

North Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

Comments by Tim Lee – Nov 2022

I am delighted that Herts CC and North Herts Council are planning action to improve the provision for cycling and walking. Improvement is a good thing, but only if they create a network and prioritise Active Travel over motor vehicles.

However, in general I don't feel the plans go far enough, and that risks making little or no difference to how many people leave cars behind and use Active Travel instead. If councils really want to make a difference, then the actions must be much bolder and clearer for people to change behaviour.

Too many past 'improvements' have been piecemeal and given cycle infrastructure a bad name – like the Letchworth painted gutter that runs along Station Way from Broadwater Avenue to Morrisson with a stupid little bit that takes you off the road ready to cross to a path by Morrisons. This 'improvement' makes things worse. It is never used. It is a waste of money. Please do not do anything like this.

Adopt the Dutch principles for improving Active Travel – and our roads – as much as is legally possible. Use resources like Not Just Bikes (<https://www.youtube.com/NotJustBikes>) to inform and educate all those involved with design AND build. Get those people on bikes to experience it first-hand so they understand how little differences in the travel surface matter.

General Comments, Tim Lee:

These comments apply across the whole of the district.

1. I have one complaint. The statement "Plans to improve facilities for people who walk and cycle".
 - a. This, unintentionally, implies it is scraps for the underprivileged who can't afford anything else. It risks setting the wrong mindset for those involved, making it less likely to succeed, as it assumes it's for a small proportion of people, not all. The experience from cities around the world is that people walk and cycle when they feel safe and more so when that's the easiest option.
 - b. Make it - "Plans to improve facilities for people **to** walk and cycle". One word different but changes the scope from the miserable few who already walk and cycle and are looked down upon for doing so because they've not made it – to **ALL** people. Because **all** people should be walking and cycling not driving, especially on local journeys – most journeys are local.
2. I'm concerned that some changes appear small and not be noticed
 - a. Many previous cycling 'improvements' failed because they were piecemeal; a stretch of cycleway that ends where it gets most dangerous because the road narrows and there 'wasn't the space'. These are worse than doing nothing – breeds mistrust, politicians make false claims, wastes money, increases car use.
 - b. The Weston Way – Baldock Road cycleway risks dumping bicyclists onto the horribly dangerous Baldock Road. (I looked at the Baldock documentation first

and it gives a bad impression, the Letchworth part indicates improvements supporting improvements.)

3. Complete Networks must be formed for Walking, Cycling, Public Transport and Driving.
 - a. The networks for Active Travel should be the most direct, smoothest, quickest and easiest routes. Push cars aside, not bikes.
 - b. Junctions are the most important. Get them right and the scheme will have an impact. Older schemes have typically deprioritised bicyclists putting cars first. They failed to make it easier to cycle and walk, and harder for vehicles.
 4. It is not enough to make it better for walking and cycling. Stevenage has one of the most extensive cycling networks of any town in the country but has only 3.3% of journeys by bike, a quarter of Cambridge. It must also be made less desirable to drive. That means heavily restricting vehicle movements.
 5. Town Centres should not have cars *driving through*, they are destinations, not thoroughfares. Especially old towns – it was fine when everyone walked or rode a horse. A 120 years ago it made sense to have through traffic who would likely stop and buy something; today that through traffic prevents people stopping and buying.
 6. Strongly limit car parking too – the town centre is not a car park. Do have lots of places to park bikes.
 7. There will be resistance. Making real positive change will be very unpopular – at the beginning. Eventually people will understand, and people will come to love it. Politicians of all persuasions must hold firm. Encourage them to watch Not Just Bikes YouTube channel to see how it can be.
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8. Change policies – it's free to change policies! – to prioritise Active Travel to make it the default option for all journeys and easier than using a car. If these are already policy, thank you! Things like:
 - a. Ensure all new plans involving transport have an Active Travel centric view, not the current car centric view.
 - b. Require **Continuous Pavements** – see <https://youtu.be/9OfBpQgLXUc>
 - c. Require clear design differences between Streets and Roads:
 - i. **Streets** have driveways; they should be 20mph (30kph). The design should make it uncomfortable to drive faster.
 - ii. **Roads** provide access to somewhere else and have no driveways, these can be 30+mph.
 - iii. **Stroads** are a terrible idea mixing high speed and local access, thankfully we don't have many of them in Herts. <https://youtu.be/ORzNZUeUHAM>
 - iv. **Motorways** are not relevant for walking and cycling, but present barriers.
 - d. Making traffic calming the norm. <https://youtu.be/bAxRYrpbnuA>
 - e. Require Tight Radius junctions, remove sweeping curves. One of the cheapest things to do and has one of the biggest impacts on safety for Active Travel.
 - f. Ensure Footpaths and cycle ways that give the most direct route to places people want to go, while motorised vehicles must go the long way round.
 - g. Make streets (and some roads) narrower.
 - h. Get rid of signs. They cost money, create hazards and are often ignored. Make the street/road design layout infer the relevant speed and use. This is cheaper and looks better. Less traffic at slower speeds reduces maintenance costs.

