

City Cyclists' response to consultation on Holborn Circus – Spitalfields LCN+ route

City Cyclists are very concerned about the 'new' proposals, the way they have been drawn up without considering the problems and needs of cyclists in particular parts of the route, let alone consulting anyone. This differs significantly from what is expected in the LCN+ process and in our view the money spent so far on consultants has not been worthwhile.

This route was proposed as long ago as 1998 but, due to the lack of priority Corporation has given over the last four years to cycling schemes, has gathered dust. The Corporation as part of its Cycling Plan has proposed a step change in provision for cycling and the LCN+, which this route has been designated part of, promises high quality cycle routes in contrast to the poor and patchy implementation of the original LCN.

However the new proposals are exactly the same as what was proposed in 1998: narrow advisory cycle lanes where space is "available" that stop and start around parking and loading bays. The City Police and City Cyclists have expressed concern about this sort of supposed facility for cycling as it seems to increase rather than reduce risks to cyclists, indeed Corporation officers have admitted informally that these advisory lanes simply have not worked.

General issues

- IHT/DoT "Cycle Friendly Infrastructure" (see Policy 4 in City Cycling Plan) principles state that cycle lanes should be last consideration: reduce speed and volume of motor traffic first and then change junctions. Cycle lanes are not helpful around Smithfield, for example, except leading up to signalled junctions, as there are no traffic queues.
- Include all carriageway widths on diagrams so we have a better idea as to suitable cycle lane widths.
- Cycle lanes should as of default be 2m in line with the DfT/IHT guidelines. Where space is limited they may be less with an absolute minimum of 1.5m but in such circumstances it may be better to have no cycle lanes at all. Such narrow lanes make it impossible for cycles to keep 1m from the kerb as advised for safety reasons. Where there are motor traffic queues frequently then narrow lanes may be preferable.
- Start cycle lanes immediately after junctions and pedestrian crossings – the current drafts have a delayed start a few metres on. Cyclists want continuous cycle lanes.
- Having advisory cycle lanes which will from our experience be frequently obstructed is worse than no lanes at all as cyclists have to keep on leaving the lane where it is obstructed and rejoin traffic flow and where there is a cycle lane they do not have priority when undertaking this manoeuvre.
- The suggestions below are based on the assumption that the route east of Finsbury Square will become part of the City 20mph zone

around or shortly after implementation. Implementing a 20mph limit in the western part of the route would require consent from LB Islington and Camden and may take much longer. Therefore traffic calming is proposed where needed, particularly around Smithfields.

- On major roads have entry treatments on side roads (CCE/A3) but still raise pedestrian crossings.
- Bay parking & loading spaces – paved and on an intermediate level as on Camden High Street so that they revert to pedestrian space when not parked in and have the effect of making the road look narrower.
- Traffic signals cause unnecessary delays: zebra crossings and mini-roundabouts on tables are far better where as here there are high pedestrian and cycle flows on roads that are not high up the hierarchy.
- 7-10am and 4-7pm loading restrictions and 7am-7pm waiting restrictions as minimum on all roads. Under the 1996 Local Transport objections to restrictions beyond 7-10 and 4-7 can trigger a local inquiry unless they are deemed frivolous. As there is no frontage needing loading etc. on much of the route (e.g. Beech St) or there are alternative locations for such loading, e.g. north side of Long Lane, in many locations it will in fact be simple to implement such restrictions and thereby allow mandatory lanes which operate at any time.

Desire Lines & routing

Besides the issue about going round Finsbury Square, we don't agree completely with the routing around Smithfield Market: LCN+ routes should follow the same road in both directions. Additionally the LCC is proposing to change the routing of the Stations Circular cycle route so that it is in fact circular and connects stations. The new routing would use the central part of this cycle route, i.e. from Smithfields Market (coming off Cowcross Street) to Chiswell St down Moor Lane.

The following are the main desire lines for cyclists that interact with the route corridor.

- West Smithfield (inc link via West Poultry to Charterhouse St) – Long Lane – Beech St etc.
- Blackfriars – Old Bailey then linking to Beech St etc.
- Holborn Circus – Fann St – to Old St area linking to LCN routes 9 & 10
- Spitalfields – Wood St down to Blackfriars Bridge and Embankment (quiet route from northeast of City to southwest)

Signing Issues

Use stack type advance direction signs (CCE/S7) generally as these not only show destinations if you turn off the route but also the destinations if you stay on the cycle route (indeed confirm that you're still on it) and how much nearer they are since the last sign. These signs are useful unlike the route marker repeater signs (CCE/S3) which should largely be avoided. At complex junctions, i.e. the staggered junction by Bunhill Row/Moor Lane use modified TSRGD diagram 2008.

