

CAMCYCLE



Cycle routes through rural and urban green spaces policy

To protect our natural environment from the impacts of congestion, pollution and climate change, cycling must be a viable alternative to driving. The reallocation of road space must be considered first before green space is allocated for cycle routes. Cycle routes through rural and urban green spaces are important parts of the cycle network and bring many benefits to their users. They must be safe and inclusive and implemented with careful consideration of local landscape, ecology and heritage.

First and foremost, more space for cycling must be created through the reallocation of road space, which must be considered before making alterations to green spaces.

However, cycle routes through green spaces can form important parts of both the strategic and leisure cycle route networks.

“Rural and urban green spaces” is a diverse category. Broadly speaking, this category covers off-road cycle routes through fields, woods, parks and commons. Cycleways refers to designated infrastructure but there are many other important routes that facilitate cycling and other forms of active travel without being classified as cycleways.

There is a key difference between strategic and leisure cycle routes through green spaces. Strategic cycleways are those which are used by cyclists for general transport purposes and form a key part of a larger strategic network that many people depend on. Examples of strategic cycleways in Cambridgeshire include the route alongside the guided busway, the DNA path, the Chisholm Trail (partly opening in 2021) and the Greenways. Strategic cycle routes must be suitable for use under all weather conditions, at all times of year, and be accessible to all people. Leisure cycle routes are also important: cycling through places which are attractive and interesting increases enjoyment and will encourage more people to cycle. Examples of leisure cycle routes include the shared-use paths through Milton Country Park and the Halingway towpath beside the Cam.

Cycling is vital for reducing carbon emissions from transport and as such is an important part of regional action on climate change (see Camcycle’s ‘Climate Change’ Policy). If there were more safe and accessible cycleways more people would be able to cycle rather than use their cars. Electrically assisted pedal cycles have also opened up cycling as an option for many more people and enabled them to cycle further even in inclement weather.

Policy asks:

- **The reallocation of road space must be considered ahead of creating cycle routes through green spaces.**
- **Cycle routes must be planned and implemented with careful consideration of local context including landscape, ecology and heritage. Disruption must be minimised and where incurred should be mitigated.**

- **Cycle routes through rural and urban green spaces must be inclusive and accessible to cyclists of all ages and riding all types of cycle. Non-cycling users must be always considered and provided with separate facilities where appropriate.**
- **Not all paths through green spaces need to be cycle routes, but reasonable desire lines should be accommodated where possible.**

1. The reallocation of road space must be considered ahead of creating strategic cycle routes through green spaces.

The preservation of green space is environmentally, socially and economically important¹.

- *Camcycle strongly supports the preservation of green space, however we also believe that protecting the global environment through reducing transport carbon emissions is paramount. A modal shift from car-based to cycle-based transport requires much more space to be found for cycling.*
- *Before planners resort to building strategic cycleways through green spaces other options must be considered first. These options include (but are not limited to) on-road cycleways, cycleways adjacent to roads (within the highway boundary) and restricting private car access to roads. These options should also be integrated within wider programmes of motor traffic reduction.*

2. Cycle routes must be planned and implemented with careful consideration of local context including landscape, ecology and heritage. Disruption must be minimised and where incurred should be mitigated

Landscape, biodiversity and heritage are important and cycle routes can be built in ways that enhance all three. However, the poor construction of cycleways can cause harm to the natural environment, just as roadbuilding may do.

- *Any new cycling infrastructure should comply with national and local planning policies which aim to ensure that any construction project, including that for a cycle route, avoids unnecessary harm to landscape, ecology and heritage.*
- *The impact of cycleways on landscape, ecology and heritage must be minimised while maintaining the safety and accessibility of cycleways. For example, different colour surfacing can be selected to blend into the local landscape and for leisure routes sinuous paths could be chosen, if appropriate, to reduce the visual impact of the cycleway.*
- *New cycle infrastructure planning, design and implementation must take into account the factors specific to each location. For example, some compromise on cycleway width might be*

¹ P. Dasgupta, 2021. The Economics of biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review. HM Treasury. [Online] Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957291/Dasgupta_Review_-_Full_Report.pdf

justified to preserve an important habitat but it must respect the approach of Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20)².

- *Cycle routes must be as direct as possible, but small detours may be acceptable to avoid sensitive areas.*
- *Where damage to landscape, ecology and heritage cannot be avoided, compensatory enhancements should be provided to offset the harm caused. Where ecological harm is unavoidable then cycle schemes must compensate by providing a net biodiversity gain of at least 10% (this is likely to be a mandatory requirement under the Environment Bill 2019-21) but ideally 20%. An approved biodiversity metric (also likely to be agreed under the Environment Bill 2019-21) must be used to assess the level of impact and to agree the level of net gain that is required.*

The construction of a new route can offer the opportunity to make improvements to landscape, ecology and heritage as part of the project. However, this should not be taken as carte blanche to spend a significant amount of designated cycling infrastructure funds on unrelated projects and should not put a higher burden on cycling projects compared to much more damaging highways projects. Possible measures include, but are not limited to, creating new habitats or improving existing landscape features, conservation work on heritage buildings, the removal of unwelcome features established prior to the cycle route (for example unsympathetic infrastructure or invasive species) and the use of dug-out sub-soil (a by-product of construction) to establish wildflower and wildlife corridors. Measures such as these can also improve the cycling experience.

- *The implementation of a cycleway should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the surrounding landscape and increase local biodiversity.*
- *Any enhancement activity, such as creating a new habitat alongside the cycleway, must take account of local ecology and soil so that a diverse ecosystem of species is encouraged. It should be designed to minimise required maintenance but where maintenance is required, it must be planned and budgeted for.*

Where enhancement has been implemented alongside a cycle route it improves riders' experience and appreciation of their local environment.