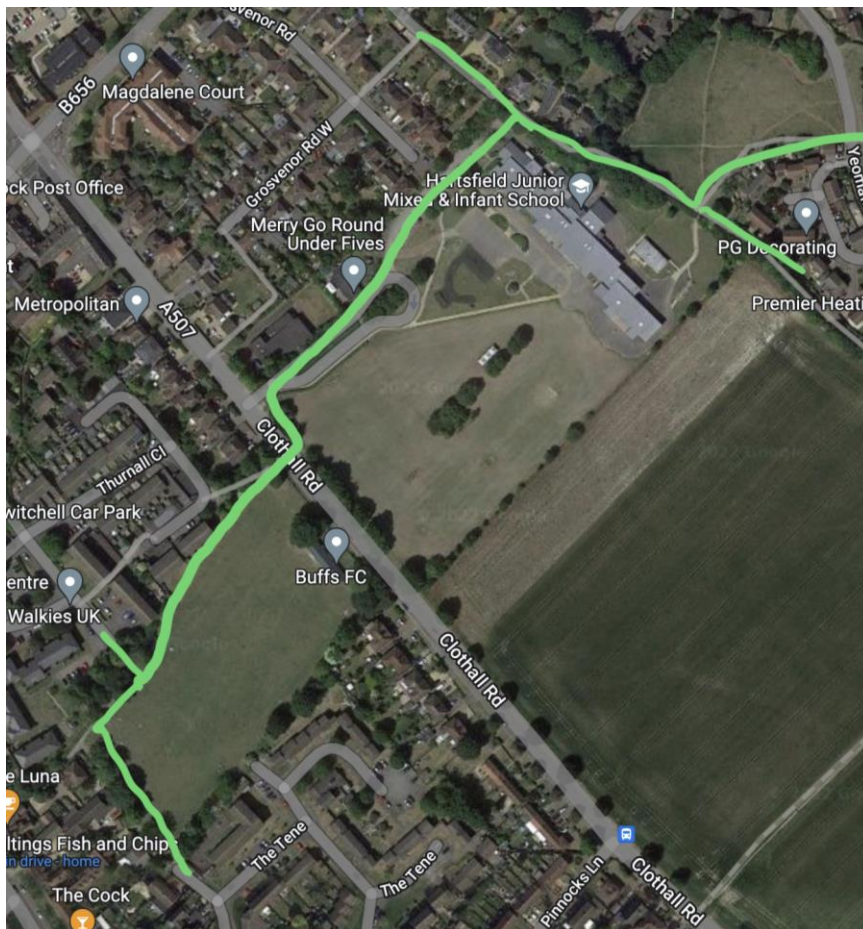
- i. If you need a flashing sign to remind people to slow down, that means the road design is wrong.
 - i. Make traffic lights smarter. Prioritise Walking and Cycling. Lights should be on Pedestrian Green (road red) unless a vehicle is detected, then it switches. When a pedestrian is detected (using radar as for vehicles) it should automatically switch to pedestrian green. Appropriate minimum green times may need to be set based on the level of flow.
 - i. An excellent location to change this is outside Morrisons on Broadway Letchworth. There used to be a Zebra crossing, but there were so many people crossing it was holding up traffic. The answer should be how do we get rid of the traffic, not to inconvenience the pedestrian more.
 - j. Do not allow any new drive-throughs. I would love to see a per vehicle charge for use. The damage they cause is huge.
9. For any new development, before construction of buildings commence, build the infrastructure in this order, so workers can get to work without driving cars:
- a. First build footpaths and cycle ways.
 - b. Then the tramways (if only ;) and start running
 - c. Then the roads
 - d. Start the bus routes
10. Make all streets in towns 20mph by default. Only by exception may roads be 30mph or faster.
- a. I understand the argument that it won't make a difference – but it does make *some* difference for very low cost. It's quick. It shows intent.
 - b. Remake roads to the design speed. <https://youtu.be/bglWCuCMSWc>.
11. To succeed, Behavioural Change is needed in addition to changing the built architecture. This will require education and information. One thought on this:
- a. The word Cyclist has been commandeered by the press for hate speech, I like to use the word Bicyclist to indicate this not about sport, Lycra and speed, but about everyday movement.
12. People cycle on pavements – let them do so. Encourage people to cycle on pavements. Education people that this is better for all.
13. Painted cycle lanes are better than nothing but are scary and dangerous. They will not encourage cycling. Not Just Bikes calls them Painted Gutters, with good justification. Please make the default wide separated cycleways.
- a. Avoid using paint and signs.
 - b. Do use consistent coloured red asphalt for cycleways.
14. Cycle paths should be wide enough for social cycling. Many people want to cycle while chatting with a friend.
- a. Minimum width 2m.
 - b. Ideally, at least 2.5m.
 - c. 3.3m for bidirectional cycle path.
 - d. <http://www.aviewfromthecyclepath.com/2016/08/mass-cycling-requires-sociable-side-by.html>

