

City Cyclists comments on A201 CRISP Stage 3

(City section)

General comments

While there are some sensible suggestions (anything not mentioned here is agreed with) it is worrying that there has been no reference to objective standards in drawing up proposals, specifically the draft London Cycling Design Standards which was made available half a year before the CRISP process started, DoT/IHT's Cycle Friendly Infrastructure and DfT guidance such as the length of ASL lead-in lanes (Circular 02/03).

[This issue has now been taken up by the London Assembly and senior TfL officers.]

The failure to compare existing and proposed facilities with such standards seriously compromises the usefulness of this study and makes it hard to see how proposals could ever be signed off as a completed LCN+ route. This problem is made worse by the fact that the consultants involved do not seem to understand key issues such as how cycles move and safe positioning – the most important thing those undertaking cycle training learn. Cycle trainers are now having to teach cyclists to ignore cycle lanes in London as they put cyclists in the wrong place and these proposals increase this problem.

This makes the suggestions rather unhelpful and this central part of the 3 CRISP reports for the Elephant & Castle to King's Cross route is the weakest.

The record of CRIM is blank and the copy of the Mouchel Parkmen report on mandatory lanes in the City is incomplete. This needs to be resolved in the final report.

Cycle lanes

The cycle lanes with the possible exception of ASL lead-in lanes (where overtaking by cycles of each other is not so necessary or indeed desirable) should be at least 1.7m preferably 2m wide. Not only due to the high flows, particularly of large vehicles, which cycles need adequate clearance from but also as the type of cyclists using this route will be going faster hence need more space both from the kerb and from overtaking motor vehicles.

Additionally 2m lanes allow cyclists to overtake slower cyclists and stay in the lane: with high flows of cyclists, 1.5m wide lanes will have further safety problems as many cyclists will need to leave the lane to overtake slower cyclists. It is for these reasons that 2m is the preferred width on the continent where large flows of cyclists during rush hour is normal and indeed in the 1996 DoT/IHT *Cycle Friendly Infrastructure*.

The cyclists on this road are fast and experienced so will only benefit from a cycle lane of less than 2m if it assists them to pass stationary or slower motor traffic.

Otherwise it will give them less flexibility in positioning and encourage drivers to give them insufficient width.

Cycle lanes of sub-1.5m width, especially where used as ASL lead-ins, are particularly dangerous on roads such as the A201 where there are significant flows of buses and lorries since they give only centimetres clearance. Moreover in everyday use there tends to be at least one vehicle overhanging into the lane making them useless, something engineers who simply look at technical drawings seem still unaware of. In any other country in the world, sub-1.5m cycle lanes on a busy road such as this would be recognised as recklessly dangerous. Fortunately for the collisions statistics most cyclists have the sense ignore them and ride on the line or outside.

Comments on individual sections

01 – Smithfield Junction

No consideration of linkage with LCN+ route along Charterhouse St, in particular permitting right turn for cyclists coming from the south which is currently banned and really ought to have been picked up.

As a result of the other LCN+ route, ASLs have now been provided.

Strategy option 1 unclear: it needs to upgrade existing substandard ASLs on the A201 at this junction. In particular removing the two-straight on lanes (going to a one lane road ahead: clearly an unnecessary remnant from when the right turn was not banned) and providing a wider left turn cycle lane and a straight on cycle lane marked across the junction (both northbound).

The bus stop needs to be moved back so that stopped buses do not make access to the ASL impossible.

The eastern alternative/additional route does not pass through private land, simply a road which has a no vehicles except for market access sign (according to the CoL).

Not aware of any CRISP studies proposed to investigate the western or eastern routes.

02 – Farringdon St (inc Holborn Viaduct)

Existing characteristics: some of the road is dual carriageway

Problems: include sub-standard width bus lanes that bikes and buses cannot fit in together.

Parking is not metered here: no wonder well used!

Options

1. Cycle track and parking underneath viaduct are both complete non-starters. There is not sufficient width for a cycle track under the viaduct, especially as cyclists will be going down hill and at some speed. The design speed would not comply with the LCDS and very few cyclists (particularly as most would be fast cyclists on this as opposed to the parallel quiet routes). Cycle parking between the arches would be an invitation to thieves as there is very limited passive surveillance. Instead there should be sensitive surface treatments,

