

LEDBURY AREA CYCLE FORUM ACTION PLAN 2004

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Abstract

The Ledbury Area Cycle Forum (LACF) seeks to improve local cycling facilities and to promote cycling as a healthy and enjoyable means of everyday transport.

This paper sets out a number of ways in which cycling might be made easier or safer in the Ledbury area.

Further information about LACF can be found at <http://www.lacf.org.uk>.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. ABOUT THE LEDBURY AREA CYCLE FORUM

The Ledbury Area Cycle Forum (LACF), a local subsidiary of the Herefordshire Cycle Forum, was established in 1999. Its remit is to improve the local cycling environment and to promote cycling as a healthy and enjoyable means of everyday transport for all ages. We hope that, over time, this will encourage more people to consider cycling instead of using their cars, particularly for local journeys.

Membership of LACF is open to all Ledbury area cyclists and, at present, there are some twenty active members of the forum. Through its members, LACF has contacts with the Ledbury Town Council, local parish councils, local health bodies, the local primary and secondary schools, and many local voluntary groups. LACF also has links with the CTC, Sustrans and local cycle clubs.

LACF's newsletter provides a means of keeping the wider cycling public aware of the Forum and its activities, and of inviting feedback on local cycling issues. In addition, a website (<http://www.lacf.org.uk>) has been set up to further the distribution of information about the Forum's activities.

Consequently, LACF believes it can speak with some authority, and with wide support from local cyclists, on transport issues affecting cyclists in the Ledbury area.

1.2. FUNDING

LACF is a volunteer group. It aims to influence policy-makers to improve the local cycling environment, but does not have the remit or the funding to commission such improvements itself.

The Forum gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance it has received from the Rural Transport Partnership In Herefordshire to cover administrative expenses. These include the costs of hiring rooms for public meetings, printing newsletters, and running cycling events such as the Ledbury Lanequest.

1.3. ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This paper sets out a number of ways in which cycling might be made easier or safer in the Ledbury area. Funding levels might not permit all of these proposals to be implemented, but it is hoped that putting ideas forward in this way will help Council policy-makers to select certain schemes for further investigation.

The following schemes have been suggested by LACF members. They are categorised as follows:

- Small schemes
- Medium schemes
- Large schemes

Schemes within each category have been given priorities as follows:

- **A** - High priority: will offer a significant improvement and/or benefit a large number of people.
- **B** - Medium priority, or might be contentious.
- **C** - Low priority: consider for the future.

Many of these schemes are interdependent, and some would become redundant if another more costly scheme were to be implemented instead. These cases are indicated in the text.

2. SMALL SCHEMES

2.1. 'A' SCHEMES (SMALL)

2.1.1. L2 LINK TO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

- Upgrade footpath (L2) from Barnett Avenue to the Lower Road industrial estate and install a dropped kerb onto the road;
- Upgrade pavement down to roundabout near the DIY centre currently under construction.

We suggest that S.106 funds from the DIY centre are targeted to this scheme first since it is near the site and will facilitate cycling to the site. The first item will complement work already done on L2 past the primary school, by providing an off-road link to the Lower Road industrial estate from the Town Trail. The second item will link from this to the New Mills Way cyclepath.

2.1.2. OATLEYS MEADOW / CANAL WALK / L10 / CHESTNUT CLOSE

- New route from Oatleys Meadow to New Street via Canal Walk.

This could continue over New Street, onto L10 by Cycles Clements and into Chestnut Close, thus serving John Masefield High School as a Safer Route to School (SRtS). There is a potential way through to Canal Walk beside the gas substation. Part of the former railway embankment forms a ridge on the Oatleys Meadow side, which would need ramps or to be cut away, or a combination of these. Visibility along New Street is good, and the exit is much safer than that from Woodleigh Road. It would also be a useful alternative when the dip in Little Marcle Road floods at the former railway crossing.

Possible contention: Some residents of Canal Walk might not be in favour. This could be countered by pointing out that they would gain a safe and direct access to Oatleys Meadow, which is used as a play area.

2.1.3. HOMEND BOTTLENECK BY KNAPP LANE

- Add road markings to ease passage for northbound cyclists past queuing cars.

Create an advisory cycle lane on the northbound carriageway of The Homend: from the bus shelter near the junction with Orchard Lane to 20m north of junction with Knapp Lane. This would be relatively inexpensive to implement. It would remind drivers wishing to turn right into Knapp Lane they should be towards the centre of the road.

2.1.4. BARNETT AVENUE TO BROWNING ROAD

- Surface the route from Barnett Avenue to the cycleway leading from L18 to Browning Road. Widen to allow cycling.

This would complete a link from the end of the L2 cycleway to Browning Road. Part of the route is a 1.8m wide footpath, and the remaining 15m length leading to Barnett Avenue is unsurfaced. There is ample room for a 3m wide path.