15. Created Filtered Permeability on many existing roads, so that cars go away from the main destination, but bicyclists and walkers can get through easily.
16. Town Centres should be a Destination, not a Thoroughfare. Meaning cars and other vehicles cannot drive through them blighting the centre. Repeated experience has shown that if you remove vehicles, especially through traffic, people start using the space more and *spending* more.
17. Across the district, there are way too many cars on the roads, most of which are parked, often on pavements and cycleways. Additionally, an increasing number of properties have dropped curbs causing more hazards and reducing public parking space availability.
 - a. Introduce resident parking across the district. Require all properties with cars to buy parking permits. The first to cost about £200, the second 10x that, the third 10x that, etc – set by property, not by household, if they claim it's another property, then there's a new Council Tax revenue stream. There are some people who have many cars (I was once one) and clog up the roads for others. I know of a non-resident who just leaves their car on the street and only moves it every 4 months or so.
 - b. Every person who has a drop curb takes away from everyone else – they should pay an annual charge for this privilege. Something like 2x the resident parking permit, that's roughly equivalent to the number of on street parking spaces they take up.
18. Work with Network Rail to increase bicycle parking at stations. One day we will have bicycle garages! <https://youtu.be/9HdqTZs3vjU>
19. Building for Active Travel is one important step in helping people become healthier and happier – and reducing GHGs. Often Active Travel works best in conjunction with Public Transport, particularly cycles and train, so much so that the Dutch now recognise Cycle-Train as a mode of transport. Any plans should consider future public transport infrastructure expansion, in particular trams. Trams construction costs more, but have significantly lower operating costs for both power and maintenance, they are also liked better by travellers and are safer, being more predictable, than busses – and have lower emissions. With a combined population of 76k, Hitchin, LGC and Baldock are bigger than many German towns with trams.

