junction with Mowbray Road is hard to negotiate west-bound because of the very limited visibility. Yet provision for cyclists ends about 5m before the roundabout, and in a position where it is impossible to get into the right hand lane or the centre of the left hand lane if there is any motor traffic.

because they do not feel safe on the road. Cycling on non-shared footways is now common. It is a strong source of antagonism between pedestrians and cyclists (including those who do not break the rules).

6. Junctions

- 6.1. Most collisions occur at junctions. However, shared-use provision is almost never accompanied by provision to make junctions they lead into safer.
- 6.2. Shared-use footways nearly always end just before major junctions. Furthermore, they are often badly placed to lead a cyclist into a junction: the cyclist nearly always ends up on the far left hand side, from where it is very difficult to turn right, and not the position on the road we would often encourage for straight on, or even left turn movements.
- 6.3. It is often unclear what a cyclist is intended to do on leaving a shared-use footway. Consider, for example, trying to travel straight on from the shared-use footway on the north side of Cherry Hinton Road into Fulbourn Road.
- 6.4. Approaching a junction, motorists are concentrating on the junction, and are often not aware of cyclists joining the road from the footway.
- 6.5. Usually there is no protection to allow a smooth merge into the carriageway. [Cycle Friendly infrastructure; Newmarket Road]

7. Safe routes to school

- 7.1. One reason often given for allowing shared-use is in providing safe routes to school. However, we do not consider that shared-use on its own is ever sufficient to constitute a safe route to school. Furthermore, child cyclists should no more have to put up with the poor quality surfaces, obstructions, and deviations of shared-use footways than should adults.
- 7.2. Safe routes to school should always be developed in partnership with the school. One of the main targets should be the immediate area around the school where vehicles are concentrated, especially parents bringing children to and from school. Mixing cycles with the car passengers outside a school is chaotic.
- 7.3. Safe routes must also primarily address road crossings and junctions. Child pedestrians are just as important to consider as child cyclists. [ref: Sustrans]
- 7.4. While it is desirable to provide for cycling to school, it is not sufficient to build facilities which are suitable only for eight year old children (for example) to use. Young children on bikes are often more akin to pedestrians than cyclists, and should probably be regarded as such.

8. Rural areas

- 8.1. A better case can be made for shared-use provision in rural areas where there are few pedestrians, fewer potential obstructions, side-turnings and driveways, and the path can

often be purpose built. However, this has not prevented very many such facilities being built with all the faults of their urban counterparts. Many are far too narrow, usually extremely uncomfortable (including most purpose-built paths), and do not address junctions well, especially at their ends.

- 8.2. Designating existing footways in rural areas is usually even worse. Rural footways are generally appallingly maintained and are often unsuitable for walking on, let alone cycling.
- 8.3. For these reasons we remain sceptical of proposals to build such facilities, and will oppose simply designating existing footways as shared-use.
- 8.4. When specially constructed for cycling, it is appropriate to refer to such facilities as *cycle tracks* rather than using the term *shared-use footway*.
- 8.5. Cycling has traditionally been permitted on Cambridge Commons and other open spaces. These paths form very useful off-road links where cycling is a more pleasant experience. The adjacent grass usually means that conflicts can be avoided more easily. However, surface quality and width are still of concern especially where there are many pedestrians; these concerns need to be balanced against environmental intrusion in such areas.
- 8.6. Pram arms (pinch stiles) and gates are very difficult to negotiate on a cycle. This is especially the case when a cycle is fitted with a child seat, to the extent that parents are often unable to use these paths.

[Picture: cyclist struggling with pram arm.]

[Picture: cattle grid at Fair Street]

- 8.7. Because drainage is poor in these areas, puddles develop which are unpleasant for cyclists and pedestrians.

9. Specifications

- 9.1. **In general, standards for shared-use provision can be summarised by saying that facilities should not mean that cyclists or pedestrians are inconvenienced to any greater extent than they would be were cyclists to use the adjacent road.**
- 9.2. Where shared-use is permitted we think that it should meet stringent minimum specifications.

Case in point:

Trumpington - Foxton.

This recently constructed facility is 1m wide for most of its length and as little as 50 cm in places (less than one-sixth of the suggested standard). It is undulating and wee infested. It requires cyclists to dismount for 20 m. It has absurdly sharp bends.

Case in point:

Quy - Bottisham. This popular sign-posted rural cycle ride is narrow, has bumpy dropped kerbs, is in very poor repair, and requires cyclists to cycle through a lay-by against the traffic.

Width

- 9.3. The absolute minimum for a two-way shared-use footway in rural areas is 2m, and that is inadequate in urban areas, where a segregated path is preferred allowing at least 2m to cyclists.

Surface

- 9.4. This should be smooth, which appears to mean machine-laid, since nowhere in Cambridge have we found a hand-laid surface to be satisfactory. Experiments are required with membranes to avoid weed problems without the use of environmentally damaging weed-killers, which is in any case not permitted by Council policy.

Dropped kerbs

- 9.5. Should be absolutely flush with the road. A quarter circle profile is unsatisfactory. Quality control on installation of dropped-kerbs is clearly currently inadequate.

Side turnings

- 9.6. paths should have priority over side roads, with suitable protection from motor vehicles.

Obstructions

- 9.7. Paths should be clear of trees and street furniture. Bollards should be used to prevent intrusion by motor vehicles. Signposts and street furniture needs to be placed so they do not obstruct visibility.

Access

- 9.8. There should be dropped, flush kerbs opposite all turnings, to allow access from the other side of the road.

Junctions

- 9.9. Junctions should always be integrated into a scheme when installing shared-use footways.

Plan

- 9.10. Gentle curves are required, not sharp angles.

Lighting

- 9.11. Where street lighting is on the road edge, extra lamps should be installed where the footway is inadequately lit (or the lamp posts moved). Where there is no lighting, reflective edge markings should be installed on both sides.

Maintenance

- 9.12. Shared-use footways should be cleaned with the same diligence as the roads. They need to be cleared of hedge-cuttings and broken glass, to which they seem to be especially vulnerable. In icy weather, gritting is essential.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. Over time, shared-use footways have changed from being an occasional provision to being the provision of first choice, resulting in many kilometres of unsuitable footway being designated shared-use.
- 10.2. This has resulted in an abrogation of responsibility to provide properly for safety on the roads for cyclists.
- 10.3. It has fostered a still-growing resentment between pedestrians and cyclists while motorists continue to benefit.