2.1.5. BROMYARD ROAD JUNCTION

A package of two items that would, together with two larger projects in para. 3.2.3., complement each other:

- Add coloured pedestrian/cycle crossing at Bromyard Road / Hereford Road junction.

This is the link that is used from the end of the Town Trail to the railway station and the Homend.

- Add cycle cut-through at Bromyard Road / Hereford Road junction (town-bound).

The build-out is a restriction for cyclists wishing to carry straight on. Providing a cut-through would also give cyclists wishing to turn right up the Town Trail the option to get off the road and wheel their bikes across at busy times.

2.1.6. CYCLE PARKING

- Progress Town Centre site;
- Replace fixtures that support a cycle by its front wheel at the Youth Centre and Primary School with Sheffield stands.

The TRO that would permit the Town Centre site has been in the pipeline for over two years. LACF sees this site as a definite statement that cyclists are welcome in Ledbury, and therefore as a means of encouraging more residents to use cycles instead of cars. Parking fixtures that support a cycle by its front wheel only are unsatisfactory: they can cause damage and it is difficult to lock a cycle frame to them.

2.1.7. MARKET STREET CYCLE ACCESS

- Alleviate cycle access around the locked gate using road markings and dropped kerb.

The way past the barrier is normally unobstructed, but remains informal. LACF would like to see a formally marked cycle route to avoid any possible conflict with pedestrians. It is necessary to negotiate kerbstones to get past the barrier which are at best uncomfortable, and at worst, could destabilise a bicycle. LACF is aware that Herefordshire Council will be reviewing green transport issues at all the county's health care institutions, and asks that this site is included in the review.

- Fix dip and 'wheel trap' drain at Bye Street end.

The Hospital management considers this to be the responsibility of Herefordshire Council. The drain grid could easily trap a narrow cycle wheel. The grid should be replaced with one whose slots run at right angles to the pavement at that point.

2.2. 'B' SCHEMES (SMALL)

2.2.1. ASL AT TOP CROSS

- Add Advanced Stop Lines at traffic lights at Top Cross, as has already been suggested by Herefordshire Council. Include feeder lanes North, West and Southbound.

The High Street and Southend approaches are narrow. In particular, High Street narrows as the Top Cross is approached, and cyclists are often 'squeezed out' by motor traffic as a result. LACF suggests removing the two parking places outside the Feathers hotel and moving the central white line over in that direction. This would make room for a feeder lane for the ASL. It would also discourage parking further down, where existing restrictions are often flouted.

The lights on Worcester Road are well set back. We suggest the feeder lane continues to an ASL much nearer to the Top Cross, with a repeater set of lights there.

It would be more difficult to achieve a feeder lane in the Southend. One way to do this would be to remove the little-used pavement on the east side so the road could be widened. This would be a larger scheme - see para. 3.2.4.

2.2.2. NEW STREET CYCLE LANE

- Two-way route under 'house on stilts': including ASL as part of Top Cross ASL design work currently in hand.

There is a 'dead' section of road under the 'house on stilts' overhang that has been cross-hatched to warn drivers of high-sided vehicles. The one-way section of New Street is very short (it ends at the entrance to the Talbot). Visibility down New Street is good. However, double yellow lines along where this route would continue are often flouted - parking in this area would need to be policed better.

A right turn for cyclists from the High Street would also be feasible if an ASL was present and the timing of the lights was altered to allow cyclists to turn, before going green for the Southend.

The route via the Feathers is private and therefore cannot be recommended as an alternative.

2.2.3. CHURCH STREET

- Block motor traffic. Allow two-way cycling, wheelchairs, pedestrians.

Visibility at the bottom of Church Street is very poor owing to the tight S bend. The pavement is very narrow and is only present on one side, on the section opposite the Town Council offices and the British Legion Club. This section is one-way, with a restriction for 'access only', which is often flouted, though the road is never busy. Currently, the options for cyclists wanting to reach the town centre from, for example, the church are: Church Lane (cobbled), wheel a bike along the narrow pavement, or ride up the hill and come back down Bank Crescent - a long and steep detour. LACF suggests blocking the road with bollards at the S bend, ie. after the junction with Church Lane.

Possible contention: Businesses at the lower end of Church Street would be affected. However, there is ample room for a vehicle to back into the section by the Market House for loading/unloading. There would have to be adequate turning arrangements for beer delivery lorries to the Prince of Wales and the British Legion Club.

- Any future one-way systems should remain two-way for cyclists.

2.2.4. FOX LANE CUT-THROUGH

- Fox Lane (next to 66 Homend) could link the Homend to Lawnside Road.