Baldock Town Comments, Tim Lee:

1. **Priority Destinations** to priorities for walking and cycling.
 - a. Schools:
 - i. Six schools along Weston Way
 - ii. Hartsfield JMI
 - iii. St. John's RC
 - b. Shopping
 - i. Town Centre: High St, Whitehorse Ln, Sun St, Hitchin Rd,
 - ii. Tesco
 - c. Health Care - mostly close to Tesco
 - d. Train Station
2. **High Street, Whitehorse Lane and Hitchin Street** (east end) of is the core of Baldock. That is, it once was and it should be, but today it is dominated by through traffic cutting the heart of the town into three parts. There is no need for traffic to drive through the town. Put in place Filtered Permeability with Bus Gates:
 - a. In Hitchin Street at Puddleducks, Butterfield House, Hitchin Street, Baldock SG7 6AE. 51.98920396097399, -0.18980626588899474
 - b. In High Street at 9 High St, Baldock SG7 6DT. 51.989207103989706, -0.1882609931339085
 - c. Full access to all properties along all streets is maintained. Only the vehicles that have the town centre as the destination will stop there. Emergency access is maintained. Cycles can easily move through.
 - d. Control parking, keeping it clear of parked cars will benefit more people.
 - e. Without this through traffic places like The George could become viable again.
3. **Clothall – Bygrave.** This is marked as an improvement plan, but the biggest problem here is HGVs use this junction all the time. They cause enormous damage and harm. There are alternative routes, they should not be there.
 - a. Place a 5t weight restriction on the junction; effectively the whole road from Baldock Services through to Clothall Road. Test with an ETRO.
 - b. I understand there is a similar ETRO planned for Cottered since the A507 is a major route to Buntingford and beyond.
 - c. Heavy traffic to industrial works to the east of Baldock already have easy access from the A505 and B656.
4. **Wallington Road - Clothall Common access.** Presently all vehicular traffic goes along Wallington Road towards town. This encourages car use as it is quicker and easier to go that way to Tesco and other destinations.
 - a. Shift Clothall Common vehicular access to the north east away from South Road, by:
 - b. Placing Bus Gates at in Wallington Road so that the quickest route becomes cycling and walking or bus from Clothall Common to town. Ensure there is still access to Tapps Garden Centre, decide whether access should be from east or west. AND

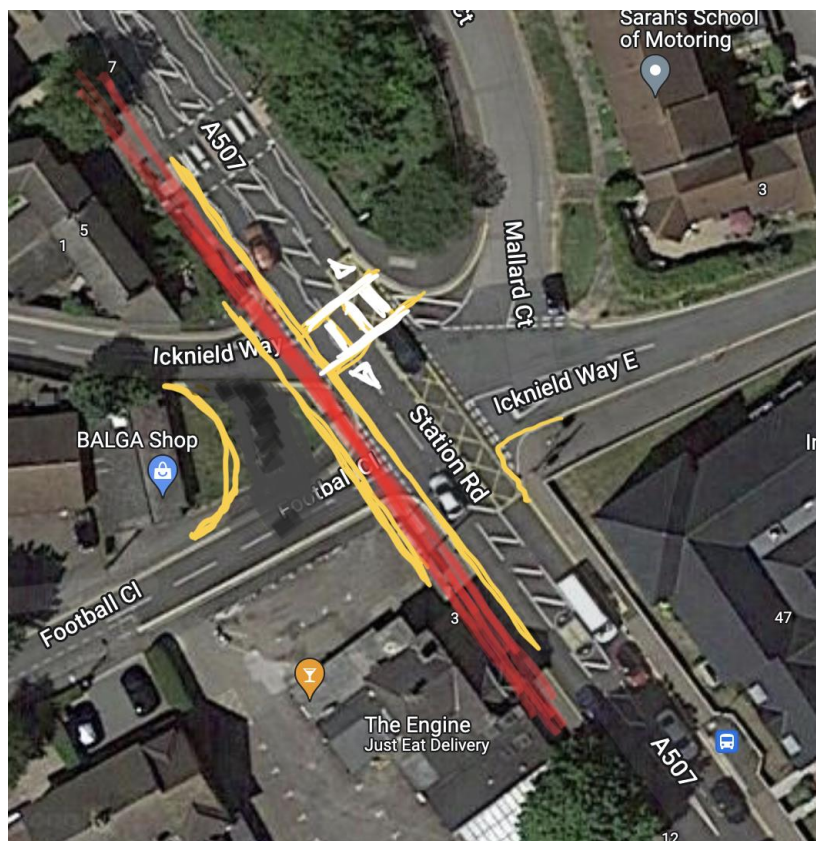
- c. Creating a new junction to Royston Road (B656) at the eastern end, at 51.99324409000174, -0.17227559464321354
 - d. Planned traffic calming in Yeomanry Drive is also good.
5. **Clothall Common to Town – new cycleway.** I see value, and an easy opportunity, in a cycleway from California down the side of Hartsfield JMI School grounds across Clothall Road along the playing field to The Twitchell and The Tene.



