

On 30 August SPOKES organised a short cycle tour around central Watford to view locations of special interest for cyclists.

We looked at many interesting & attractive places. Useful cycling infrastructure, missing links, wrong information, neglect & lack of maintenance. Most of the photographs were taken on the ride, but some were taken before.

Those on the ride were: Councillors Mark Watkins, Peter Jeffree, Peter Kloss, from Hertfordshire Highways Odette Carter & from SPOKES Peter Jackson & Roger Bangs.

Leaving the Town hall though the Underpass (a Watford success- useful for pedestrians & cyclists) onto the Parade then turned left heading for the proposed quiet way to Watford Junction Station.



The shared-use underpass is very useful.

Confusion on where to cycle by Sainsbury's, it was very busy, parking on Double Yellow lines. Not sure whether to cycle on pavement or road. Dropped kerb to road would benefit from clearer marking, contrasting material. Potholed road added to hazard.

Crossed over the ring road. Then cycled along the **proposed quiet route**, no serious issues apart from parked cars until we came to **Station Rd**. A new cycle crossing would be required here to provide access to the Station. We were confused but decided to walk along the pavement to the Zebra crossing.



Looking up Station Road from the Junction Station.

Access arrangement by all users for the station are a long standing issue still to be resolved. SPOKES also support the idea of providing a pedestrian & cycling link from the station to Brixton Rd.

As we were heading to Waterfields Recreation Ground we walked along the one way Woodford Rd. which ideally should have a contra-flow cycle lane, the road is wide enough but vehicle parking on both sides make it a difficult road for all users.

Waterfields Recreation Ground is an attractive area adjacent to the River Colne & Nation Cycle Route 6 (NCR6) on which we cycled to Water Lane, which could be a useful route between central Watford & East Bushey. At the junction with the Ring Rd. a shared use path starts, but the signs are the wrong way round.



Water Lane - Ring Rd. junction.

Then cycled down the Lower High St. on the shared use path which is not clearly identified as such.

Turning onto Local Board Rd. (NCR6) we arrived at Century Park on a clearly marked shared Pedestrian & Cycle route. Here Peter commented on the potentially dangerous ribbed paving, which can throw a cyclist off their bike. The photograph shows the badly placed obstructing posts in the middle of the route, further along the vegetation was obstructing the path & needs to be cut back.



Century Park

On approaching the Thomas Sawyer Way we were at a blind junction unable to see traffic approaching from the west.



Difficult to see approaching vehicles.

We then cycled along NCR6 by the future Skate & Cycle Park, a large recreational area for young people, to the junction over Wiggshall Rd. This is a clumsy crossing to use, with much street clutter to negotiate. It would be better if the crossing was moved to the other side of the bridge near the entrance to the old waste site, allowing a safer crossing on to Riverside Park.



Whiggshall Road crossing.

Quick look at the deteriorated path linking Wiggshall Rd. to the Ebury Way (part of NCR6). Peter observes he frequently sees cyclists using the left hand pedestrian path probably encouraged by the poorly surfaced cycle route. Clearer signs clarifying the cycling/pedestrian status of each path would assist.



Riverside Park.

Then onto the Shared use path alongside Thomas Sawyer Way a useful link to the Hospital & west Watford. Again this is not clearly identified as a shared use path. It is also close to the Ebury Way from which a link could be provided, giving pedestrians & cyclists an easy route to the hospital.



Look east from the Thomas Sawyer Way.

After the junction into the hospital unauthorised vehicles are not allowed. Authorised vehicles including buses are allowed. It was the intension that pedestrians & cycles would be allowed but the Traffic Order for this road was incorrectly drawn up. It now needs to be revised allowing cyclists to legally use the road as was intended.



Link Rd. Sign - implying No Cycling.

We then cycled along Vicarage Rd. to the Ebury Way, a very attractive route part of NCR6 linking Watford to Rickmansworth.

From the Ebury Way up to the crossing over Tolpitts Lane. There in front of you is a blank fence. No sign to indicate that there is a cycle route through to Ascot Rd. & Cassiobury Park etc.



Tolpitts Lane crossing.

Then on the new convoluted route around the new flats. Are these Cycling stop markings really necessary?