Use flag type (CCE/S5) for signing off attractions etc. for example Barbican centre (& cycle parking) down Silk St off Beech St. As this particular route is straight, on surface cycle symbols (CCE/S2) are unnecessary, even if the route had been given an official LCN route number.

The hard sell

It will be easier to get the cycle route approved if it is presented as part of general improvements rather than just a cycle route. So the proposals could be described as general road safety improvements, improved pedestrian experience, more attractive streets as well as a new cycle route. The Street Scene Challenge section of the Corporation should be approached to use the opportunity of the cycle route to enhance the street scene, for example they might contribute to some of the entry treatments and raised tables, particularly around Smithfield Market, the narrow section of Chiswell Street and Sun Street.

For the area around Smithfield market the change from one-way roads to false one-ways should be presented as increasing flexibility for market operations as it will be easier for market constables to direct lorries around at the busiest times.

We understand that the Barbican centre is concerned about its patrons car journey times particularly at the Beech Street/Long Lane junction. It should be pointed out to them that most visitors will not be arriving by car and that the current pedestrian and cycle facilities are wholly inadequate.

Pedestrian Issues

A guiding principle of the LCN+ is to improve pedestrian facilities and the pedestrian experience along cycle routes. The suggestions being made by City Cyclists take full account of this. Wide cycle lanes will keep the noise and air pollution of motor vehicles further away from the pavement while tending to reduce (as in the case of 1.5m or narrower cycle lanes) rather than increase motor traffic speeds. They also make pedal cycle movements more predictable. Entry treatments at side roads and at pedestrian crossings will provide a continuous pavement while reinforcing priority for crossing pedestrians.

Detailed Route Proposals

Plan 1 – Charterhouse St (west)

Change lanes to mandatory at any time and increase width to 2m. Side road entry treatments. Move westbound ASL nearer to ped crossing (consider truncating the central island) as it's not observed at present by drivers or cyclists who stop further forward. Continuity of cycle lanes in bus stop cages – consider cycle symbols or dia 1010 markings between "BUS STOP" markings. Move the island at the eastern end of Charterhouse St northbound so that two queues of motor traffic cannot form and so that westbound large vehicles can turn in more easily.

The LCN+ standard is ASLs at *all* arms of junctions LCN+ routes pass through. So at Farringdon St liaise with TfL who are implementing bus lanes to bring ASLs up to standards – 1.5m/1.7m feeder cycle lanes that are sufficiently long - on northbound carriageway have it on offside of nearside left turn lane to avoid left-turn conflict. This will also necessitate cutting back the loading bay on the eastern arm of the junction so that there is an ASL with feeder lane.

Plans 2-7 – Smithfield Market overview

This is a sensitive area as market interests have political clout within Corporation. The area is engineered as a gyratory system: the combination of one-way working and fast speeds is very cycle unfriendly and simply implementing cycle lanes could make the area even more dangerous for cycling. There are heavy traffic flows 4am-9am when the market is busy that have to be catered for and this conflicts with the morning peak.

The aim should be to remove gyratory system and make all roads through the market to become two-way for cycles with plugs at some points to remove through motor traffic in other words converting the one-ways to false one-ways. To remove racetrack speed effect all junctions should be raised onto tables around the market which will also help pedestrians cross. This could either be t-junctions or mini-roundabouts.

A significant problem at present is that many vehicles park partially outside the loading bays. At other times the loading bays are empty which makes the carriageway look very wide and tempts drivers to speed. It also is detrimental to the street scene as all the markings make the market area look like an empty car park.

The solution here is to put the parking bays on pavements, as on Camden High Street. This will narrow the road, reducing speeds, besides looking much more attractive and encouraging vehicles to stay in the parking area. There may be problems for the bays between St John St & Charterhouse Square but this is certainly the solution for those west of East Poultry Avenue.

There needs to be some reduction in motor traffic using the market area as a through route. Besides traffic calming, redistributing some capacity at Beech St/Long Lane jcn from motor vehicles to cycles, closing the end of Carthusian St to motor traffic entering, there needs to be some additional measure taken.