- a. Presently the school driveway is underused, but perfect for becoming a cycleway. It does not have constant traffic, only at the beginning and end of school days, hopefully a while before and after when the children will be leaving on their bikes!
 - b. The turning circle would have to change. It's provided for parents to drop off their kids who don't walk or cycle to school because it's too dangerous to walk or cycle because of all the people driving their kids to school because it's too dangerous, coda... The aim should be to make this unnecessary, removing it altogether will encourage people to cycle and walk.
 - c. The cycleway should cross Clothall Road on a raised continuous pavement with a Zebra crossing. If traffic is too high, then use lights that prioritise pedestrian crossing – it's green for pedestrians by default.
6. **West Avenue & A1(M) Bridge.** This is an excellent opportunity to introduce Dutch style Continuous Pavements (see <https://youtu.be/9OfBpQgLXUc> for a clear

demonstration of how they are different to what we do now. I currently cycle this route. There are some oddities like the cycle path curving round and dumping you into the road, changing that would be good.

7. **Football Close & Icknield Way.** Icknield Way is currently used as a rat run destroying the health and happiness of the residents and making cycling and walking dangerous.
 - a. There is no need for through traffic – I know, I used to drive regularly along there, sorry residents.
 - b. Close off access to and from Station Road (A507) by building a cycleway/ pavement along the Station Road (wide enough for mixed use). Have easy ramps up to raised cycleway pavement.
 - c. Prevent vehicular access from either side street to Station Road.
 - d. Move the Zebra crossing to be in direct line with the end of Icknield Way and raise it to make it a continuous pavement/cycleway. This will reduce bicyclists and walkers time wasted in having to move for the cars previously, so will not cross away from the crossing as often happens now. That makes the crossing safer.
 - e. Use the land in front of the BALGA Shop to allow vehicles who have driven up one road to go down the other road.
 - f. Consider making both roads narrower and one way.



8. **Roads around Church Street.** Consider making one way.

9. **Sun Street.** Why is it necessary to have any parking or through traffic on Sun Street? Preventing through traffic would make the street, and Church Street quieter and safer. Encourage outdoor eating and socialising.
10. **Church Street** one way section. I have observed frequent abuse with cars going the wrong way along the street. Enforcement may be needed. Alternatively make the whole of Church Street one way, but with half of it a segregated two way cycle path.
 - a. There is a risk that it would be a rat run with restrictions on High Street and Hitchin Road. Better to prevent through traffic on Sun Street.
11. **Weston Way** traffic calming is very necessary. Weston Way does not need to be a through road. With six schools on the one road, it needs to be made as safe as possible, with a lot of traffic calming and no through traffic.
 - a. Introduce a Bus Gate with filtered permeability at 3 Weston Way 51.986058868883354, -0.19142529968728986.
 - b. Weston Way and St. Mary's Way should become School Streets (<http://schoolstreets.org.uk/>).
 - c. May need filtered permeability on Park Street at 51.98837602898256, -0.18980685491293087 to ensure there is no rat run created by limiting access through Weston Way.
12. **Weston Way – Baldock Road (off road link).** I support routes being off road. However, the design presently appears to be terrible.
 - a. The Baldock Road end abandons you on a horrible road. I do note that under the Letchworth improvements there is a proposal for significant work along Baldock Road. If that is a clear continuous cycle path that has priority over vehicular traffic, then this route will make sense.
 - b. The motorway underpass bridge has big problems with flooding.
13. **Crabtree Lane** – I am not clear what improvements are planned.
 - a. Lighting is not great, but please be careful not to damage wildlife by having lights too blue and bright.
 - b. The access at each end of the lane could be better.
 - c. Make it connect more directly to Baldock Lane.
14. **Baldock Lane.** Make this a cycle way, with footpath alongside.
 - a. This is an important route for many children travelling from The Jackmans, and The Lordship, Letchworth, to Knights Templar School.
 - b. The A505 and London Road runs parallel.
 - c. This road could be made a cycle and walking only route without impacting access to any properties, there are no properties on the road.
 - d. Currently it is used by fire engines as a route to Letchworth, but the fire station is in a daft location. Safety will be improved when we moved the fire station.
15. **Mansfield Road.** This is an important cross road and should have a Bus Gate modal filter between the junction with Park Street and the High Street.
 - a. **Remove barriers** between Mansfield Road and Park Drive. These inhibit cycling instead of encouraging cycling, but the route would otherwise be ideal for cycling.
16. **Baldock Train Station.** Request Network Rail build a bike parking garage.
17. **Tesco.** Request they build a bike parking garage, with space for Cargo Bikes, like these <https://www.bakfiets.com/>