Surely pedestrians & cyclists should have a higher right of way than motorists on a shared use path at an entrance into a carpark. HCC Transport Hierarchy LTP4



We then re-joined the original link path by Croxley View linking the Ebury Way to Ascot Rd. A good cycle path, but needs vegetation & minor tree growth to be cut back at least one metre from the edge of the path.



Shared path linking the Ebury Way to Ascot Rd.

Arriving at Ascot Rd. we soon approached the junction leading to Morrison's. Apart from the confusing sign's, the cyclist is directed to cross three roads rather than cross the one road in front, which is what most cyclist actually do. This junction needs to change before any further development in the area.



Ascot Rd junction near Morrison's.

We then cycled on the long established clearly identified Contra-flow lane towards Whippendell Road.

At the top of Ascot Rd. is a cycle path leading to the Gateway, the width restriction barriers are often put to close for modern bikes as shown in the photograph.

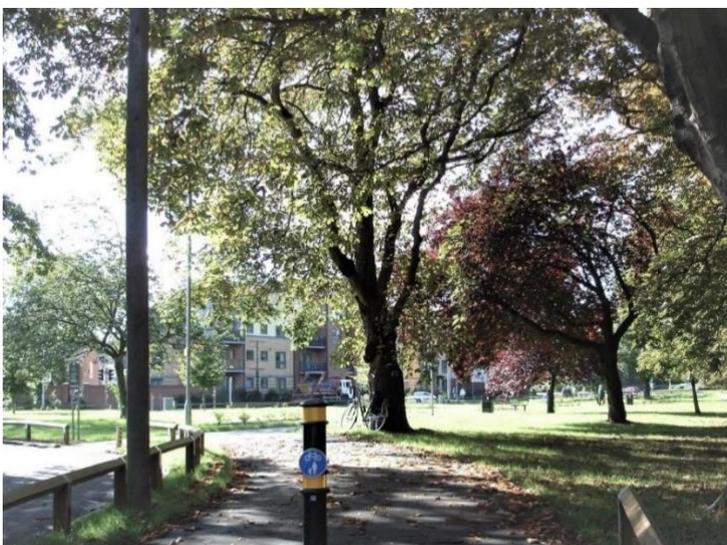


Width restraint barriers are too close.

Manoeuvring onto the north side of Rickmansworth Rd. by Two Bridges we came to the attractive Cassio Common. Here it would be beneficial if the footpath often used by cyclists is made into a shared use path. This led onto the recently built shared use path by Gade Ave. Another attractive cycling route leading to the Canal Path



Cassio Common-Often used by cyclists.



Shared use path by Gade Avenue. Lack of signs to indicate Shared use.

The canal path is always a joy to walk or cycle along. We joined it by using the ramp that was provided about fifteen years ago, but is now in a neglected & dangerous condition. The canal path.



Ramp from Rousebarn Lane onto the canal path.

The cycle tour finished with a delightful ride though Cassiobury Park & good shared use path to the Town Hall.

We believe the status of the path network though Cassiobury Park is likely to change in the near future allowing cycling from the canal onto the existing cycle routes. This will be a great benefit to those who use the park & the area around it.

We also believe there would be a benefit having a shared path from the car park via the bowling greens to the Cha Cha Café. This would ease the traffic in the busy paddling pools area and assist those using the bowling/tennis and croquet facilities as well as cyclists needing a route through the park. It provides additional options for the proposed bike hire scheme. These proposed changes would create a good cycling network across the park, relieving congestion in busy areas.

This exercise was arranged by SPOKES to show local issues that affect people’s ability to cycle on short utility journey’s around Watford. Apart from developing continuous safe cycling routes we hope that resources can be allocated for minor changes, improved maintenance particularly road & track surface & signage. We are not in favour of more street clutter & believe that useful signage information is often better on the ground than on posts.

SPOKES are willing to be involved in assisting future changes & developments affecting cycling.

Following this exercise it has occurred to us that the route could be made into a Green Ring similar to that recently developed at St. Albans.

[This report was prepared by Peter Jackson & Roger Bangs members of SPOKES the South West Hertfordshire Cycling Group.](#)