- *It may be appropriate to provide information boards which educate users about the local landscape, ecology and heritage. Providing places to stop and sit may also enhance the experience and facilitate public appreciation.*

There is an opportunity to integrate green infrastructure into cycle infrastructure. This can provide new habitats for wildlife, sustainable urban drainage and an urban cooling effect. Examples of this include living green roofs on cycle shelters and the reallocation of road space for cycleways and landscaping.

² Department for Transport, 2020. Cycle Infrastructure Design: Local Transport Note 1/20. Department for Transport. [Online] Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf

- *The possible extension of green infrastructure must be considered when updating existing or implementing new urban cycle infrastructure.*

3. Cycle routes through rural and urban green spaces must be inclusive and accessible to cyclists of all ages and riding all types of cycle. Non-cycling users must always be considered and provided with separate facilities where appropriate.

In order for cycling to be an attractive and convenient choice in preference to driving, strategic cycle routes must be designed to a high standard. The key to cycling long distances is being able to maintain momentum and save energy. More people will use cycleways if they feel safe and the infrastructure is accessible to people of all ages and abilities, using all types of cycles.

- *Where new routes through the countryside are proposed in response to the danger of using a nearby road, the best first response is to consider addressing the source of the danger by reallocating road space to a protected and segregated cycleway alongside that road.*
- *The consultation, design and implementation of strategic cycle routes through rural and urban green spaces must be inclusive of other users.*
- *Strategic cycleways through rural and urban green spaces must allow cyclists to maintain momentum. They must be direct and efficient.*
- *Strategic cycleways must be suitable and practical for cycling in all weathers. They must be well drained to prevent water pooling. Snow, ice and vegetation must be cleared away to prevent them posing a hazard (see Camcycle's 'Maintenance of cycle routes and facilities' policy).*
- *Foundations must be properly built on strategic cycleways. Tree root damage can be avoided with the correct foundations.*
- *Strategic cycleways must be made of a solid and durable material. It must not break up in cold weather and should be straightforward to maintain (see Camcycle's 'Maintenance of cycle routes and facilities' policy).*
- *Obstructions, for example chicanes and gates, must not be used on either strategic or leisure cycle routes (see Camcycle's 'Obstructions in cycleways and access controls' policy).*
- *Access controls, such as bollards, must be used only if there is a proven and ongoing need (see Camcycle's 'Obstructions in cycleways and access controls' policy).*

On paths across green spaces there is a key balance to be made between the width of the path and the need to maintain the quality of the green space. It is better to have a slightly wider hard path than cause the creation of muddy desire lines to the side of a narrow path.

- *Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) should guide the width and geometry of cycleways and paths used for cycling.*

It may be acceptable for cyclists and pedestrians to share infrastructure in some locations, for example towpaths and through green spaces. Concern over cycles going too fast is often an indication that the cycleway is too narrow or that pedestrians and cyclists are not safely separated.

- *Where pedestrians and cyclists share infrastructure, the path must be sufficiently wide to ensure both pedestrians and cyclists feel safe and comfortable.*
- *Cyclists should ride at considerate speeds through green spaces and should be prepared to slow, stop or give way when this is required.*

Lighting on cycleways is important for preventing collisions, facilitating wayfinding and making people feel safe. Women are more likely than men to have personal safety concerns and to experience anti-social behaviour whilst travelling.

- *Lighting design is dependent on context. In rural spaces where there are fewer people it may be more reasonable to use low-impact lighting solutions that do not affect wildlife but that still facilitate wayfinding, while in urban or near-urban locations with more people around there is correspondingly a greater need for lighting coverage.*
- *Personal security concerns must be addressed, through aspects including lighting and routing of cycleways.*
- *Junctions and road crossings must always be lit, for safety purposes.*

Off-road leisure cycle routes are important. Increasing cycle access to and experience of rural and urban green spaces, away from traffic, will encourage more people to cycle and offer mental health benefits. Off-road cycle routes are particularly valuable for those learning to cycle or building their cycling confidence. They can also provide important infrastructure for those using handcycles and other adapted cycles (such as cycles that are combined with, or are attached to, wheelchairs) who may prefer to undertake leisure cycling on off-road routes. There can also be benefits for non-cycling users who can share the infrastructure.

- *Off-road leisure cycle routes must be acknowledged as providing vital inclusivity to the cycle network and should be expanded to offer more space for less confident cyclists and leisure cycling.*
- *There must be good cycle access to green spaces from local neighbourhoods.*
- *Access to green spaces should not include barriers or obstructions such as chicanes, kissing gates or stiles (see Camcycle's 'Obstruction in cycleways and access controls' policy).*

There are 140,000 miles of footpath in the UK and only 20,000 miles of bridleway. Under the Countryside Act 1968 cyclists are permitted to use bridleways but must give way to other users. While it is appropriate to have some rights of way accessible only by foot, there is an opportunity to expand the network of bridleways to create a larger network of off-road public rights of way which horse riders, cyclists and other eligible users can use safely.

- *Camcycle would support a review of the designation of bridleways and footpaths with a view to expanding the network of bridleways and cycle routes.*

4. Not all paths through green spaces need to be cycle routes, but reasonable desire lines should be accommodated where possible.

- *There are sensitive green spaces where it is appropriate for cycling not to be permitted.*

- *Some paths through green spaces may not be open for cycling. It is appropriate for pedestrians to have routes that they do not have to share with cyclists. However, where there is a proven and ongoing need for a cycle route then it is better to provide cycle infrastructure, in a sensitive way as outlined in this policy, than have cycle desire lines damaging the surface around the footpath.*

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To provide feedback on this draft policy please contact Camcycle at
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