18. **Schools.** Build bigger bike sheds.
19. **A507, Clothall Road.** Request the road be de-trunked. Through Baldock it is a street, and traffic needs to be reduced. It would be great to close it to through traffic, but that does not seem feasible at this time.
20. **South Road. Clothall to High Street.** I am glad for this plan – it makes a lot of sense. Presently South Road has heavy traffic and feels unsafe for cycling. It will make an important cycleway. When you do, please implement separated raised continuous cycleway/pavement; see <https://youtu.be/9OfBpQgLXUc>, especially at the roundabout junction. It will make a huge difference to the safety of bicyclists and walkers.
21. **Tesco High Street Roundabout.** This is a critical junction that is presently very poorly designed for cycling and walking. The success of many transport projects is made or failed at the junctions. With cycleways from High Street, South Road and London Road, this junction must be clearly modified to prioritise Active Travel, possibly with Active Travel prioritised lights.
 - a. If through traffic on the High Street is stopped, then the junction can be simpler.
 - b. Will have to work with Tesco to make cycleway access to the store.
22. **Willian Way** is used as a rat run through to London Road. There is no need for traffic to be able to go from Willian Way to Templar Avenue. Create filtered permeability at leading into Willian Way from Nightingale Way and Clare Crescent. All properties will have the same access as presently, but Willian Way vehicles will be able to exit to Weston Way only, the other roads via Templar Avenue to London Road only. This will reduce through vehicular traffic while enabling cycles and walking.
23. **New Bygrave Development.** Ensure the new Bygrave development north of Baldock Station has a bus gate onto North Road (A507) so that all vehicles must use the A506 Wallington Road multi-grade junction. This will take vehicles away from the town centre, making it more desirable to cycle, walk or use public transport.
 - a. This is where I would really like a tram to start that connects New Bygrave to Baldock Station, to Tesco, to the Weston Way schools, to Works Road, Letchworth and beyond. I can dream 😊.
24. **Turpins Way to London Road.** Improve the Footpath from the end of Turpins Way to London Road.
 - a. Make it easier to use a bike there. Remove about 1m of the railing.
 - b. Move the lamp post at the top, it creates a hazard.
25. **DeClare Mews.** An old resident of Baldock told me that until quite recently it was possible to walk (or cycle) from Park Street and Sadler's Close through to the High Street or Hitchin Road. These were not official rights of way, even though it had probably been possible for hundreds of years since it was beneficial to the publicans and innkeepers who managed the properties until they were taken over by developers. With the change of use this public, but unofficial right, disappeared. This should be rectified.
 - a. Open up DeClare Mews for walking and cycling. This will encourage walking by saving time for school children leaving KTS, compared to going to the alley 120m further south.