Plan 2 – Smithfield Market (northwest)

Allow cycles through barricades on West Poultry Avenue: the weight restriction should not apply to them! Both West and East Poultry should be two-way for all traffic. Remove the loading bays on the north side on Charterhouse St – it seems they are no longer official anyway. Make the north side no stopping 7am-7pm.

Plan 3 – Smithfield Market (northeast)

Entry treatment at point of Charterhouse St where it bends off (between nos 38 & 99). Also entry treatment at southern end of Fox & Knot St, starting with a buildout at the eastern end of the current parking bay, which if it is to stay should be raised, so as to line up the kerbs better.

Change priority at Charterhouse Square / Lindsay St jcn as it is confusing at present: how do you signal to go straight on down Lindsay St? Narrow the jcn and put it including the zebra crossing on raised table. Build out Charterhouse Square just north of Smithfield House to align roads better. Either remove the loading bay outside Smithfield House or put it on a pavement so it functions as a buildout. Plug at eastern end of Carthusian Street so that only cycles could enter it from Aldersgate. With a cycle gap on the central partition of Aldersgate, cycles coming from Fann St could turn in.

Allow eastbound cycle movements using plug from Charterhouse Sq to St John St – cut back diagonal loading bay on northeastern corner slightly. There may be possible complications at St John St junction but the crossing could be converted into a separated toucan.

Plan 4 – Snow Hill (west)

Close off Snow Hill at its western end during the day with access via Smithfield St. By using bollards for the closure it could be opened at night and used for marshalling of the market's delivery lorries. The western end of West Smithfield would return to two-way working.

Plan 5 – Snow Hill (east)

Given the lack of southbound motor traffic due to the cycle only gap, a cycle lane here is particularly pointless besides being unhelpful for cyclists wishing to turn right onto Holborn Viaduct. There should be an entry treatment at the southern end of Snow Hill.

Plan 6 – Smithfields Market (southwest)

Mini-roundabout at junction just south of West Poultry, Smithfield St would be two-way and a dead-end during the day. The link between West Smithfield and Smithfield St (south of the old toilet) would be closed allowing the loading bays to be shifted west, away from the end of East Poultry Avenue. West Smithfield would become two-way with only cycles able to continue east after East Poultry Avenue.

Plan 7 – Smithfields Market (southeast)

Entry treatments across both entrances to Smithfield Rotunda and narrow down the entrances as they are currently engineered for when it was a major roundabout not a service road. Convert pedestrian signaled crossing to zebra and consider mini-roundabout outside Grand Avenue, especially if cycles are allowed to use Grand Avenue again. Cycles can use the other avenues during loading hours so it does seem strange that they are not permitted to cycle here. Grand Avenue should have collapsible bollards instead of barriers which would also be more pedestrian friendly.

Long Lane would be two-way for cycles, with a plug just east of Grand Avenue preventing other traffic making the eastbound movement. The junction with Lindsey Street would be changed into a t-junction or mini-roundabout with the curves made less wide and the zebra crossings brought nearer the centre of the junction. At present it is engineered for high speeds.

Plan 8 – Long Lane/Aldersgate

Make the eastbound cycle lane mandatory at any time (with gaps for the crossovers) as all frontages have off-street loading and there will be a strong temptation for drivers to use the cycle lane. The westbound cycle lane will be parked in often and is not really useful – the main priority is to let cycles bypass motor traffic queuing at the Aldersgate junction. Consider marking cycle lanes across the junction as the path is not clear (CCE/B21).

Start the eastbound cycle lane immediately after the pedestrian crossing, forget the slow marking.

Plan 9 – Beech Street

Cycle lanes in both directions to be mandatory at any time and at least 1.7m if not 2m wide. The two westbound lanes are already very narrow so the only way to fit a cycle lane in is to remove one. The pavement on the southern side of Beech St is very narrow and two people can barely walk abreast meaning they often step into the road, so it should be extended slightly, leaving enough space for a proper cycle lane and motor traffic lane.

Golden Lane is an LCN route so cycles need in particular to be able to join and leave it. The junction with Golden Lane should be raised on a table and the barriers replaced with bollards so that pedestrians and cycles can cross safely to and from Golden Lane.

Plan 10 – Beech/Chiswell Street

End cycle lanes at start of controlled zone for zebra which should be raised on table extending to raised section of Chiswell St. Green ghost lane with cycle markings past entrance/exit of Whitecross / Silk Street. Permit cycles going north out of Silk Street to turn right via a cycle gap in central reservation.

