

Improving Cycling in Knutsford

By Patrick Jones and Andrew Coatsworth on behalf of CycleKnutsford

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1 Purpose of this Paper

This paper is intended to present to East Cheshire Council and to Sustrans the priorities for improving cycling as a means of transport within Knutsford.

It does not, other than coincidentally, present means to improve the means for cyclists to egress or enter Knutsford into or from the wider road network.

2 Amendment History

Revision	Date	Description
A	5 December 2013	First issue
B	7 December 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Captions to Figures 4 and 5 corrected. 2. Information about Bike & Go hire scheme added to Sections 3 and 4. 3. Footnote concerning ginnels added to Section 5.1. 4. Comment about the entrance of traffic from the A50 south bound into Bexton Lane added in Section 6. 5. Further consideration of speeding due to the oblique angle at which Bexton Lane meets Toft Road. 6. Reference to Gifford report "Parkgate extension, Knutsford – Pedestrian and cycle route assessments" added to Section 3. 7. Conclusions added as Section 7. 8. Comment about King Street added in Section 4.

3 Previous work

Cycle Knutsford produced the cycling information on the 'Knutsford Cycle Map' published by Active Maps Ltd (Reference 1). This map grades:

1. Roads according to four categories (Yellow, Green, Blue, and Pink) of experience required for cycling;
2. Identifies pedestrian routes and shortcuts requiring cyclists to dismount;
3. Marks:

Cycle parking;

Bus station;

Train station;

Schools;

One way streets;

Steep hills;

Bike shop;

And, places of worship.

Since publication of this map a Bike & Go hire scheme has been installed at Knutsford Railway station.

A copy (Reference 2) of this map has been placed on the CycleKnutsford website (<http://cycleknutsford.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/map-showing-proposed-routes-high-resolution.jpg>) annotated with:

1. Suggested routes;
2. Routes frequently used;
3. And, photographs and annotations concerning obstacles, road conditions etc.

The lack of action in response to a report commissioned by the former Cheshire County Council (Reference 3) is noted. Improvement in cycling provision requires action, not mere studies.

4 Comment on previous work and selection of priorities

Considering the suggested routes in Reference 2, the following are not considered as priorities:

1. Routes from King Street and Garden Road into Tatton Park, and routes in Tatton Park, although the latter may need to be considered if the Bewilderwood project proceeds;
2. The route from the A5033 / A50 roundabout along Manchester Road across to Mereheath Lane; this should be addressed as part of the proposed housing developments to the North-West of Knutsford;
3. The route along Woodlands Drive into Manor Park, across to Shaw Heath, and with a spur to Sparrow Lane; traffic in this area is generally light;
4. The route from the east side of Toft Road into Bexton Lane to Bexton Primary School, and along Beggerman's Lane back to Toft Road; it is true that the pavement and grass verges are generally wide enough to permit a cycleway to be made, but the need is not proven;
5. The route from Leycester Road and along Legh Road to Chelford Road; again, traffic is generally light.

Additionally:

1. Although discussions with the landowner, Mr Brooks, are understood to have taken place, a proposed route from the Moor through Dog Wood to the Park Gate estate is considered to be best developed at the time of future development of the Park Gate Estate as housing.
2. King Street, although not identified as a suggested route in Reference 2, requires consideration for cyclists as well as pedestrians; it is not discussed further in this report, as East Cheshire Council already has studied proposals for this road.

The following are considered as priorities:

1. A safe route traversing the very busy A50 (bypassing the very busy Brook Street and Adams Hill to its junction with Toft Road) to connect:

- a) The west side of Knutsford (including four schools, the community hospital, the leisure centre, library, bus station and the town's largest supermarket);
 - b) The town centre as defined as lying between Princess Street and King's Street;
 - c) and the east side of Knutsford, including three schools and a large housing estate of approximately 5000 people;
2. A safe route along the worst section of the A50, from the A5033 / A50 roundabout to the pedestrian crossing on Toft Road immediately North of the junction with Bexton Lane, incidentally providing access to the cinema, the railway station (via steps) including the Bike & Go hire facility, and several shops .
 3. The A5033 / A50 roundabout, which is severely difficult for cyclists, should be considered with more general Highway proposals for this intersection.

The authors are conscious that this selection of priorities will disappoint advocates of the routes rejected to be priorities. The proposals, being based on need, not ease of implementation, will present a challenge for East Cheshire Council. The authors reject the development of cycle routes based solely on ease of implementation.

5 Route between the West and East side of Knutsford

5.1 Western section – Knutsford Academy to King's Street

The stretch of the Northwich Road is graded pink, the most difficult, in Reference 1. Reference 2 shows a proposed route from Knutsford County High School (now Academy) along a footpath to the Leisure Centre, through another part of Knutsford County High School and into Bexton Road. This proposed route cannot currently be cycled as there are locked gates to the two school properties. There seems no reason to seek public access to such private property, as the parallel Westfield Drive has speed humps and is reasonably cycle friendly, subject to parked cars (a common issue in Knutsford). Westfield Avenue leads into:

1. Cranford Avenue, and thus Bexton Road, providing a good route to the A50 crossing in an west to east direction;
2. Or, alternatively into Gaskell Avenue, which is cycle friendly to the A5033 / A50 roundabout.