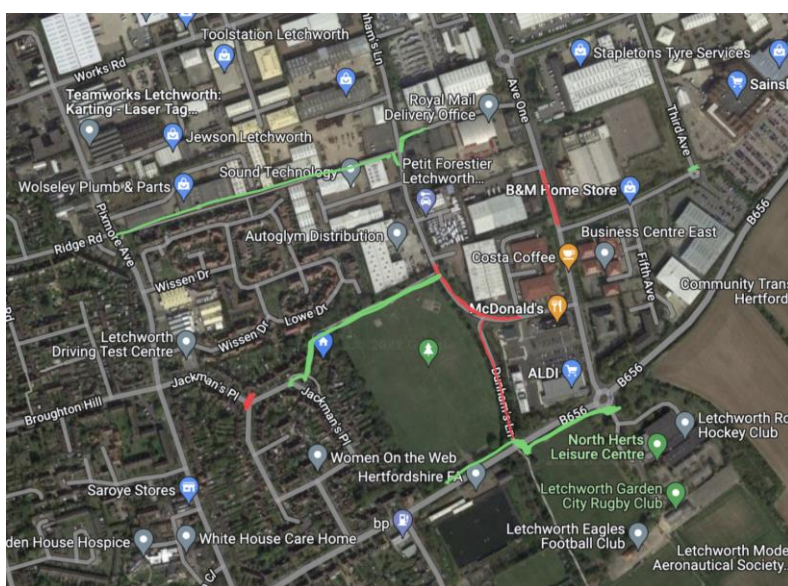
- b. People always want to walk the shorter route, just look how people cut corners and make their own paths. Removing barriers will help them want to walk and cycle.
26. **Fire Station Weston Way.** This is a very odd location for the fire station, especially as the majority of incidents are now caused by road traffic, quite a lot of which is on the motorway and A505.
- a. Suggest relocating to be with Ambulance station in Letchworth, or London Road – A505 roundabout (51.96588617529023, -0.1940461943899151).
 - b. Moving the fire station from a congested location to a far more open location will with direct access to high-speed roads will speed response times.
 - c. The cost of the move could be easily covered by selling the current land.
 - d. This will also make it easier to reduce the road speed requirements on this school road.
27. **St.Mary's Churchyard.** Remove no cycling sign(s). There's a sign at the Icknield road end. Better to make the path wider to allow more cycling. Don't discourage cycling...

Letchworth Garden City Town Comments, Tim Lee:

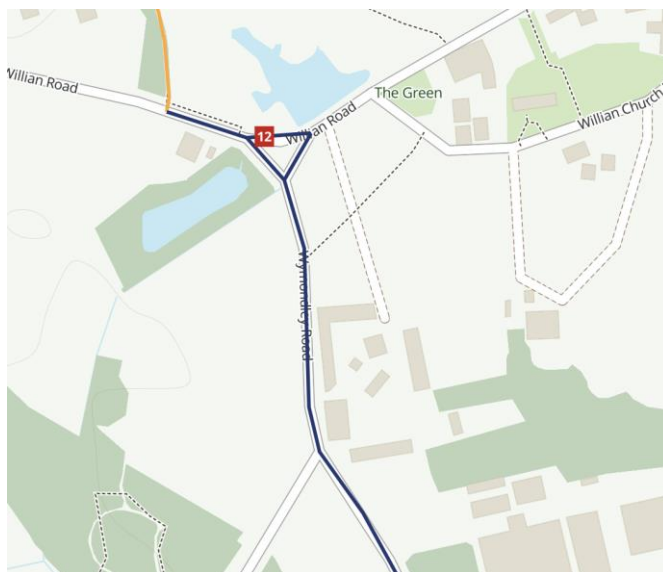
I have plenty to say about Letchworth Garden City, but don't have the time to provide a full submission. These are selected points.

In general, discourage through traffic. The town is a destination, not a thoroughfare, so make the roads match that. Create overlaid networks of Walking, Cycling, Public Transport, Car and Truck routes.