Fox Lane is wide enough for shared use. It terminates on a footpath that leads from Lawnside Road to Belle Orchard Close. The footpath is not wide enough for cycling, but there is only a short length from the end of Fox Lane to the end of Lawnside Road. A dropped kerb into Lawnside Road is required. Alternatively, the path could be widened as far as an existing dropped kerb further south.

2.2.5. GREEN LANE

A package of two items that would complement each other:

- Install ramp at the side of, or in place of, steps leading from Homend Crescent. This should be made wide enough for wheelchairs and prams;
- Sign the right-of-way as shared-use, to encourage cycling and warn pedestrians.

This route is proposed for the Ledbury end of the Quiet Lanes route to Colwall. Whilst the path further up is very steep, LACF and the Ledbury CPRE group consider this is a preferable route to Knapp Lane. The 'difficult' section is short and could, at a later date, be altered to reduce the gradient and bind the surface together. Most of Green Lane is level, and the whole route is probably the most attractive approach anywhere to a town.

2.2.6. BYPASS

- Add cycle lanes to the bypass.

Although the bypass is primarily intended as a fast motor road, it is used by some cyclists to get to other parts of the town. The need for cycle lanes has been highlighted by the tragic death of a local cyclist in October 2003. The current markings are only intended to delineate the edge: they disappear at approaches to roundabouts, where the continuation is a kerb. The gap between the marking and the physical edge of the road is only 700mm, which is about half the recommended minimum width for a cycle lane. The bypass is about 9.5m wide.

2.3. 'C' SCHEMES (SMALL)

2.3.1. BRIDGE STREET / BYE STREET CROSSING

- Install Toucan crossing for the Town Trail.

This would be a cheaper, but less satisfactory means of increasing the safety of this crossing, than an underpass (see para. 4.3.1.) However, the road is seldom very busy. Active means of traffic control such as pedestrian/cyclist-controlled traffic lights are sometimes abused by those who just push the button without intending to cross. A zebra crossing might be more appropriate.

Contention: The Ledbury Access Group, which represents the needs of the disabled, wants a crossing of Bye Street nearer the town centre. Whilst this might benefit a greater number of people, there are several road junctions and car park exits in that area that would make this difficult. Neither group advocates two crossings.

2.3.2. ASL AT HOMEND TRAFFIC LIGHTS

- Add Advanced Stop Lines at traffic lights near Tesco, with feeder lanes.

These traffic lights are never busy, even at Tesco's peak trading hours. However, the Orchard Lane approach (from Tesco's exit) is uphill.

2.3.3. OAKLAND DRIVE / BIDDULPH WAY CYCLE CUT-THROUGH

- Resolve the land dispute and implement a cycle cut-through on the blocked road.

The dispute might end up by being insoluble, for political reasons. Cyclists are able to ride through the gap on the pavement. LACF recognises that this is illegal, but human nature being what it is, this situation will continue unless a proper way through is made. However, there is no evidence of conflict with pedestrians.

2.4. SMALL SCHEMES ALREADY UNDERWAY

The following schemes that were on the original 'wish list' are already underway, but have been included for completeness:

2.4.1. DEER PARK PATHS

- Remove unnecessary barriers on Deer Park paths (Mabels Furlong to Biddulph Way, and branch off it to Ferndown Road);
- Set barrier at Biddulph Way exit to 1.2m/1.5m gaps;
- Install dropped kerb at Biddulph Way exit.

The barriers part way along these paths have been modified, by removing obstructive sections. The Biddulph Way exit is onto a road, so a 'Town Trail' type barrier that is passable to wheelchairs should remain for the safety of children.

2.4.2. LITTLE MARCLE ROAD ACCESS TO RIVERSIDE PARK

- Proposed new steps should include a 'Dutch' bike chute to allow bikes to be wheeled.

The grant application that has been filed by Ledbury Greenspaces Liaison Group to 'Living Spaces' includes this item. Unfortunately, there is not enough room to build a ramp or take the path through the bridge alongside the river Leadon.

3. MEDIUM-SIZED SCHEMES

3.1. 'A' SCHEMES (MEDIUM)

3.1.1. HEREFORD ROAD CUT-THROUGH

- Make cycle route through the old canal tunnel under railway to industrial estate.

This has been suggested by Andrew Wilson, MD of Helping Hand. He has indicated that many of his fellow industrialists could be persuaded to facilitate this to the north of the railway line. Many people cycle to work on the Bromyard Road industrial estate, and the indications are that it would be well used. It would be a safer access than the Bromyard Road.

Possible contention: The easiest access from the town side would be via The Leasowes, a recent housing development. The area has been landscaped.

3.1.2. BYPASS CROSSINGS

- Upgrade crossings by roundabouts at Hereford Road, Dickinson's, and Full Pitcher for safer access to the Town Trail, Rugby Club, and Riverside Park.