- perhaps buff colour, for 0.5m by the barriers acting as a deterrent strip to ensure cyclists give themselves plenty of space and do not end up squeezed in.
2. The point is there would be no advisory lanes (except the nearside lane at the Charterhouse St junction) with the new bus lane scheme which would benefit cyclists more anyway.
 3. This is vague: what it should say is increase bus lane width. The centre of the carriageway should be moved so that there are two-and-a-half lanes on each side meaning a 3m general traffic lane and 4.5m bus & cycle lane (with separate cycle lane marked only in ASL lead-in). As part of this the pedestrian crossing north of Stonecutter St should be upgraded to straight across and the one on the southern side given pedestrian phases.
 4. This is completely pointless as cyclists have better access via St Bride St and ?? which are both virtually motor traffic free and far less steep. The closure point could be used instead for motor parking, allowing the central reservation to be narrowed. This may need extra signal time which would better be given to pedestrians who have poor facilities here.
 5. Dropping kerbs in central island should be done in conjunction with removing the redundant disused toilets, creating wider carriageways.
 6. Realign the kerb and end of West Smithfield to take account of the new security barrier: this should not have to await the future scheme.

03 – Ludgate Circus

Problems:

ASL feeders are substandard both in width and length (LCDS & DfT Circular), including loading bay outside Evans Cycles

Cycle lanes not continuous across junctions (applies elsewhere on route)

Stakeholder feedback:

TfL have apparently given up on this

Constraints:

Just “capacity”, cycles are vehicles after all and a more efficient use of space.

Opportunities:

CRISP on Fleet St/Ludgate Hill may propose daytime bus & cycle only gates reducing flow and turns into these roads, allowing removal of right turn lane and greater pedestrian priority

Following the Thameslink scheme in the 1980s, the whole junction has been raised up forming a natural traffic calming feature. By removing kerbs and replacing guardrails with bollards (as at the junction of Bishopsgate A10 and Liverpool Street) to prevent motor vehicles overrunning it would reduce speeds, especially with bus lanes either side reducing road space for general traffic and warning drivers of a humped crossing.

Strategy options:

1. Making substandard cycle lanes green and mandatory will not help as they are dangerously narrow and of insufficient length to help much let alone be a quick win. Cyclists do not need so-called “driver awareness” (in fact encouraging them into the gutter by painting it green will make them less visible) but proper cycle lanes to let them get past queues. The suggestions seem very muddled. The loading boxes need to be moved, possibly the one by Evans Cycles removed with loading vehicles using the bottom of St Bride St or the court yard being redeveloped by Richer Sounds.
2. Combine pedestrian improvements with more noticeable junction table.
3. Gap in central reservation to allow cyclists in and out of Tudor Street.

04 – New Bridge Street

Problems:

Southbound cycle lanes follow winding kerb, taking cyclists to wrong place.

Opportunities

The cycle lanes are useless due to their current dimensions. Changing their colour and line markings will not upgrade them in any meaningful sense and is a waste of time in fact would encourage drivers to become more aggressive to cyclists who sensibly stay out.

05 – Blackfriars junction

Problems

Many pedestrians understandably want to cross on the surface and this can cause conflicts with cyclists.

There is also an uncontrolled slip *from* Embankment which similarly needs to be signalised and realigned (this was supposed to be done in the 1998 LCN scheme).

This would enable a surface level pedestrian crossing.

The three-lane northbound carriageway is so wide that it encourages speeding.

Blackfriars junction is not simply a north-south route but there is also the LCN+ on Embankment and City proposed local cycle routes on Blackfriars Passage and Queen Victoria St: all movements need to be easy and safe.

Constraints:

NB should read “motor traffic” since cycles are traffic too.

There is sufficient width at all points, it all depends on calculations about motor traffic capacity and possible reduction. This is also the main constraint rather than funding.

Strategy

2. “Improve cycle lanes” unclear in light of 1. Also possibility of continuing cycle lanes across junction.
3. “enhance cycle provision” similarly vague, sounds as if no real plans considered.

The vagueness and similarity of these different options is unsatisfactory and it is strange to be able to cost them so specifically in such circumstances.

06 – Blackfriars Bridge

Existing characteristics

NB concerns were raised before the fatalities

Stakeholder feedback

Facilities need to be convenient as well as safe or they will be ignored, such as TfL's pavement cycle track proposal which few if any cyclists will use, just as the central track immediately south of the bridge is never used by cyclists. There needs to be facilities both for fast commuters/couriers and also slower less experienced cyclists, i.e. a range of design types (see DfT LTN 01/04): that means tracks *and* on-road such as wide bus lanes. See City Cyclists plan at www.citycyclists.org.uk

Constraints

Also motor vehicle capacity and bus priority.

Strategy Options

1. Part of northbound lane is already mandatory but central cycle lanes cannot be made mandatory under TSRGD.
- 3 & 4 separate the two sentences (though signalled facility is really part of the previous section CITY05)
5. Remove one of three lanes so that there is nearside bus lane which terminates shortly before signals for lightly used left turn.