1. **East Cheap and Leys Avenue.** Why are cars permitted here? The presence of cars significantly impairs the environment for all people and is completely unnecessary.
 - a. East Cheap requires minimal access for deliveries and one small private car park. Limit access to only what is necessary.
 - b. Leys Avenue does not require any vehicular access – there are no driveways or other locations. Prohibit motor vehicles. Make t
 - c. Permit cycling throughout in both directions – it happens anyway.
 - d. Make the space more attractive to people to enjoy.
2. **Sainsbury's Safe Routes.** It's very dangerous to walk there, especially since McDonald's was build (that's been terrible for traffic and the environment).
 - a. **Close south Dunhams Lane.** This bit of road is redundant and often closed.
 - b. **Close road between McD junction and drive opposite Autoglym.**
 - c. **Restrict traffic on Avenue One.** This does not need to be a through route. The fact it is a through route reduces access to the Leisure Centre. Consider closing it from Second Avenue to Kite Packaging drive. At the very least:
 - d. **Make Safe Crossings on Avenue One.** There need to be several raised crossings to make Avenue One safe to cross, with pedestrian priority. It's a nightmare road at present.
 - e. **See illustrated map:**



3. **Jackmans Place.** (I live here.) Implement modal filter to prevent through traffic. It is a destination, not a route and is sometimes used as a rat run.
 - a. Right now (14 Nov) a zebra crossing is being constructed over Pixmore Avenue. That's great, but would be even better if it were a made as a continuous pavement to connect.
4. **Implement Letchworth Garden City Cycle Network Proposal** – and go further.
5. **Connect Dunhams Lane to Avenue One** via new footpath & cycleway extending existing footpath from Pixmore Avenue. Use raised crossing over Dunhams Lane and then Avenue One to cross roads.
6. **National Cycle Route 12.** This route connects Letchworth to Stevenage via Willian. See <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-a-route-on-the-national-cycle-network/route-12/>. This is not recognised in the plans, though some improvements accidentally coincide. I request that this route be incorporated into the plans with appropriate segregation and safety measures implemented at:
 - a. **Willian** – implement strong traffic calming along Wymondly Road at the junction to make it safer for bikes, along the route. See map, clip taken from OS map overlay (<https://explore.osmaps.com/?lat=51.960102&lon=-0.221500&zoom=15.9539&overlays=os-ncn-layer&style=Standard&type=2d&placesCategory=>), see sustrans link for more info.



- b. **Straighten Route** by enabling use of footpath, instead of going round Aubreys and Fouracres.



- c. **Relocate Baldock Road crossing** from Spring Road to Muddy Lane. The crossing should be located between the two destination roads to make the route more direct so encouraging crossing on the official crossing. This should not be a continuous pavement, but the pavements across Spring Road and Muddy Lane should both be continuous pavements. Having the crossing straighter will increase safety as people will then use the crossing instead of not bothering to go out of their way. Make the crossing pedestrian/bicyclist priority to reduce waiting time.



7. **School Streets.** Make the streets by the schools into School Streets with traffic controls at relevant times.

8. **Extend Blackhorse Lane.** Build a new HGV access road by extending Blackhorse Lane to Norton Road allowing all HGVs to access the industrial estates without passing houses, with exception of the small part of dual carriageway on Green Lane. This 500m of road would enable the dangerous traffic to be completely removed from B656 Baldock Road which can then be downgraded with cycling priority.

- a. **New Bridge to Works Road.** This could be extended to bridge the railway line and connect directly to the end of Works Road. This is clearly more expensive, and probably not necessary.
- b. I am not generally in favour of building roads, but this is an opportunity to significantly reduce the hazards to cyclists. It can only work if motor vehicles, especially HGVs, are prevented from using existing roads.
- c. Something would have to be done about the Refuse Site at the end of Blackhorse Road which often has queues.



- d.
- e. Would need to prevent HGVs from turning towards Baldock. If my Baldock suggestions are taken up there would be no point anyway.
- f. This would increase HGV traffic by the properties at the north end of Norton Way just south of Stotfold, but that's a lower impact than the reduction it would have in Baldock.

All the above was written by 09:00 on Monday 14 November 2022 to be submitted by the consultation deadline.

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