

Part 3

A tour of Witham

In this section we illustrate the points made in the preceding sections.

Poor implementation and maintenance

Cycle paths stop short of road and don't have dropped kerbs.



Laurence Avenue. Path ends in a parking bay!



← Armond Road - stops short



Allectus Way - drop kerb on one → side of road only.



← Kerb at White Horse Lane (N) on approach to Bellfields. ↓ Chipping Hill



Poor Layout

Artistic curves serve no purpose in this view towards Pattison Close. Where paths meet no allowance has been made for the turning circle of a bicycle. The second photo shows the north side of the bridge further down the Riverwalk. This junction is almost impossible to negotiate when coming off the bridge. This view taken before the nettles grow to add extra spice to the manouever.



No signs

There are no encouragements to use legal routes. Simple signs let people know routes are there and legal. These shots show the two ends of the Cuththroat lane route. In the first you'd be hard put to see there are two useful routes vanishing down the hole between the trees on the left. In



the second signs indicate a footpath but no hint for cyclists.

Blockages

When Motts Lane was completely blocked by a dumped caravan neither the County Council or The District Council for four weeks. If this had been a road used by cars the obstruction would have been removed in hours.



Predictably more rubbish was dumped and eventually set alight.

The attitude "cyclists and walkers don't matter" goes right through Essex County Council including the Chief executive; who was notified of the situation and did nothing.



Here is a less extreme example. It shows the path from Short Ridge to Spinks Lane looking north. Half the width of the path has been overgrown. When looking at plans people need to bear in mind that vegetation encroachment often restricts widths. The shared use path from Linfield Motors to Hatfield Peverel suffers from the neglect of the Highway Agency. (Who don't act when asked to deal with people being swiped in the face by hawthorn branches and stung by nettles.)



Where the Riverwalk meets Bridge St. is a crossing which defeats the object of having a crossing or assumes that cyclists don't use roads. A completely unnecessary 'safety feature' dreamt up by a highway engineer without considering either the need or the effect.

Turn restrictions to be removed.

Hazards

Bridge Street traffic lights

It is generally recognised that queue-busting is one of the major advantages that cycles have over cars and is therefore to be encouraged. However this can be very hazardous unless a well identified and clearly separated cycle lane is provided.



When a cyclist encounters a queue they can try creeping by on the inside or the outside. On the one hand there is the possibility of being squeezed against the kerb (often fatal) or dealing with oncoming traffic in the middle of the road. Where Collingwood Road approaches the lights at the George is a particularly bad example of an inside trap like this.



The problem becomes **much worse** if the queue starts to move. The picture on the left shows the bus yet to accelerate as the red and white cars have done. As they do so they overtake cyclists

who they may not have seen coming up from behind. The cyclist may find themselves being squeezed, undertaken, tailgated. If that wasn't enough the cyclist has to get into the right position across the road to take whichever exit from the junction they want.

If at all possible these very busy lights need cycle approach lanes and advance stop lines.

Right Hand turns

Every junction is different. All right Hand turns and roundabouts are a problem but some appear much worse than others for mysterious reasons. One major contributory factor is whether the cyclist has the experience, nerve and judgement to make cross-traffic manoeuvres. If we accept that possibly the majority of cyclists do not have these skills then we have to design junctions that are straight forward enough for all cyclists to use and all users to understand what part they have to play in safe use.

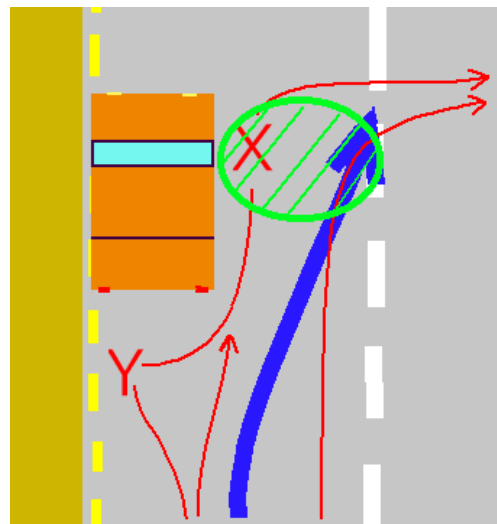
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In the next two pictures we see the junction of Chalks Road with Braintree Rd. There are a lots of different movements, parked vehicles and a race-track effect from the slope of the railway bridge.



A cyclist has to claim their space in the middle of the road well in advance or risks being stranded not in a safe position by the kerb but against the vehicles parked on the left.

If a cyclist (red) can claim the right of the road in good time then they are able to hold up the following traffic (blue) by blocking their passage squarely. In the event of not being able to find a suitable gap the cyclist is forced to stop on the left and wait for a gap. Stopping at Y is sometimes possible but X (adjacent to a parked vehicle) is the normal refuge which as the green hatch shows is an invitation to be squeezed.



The above photos were taken before 7am on a Sunday morning. Even though the scene looks deserted there were two vehicles exiting from the petrol station.



This photo is taken outside the Labour Hall. Just round the bend is the junction with Guithavon valley. A cyclist has to start claiming their road space from about this point to be sure of being seen as they go around the corner. Experienced cyclists find this junction quite tricky.

Another RH turn just after a bend. Junction of Spa Road and Guithavon Road.



Various hazards



The junction between Maltings Lane and Maldon Road is in a 40mph area and is surprisingly busy. Trying to make a right turn here is daunting enough for an experienced cyclist, but a few feet of being in the wrong position can give drivers coming out of Maltings

Lane the wrong impression of your movements and they can be tempted to cut out into a gap in the traffic.

Here is the postman negotiating Sauls Bridge. This is long overdue for a footway on both sides. This is included here because it illustrates the legacy of infrastructure which has not been kept up to date with the needs of non-motorised road users even though traffic volumes have increased dramatically. With 6000 odd vehicle movements being generated by the Maltings lane development how many of those will use this road? How many people would walk? It is difficult to cross now at peak times -



what will it be like with even more traffic!



This is Maltings Lane just before school! There is a vicious circle of more cars...less safe roads... more parents drive... (In one study 43% said the reason for driving children to school was

fear of traffic.) This is a hazard for all road users, a major cause of congestion and concentrated air pollution.

Hatfield Peverel link

Is this wide verge in Howbridge road an opportunity for a dedicated cycle path?



← Looking north

↓ Looking south



This bridge needs replacing. →

↓ This path needs to be fit for cycles, or a parallel cycle-only path created.



Rail trail



This is quite pleasant but the photograph doesn't show the encroaching overgrowth behind the camera.

This photo is looking north. A commuter from the south would have the town ahead to the left and the industrial estates on the right. Travelling time to the railway station could be less than the time taken to find a parking place then walk to the

station entrance.

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Continuing over Pasture Road, these photos show the hard surfaces in quite good condition and lush but not too serious vegetation. Very little work required here to make this an express commuter route.



← After the junction with Chess Lane the trail reverts to natural surface. This is boggy, can be covered in glass and is not lit. These drawbacks need addressing.

↓ Soon we arrive at the Catholic Bridge which leads through to Eastways and thence Motts Lane



The left hand photograph below shows the South side of the bridge. The path seen on the right rises about a metre and is then practically level to Colchester Road. The right hand photo is pointing towards this spot with the trackbed visible above the handlebars. The paving in the foreground runs from the bottom of steps up to Colchester Road and an overgrown



footpath to Stepfield.