From Bexton Road the existing traffic lights provide a good west to east cycle route, briefly onto the A50, before turning down Church Hill¹, across King Street. However, going east-west is very difficult, as:

1. Church Hill is partially one way;
2. There are no traffic lights to facilitate turning right at the top of Church Hill;
3. The eastern end of Bexton Road is one way.

5.2 Eastern Section – King Street to Mobberley Road

From King Street the route goes through the King Street Car Park, and to Moor side. CycleKnutsford asks again that one of the paths across the moor could either be widened and have a cycle lane designated or be given dual status, eg in accordance with Reference 4. Although possibly not legal, the Moor has been used by cyclists for at least 25 years without any incident between cyclists and pedestrians known to the current authors. Recently installed gates at each end are awkward, and cycling is now prohibited.

The projected route passes under the railway, where chicane barriers are negotiable by bike; a simple segregation of pedestrians and cyclists would be better.

The steep hill of Middle Walk requires no special provision. The pedestrian crossing of Mobberley Road leads on the east side of Mobberley Road into a little lane (Figure 1) from the Mobberley Road up to Woodlands Drive. This is really essential for cyclists wanting to access that part of the CrossTown and Manor Park Estates, and the prohibition on cycling this short distance is yet another cycle unfriendly feature of which Knutsford is only too full. From

¹ An intriguing alternative to Church Hill lies in the various medieval, grossly undeveloped, ginnels or snickets between Princess Street and King Street, such as Silk Mill Street, Church View leading to Tower Gate, and an innominate ginnel to the south, but these tend to be narrow and in the case of Tower Gate involving steps. Further consideration has not been given to ginnels at this stage.

Woodlands Drive approximately one quarter of Knutsford's residential property can be easily and safely accessed by cycle.



Figure 1 Short lane from Mobberley Road to Woodlands Drive.

A cycling provision along Mobberley Road as far as Parkgate Lane is required, although graded Blue in Reference 1, and not as bad as Toft Road. Mobberley Road is much used by cyclists – mostly going to the Parkgate estate. Some of the pedestrian pathway or the roadway, which is very wide for a simple 2 lane road, having for much of this section a central reservation (Figure 2), should be designated a cycle lane. A major hazard for cyclists is parked cars (Figure 3), both legitimately parked, and parked half on the pavement, even close to pedestrian crossings.



Figure 2 Facing East past the water tower: wide roadway with central reservation.



Figure 3 West side pavement Mobberley Rd.

6 A50 – section of about 800 metres

Much could be written about the difficulty to cyclists of the A50 (designated Pink, the most difficult grade in Reference 1). The current proposal considers the limited section King Edward and Toft Road – Canute roundabout through Adam’s Hill traffic lights to Paradise Green (Bexton Lane turn off).

This is a difficult stretch of road for cyclists and still within the busy part of the town. The pavements are wide for most of the way (Figures 4, 5 and 6) and might therefore be considered for the marking out of a cycle lane or for dual use. However there are places where this is problematic and these are mostly where there are safety barriers by junctions and where the pavement narrows.



Figure 4 King Edward Road – East side looking south, showing wide pavement.



Figure 5 King Edward Road west side, facing south showing fairly wide pavement, but street furniture poorly positioned for any future cycle lane development.



Figure 6 King Edward Road.

The Toft Road (A50) junction with Adam's Hill is very difficult for cyclists, and the Stanley Road crossing is difficult for pedestrians.



Figure 7 Views of Adam's Hill Lights facing north.



Figure 8 West side of Toft Road junction with Adam's Hill.

It is anticipated that this route would terminate at Toft Road pedestrian crossing north of junction with Bexton Lane (Figure 9).

This is notwithstanding a traffic incident between a car and the authors during the reconnoitring of this route, and which resulted in demonstration of road-rage. A factor in that incident is considered to be the oblique angle at which Bexton Lane meets Toft Road, such that speeding traffic south-bound along the A50 can enter the residential road of Bexton Lane at excessive speed. Although the authors have decided under Item 4 of Section 4 above that the need for cycling provision in Bexton Lane is not proven, there is a case for:

1. Observing conditions during peak school travel hours;
2. And, considering traffic calming measures (and **Twenty is Plenty**) at the northern end of Bexton Lane to mitigate this situation.



Figure 9 Toft Road pedestrian crossing north of junction with Bexton Lane.

7 Conclusions

1. The highest priorities for improving cycling provision within Knutsford, without specifically improving the means for cyclists to egress or enter Knutsford into or from the wider road network, have been set out above.
2. Some essential improvements have not been discussed in detail as it is recognized that these would best be integrated into other development activity proposed for the town.

8 References

1. Knutsford Cycle Map' published by Active Maps Ltd.
2. Annotated version of Reference 1, as found at CycleKnutsford website (<http://cycleknutsford.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/map-showing-proposed-routes-high-resolution.jpg>).
3. Gifford: 2008: Parkgate extension, Knutsford – Pedestrian and cycle route assessments. Gifford report No. 11916.
4. Department of Transport: 2012: Shared use routes for cyclists and pedestrians. LTN 1/12.