The narrow section of Chiswell Street between Whitecross and Milton Streets should attractively paved and level with the pavement, with the kerb line marked by different stone and bollards of which there are already some at present. Funding should be sought through the Street Scene fund as this is already a most attractive conservation area.

Plan 11 – Chiswell Street

East of Milton Lane, mandatory cycle lanes at any time, 2m where possible. Discontinue through zebra, all of which including zig-zags on raised table. Remove parking bay, possibly relocate a couple of spaces on the northern section of Finsbury Street above Chiswell St but there are already a lot of

parking spaces around here on the side streets. Entry treatments on side streets where no raised junction.

Plan 12 – Finsbury Square (south)

Upgrade all ASLs at all arms of Finsbury Square/Chiswell St jcn to LCN+ standards. Widen the eastbound cycle lane outside 1-3 Chiswell Street where the carriageway widens.

Move the westbound ASL feeder lane on Finsbury Square so that it is between the left turn lane and the straight on /right turn lane, which would line it up better with Chiswell St and prevent conflict between straight on cycles & left turning vehicles (conflicts between left turning cycles and left turning motor vehicles are almost unheard of). This would allow it to basically stay straight past the parking bays and the bus stop which is not shown. It could not be mandatory but this would not matter as parking would happen next to the kerb not in the lane.

Cut back the central reservation on Finsbury Square south to the pedestrian crossing by Moorgate and move it north slightly so that there is space for the westbound cycle lane outside the bus stop cage. Revert south side of Finsbury Square to two-way working for all vehicles and remove parking bay on north side of carriageway. Install give way marking and entry (or rather exit) treatment, including narrower curve at bottom of eastern side of Finsbury Square. Eastbound mandatory cycle lane at any time leading to Sun St contraflow.

Plan 13 – Finsbury Square (north)

Keep eastbound route on south side – cycle lanes in gaps between bus stands and loading bays are amusingly pointless.

Plan 14 – Sun St

Sun St contraflow track – use wedge island design that LB Islington have pioneered on nearby Bunhill Row / Featherstone St. Have mandatory cycle lane on south side of Sun St between Wilson St and Finsbury Square feeding into westbound advisory lane between car parking and general traffic westbound lane.

The traffic signals should be removed and replaced with a raised mini-roundabout and zebra crossings (with central island to reduce speeds) on eastern and southern arms as in Islington, N1 on Danbury St/Peter St jcn.

There is significant demand for parking and loading on the north side of Sun St between Wilson St and Crown Place so it will have to be provided for. There is also a taxi rank not shown on the plans on the south side.

A new raised table should be created linking Crown Place and the pedestrian entrance just east of it to Finsbury Avenue Square thereby connecting the two pedestrian spaces. Having some sort of modern art or sculpture in the centre of the road on the table would help create a new space while slowing motor

traffic speeds further.

Plan 15 – Appold St

The triangle island on the northeastern side of Sun Street roundabout should be removed with the entrance narrowed down. The traffic signals should be removed and the raised table continued on a narrowed carriageway with a zebra crossing on the location of the current pedestrian crossing.

The parking bays on the western side of Appold Street should be removed and those on the eastern side put into raised bays. There is huge overcapacity of on-street parking in this area with the on-street parking on Pindar St etc. usually just a third full during the week.

The traffic signals at the junction of Appold and Primrose Streets should be removed, the road narrowed considerably with a mini-roundabout on a raised table and zebra crossings on the south and east arms of the junction.

Plan 16 – Primrose St

Install 2m wide mandatory at any time cycle lanes in both directions. There needs to be a raised bay with space for two taxis/PHVs for Exchange House inside the cycle lane which would be dashed (dia 1010) past it. Otherwise the cycle lane will be obstructed frequently. Also need pointer sign to cycle parking at back of Liverpool St station down service road between Exchange House and Broadgate Court and improvement of cycle access as the barrier does not open for pedal cycles.

At eastern end have ASL feeder lane in between left filter lane and straight on/right turn lane. See www.citycyclists.org.uk/asl.html pictures from York for examples. Otherwise there will be serious conflict between straight on cyclists and left turning motor vehicles. Also it lines cycles up better with the entrance to Spital Square. Consider modified version of CCE/B21) and liaise with TfL re new ASL at northern end of Bishopsgate that they are considering: this is a dangerous location where a cyclist was killed two years ago.