The Dickinson's Roundabout access to the Riverside Park will be improved from S.106 funding from the DIY store, as part of a scheme suggested by Ledbury Greenspaces Liaison Group.

3.1.3. RIVERSIDE PARK CYCLEPATH

- Extend/improve existing footpath to allow cycling between Ross Road and Hereford Road, where an improved crossing point should link with the New Mills Way cyclepath.

This would complement the Town Trail and provide a circular recreational route for novice and child cyclists at relatively little cost.

3.2. 'B' SCHEMES (MEDIUM)

3.2.1. QUIET LANES PROJECT

- Implement the Ledbury to Colwall route.

This would be an excellent pilot project for Herefordshire. The route that has jointly been proposed by LACF and the Ledbury branch of CPRE links existing footpaths with the rail stations, allowing the option of a return journey by train.

3.2.2. RUGBY CLUB CYCLEPATH

- Build new cyclepath on the north side of Ross Road, with direct links to the Town Trail and to the proposed Riverside Park cyclepath.

This would also serve the football ground if the relocation proposal goes through.

3.2.3. BROMYARD ROAD & HEREFORD ROAD

- Reduce bank at end of the Town Trail to make space for a traffic island.

This would complement the small schemes listed in para. 2.1.5. It would enable large vehicles to turn left from Hereford Road into Bromyard Road, and enable pedestrians, etc. to cross half the road at a time.

- Widen pavement down Hereford Road as far as the Skew Bridge.

This would provide better access to the Town Trail from the north end of New Mills. Unfortunately, the Skew Bridge is a restriction.

3.2.4. SOUTHEND FEEDER LANE

- Install a feeder lane to the proposed ASL on the Southend.

The Southend is probably too narrow for a cycle feeder lane. One way of remedying this would be to remove the little-used footpath on the east of the road so the road could be widened. The opportunity could be taken to widen the footpath on the west side - this is used by JMHS pupils to reach the town centre, and is busy at times.

3.2.5. BYPASS EXTENSION UNDER VIADUCT

- If approved, this must include a cycle track.

Consider building a cycle track in advance, as soon as the bypass continuation route has been defined. If, for any reason, the Hereford Road cut-through (see para. 3.1.1.) cannot be achieved, this should replace it in priority.

3.3. 'C' SCHEMES (MEDIUM)

3.3.1. SPEED LIMIT REVIEW

- Review 60mph limits e.g. in Bromyard Road, Eastnor, Yarkhill, Staplow / Shucknall.

This would be relatively inexpensive to implement, but would require policing.

4. MAJOR SCHEMES

4.1. 'A' SCHEMES (MAJOR)

4.1.1. ORCHARD LANE BRIDGE

- Replace narrow bridge carrying the Town Trail across Orchard Lane.

This bridge is only 850mm wide, and it is not easy to cycle across, or even wheel a bike across. It therefore effectively bisects the Town Trail. An initial feasibility study concluded it would be possible to widen the bridge to 1250mm using the existing plinths and bearers. The bridge is near to Ledbury primary school, and is used by children living in the southern parts of the town. Access from the primary school to the Town Trail has been improved recently via the ramp from Orchard Rise.

4.2. 'B' SCHEMES (MAJOR)

4.2.1. BROMYARD ROAD BRIDGE

- Extend the Town Trail over Bromyard Road to the Railway Station.

This was part of the original design brief for the Town Trail, but was never implemented owing to lack of funds. It would enable cyclists and pedestrians going from the Town Trail to the station or town centre to avoid the Bromyard Road crossing entirely.

4.2.2. COLWALL TUNNEL

- Commission initial feasibility study.

See discussion paper at: <http://www.lacf.org.uk/docs/tunnel.pdf>. This very ambitious project, to open the original (now abandoned) railway tunnel under the Malvern Hills for cyclists and pedestrians, would need to be carried out as a partnership. Potential partners might include Worcestershire County Council and Sustrans: the latter is planning a route from Hay-on-Wye to Malvern as part of the extension of the National Cycle Network. It would be a prestigious landmark and tourist attraction on such a route.

4.3. 'C' SCHEMES (MAJOR)

4.3.1. BRIDGE STREET CULVERT

- Build an underpass under Bridge Street to take the Town Trail though from the cutting to Queens Walk.

This would avoid the necessity to cross Bridge Street, the busiest road that intersects the Town Trail. If built, it would remove the need for a toucan/zebra crossing (para. 2.3.1.) The ramp up from the cutting is steep - much more than the 8% maximum that was suggested for the Town Trail, and most of it is less than 1.7m wide. Visibility towards the town is not very good from the top of this ramp, and there is no level part at the top where cyclists can wait to give way to pedestrians on the Bridge Street pavement.

However, we are told that there are gas pipes beneath the road at this point, and rubble from the former railway bridge was used to fill the gap shortly after the railway was closed.