

Highways England

Dear Sirs,

Buckden-Grafham Cycle Path Group

Buckden Parish Council has for some time been looking to create a safe family cycling route to Grafham Water, which is a popular local leisure cycling destination. It frustrates villagers that at present, the Perry Road is so unsafe, that people have to put their bikes in their car to drive there, in order to then cycle the excellent path round the Lake itself. Off road routes are not currently possible due to land ownership issues and existing footpaths are not legally, or physically, capable of being cycled upon.

However, the new shared paths and the levelling of the Mere Lane Byway, provided as part of the A14 works provide an excellent new opportunity for an alternative route to Grafham. We have secured funding from the A14 Legacy Fund (copied in) to undertake a feasibility study into what is needed along the route to enable cycling. I attach a copy of a presentation which accompanied our bid to the A14 Legacy Fund which explains the planned route with map and photos, also cross referenced to the table below.

This feasibility work has highlighted that there are a number of areas within the Highways England A14 Project works which are underway which could, with some amendment, make our route possible. We would like to ensure that these works are completed before HE leaves this part of the site, as it would be much easier to resolve these matters whilst you are working here, than subsequently. In addition, one element is shown on the approved plans, and does not appear to have yet been implemented. I have listed them on the table below, and have attached the full draft feasibility study for your reference, noting that this proposes measures outside the current project area of the A14, which the Parish Council will seek to fund through other means.



Therefore, please could you respond on the issues highlighted from the Feasibility Study and how to resolve them. We do not want to miss this opportunity. Clearly, a cycle route is only as good as its weakest point, and it would be a great shame for Highways England to have spent so much money and effort in creating elements of what could be a great new path, for the weakest links to render it much less useful, and in some cases, dangerous.

I would be grateful if you could respond promptly so that this can be reported back to the various Parish Councils within which the Feasibility Study area covers.

Yours sincerely,

Amy Burbidge

Buckden Parish Council

	Location	Issue	Image	Suggested action by HE
1	Mere Lane Byway	The Byway has been flattened and levelled, so it is possible now to cycle on it with a mountain bike. But its large rubble surface means that it is inaccessible for normal bikes, and for pushchairs/ wheelchairs. In addition, there is concern that the byway could be used as a cut through.	 <p>The image shows a gravel path leading to a field. On the right side of the path, there are two signs: a circular sign with a red border and a black silhouette of a bicycle, with '11.5 t' written above it, and a rectangular sign below it that reads 'HIGH PRESSURE PIPE LINE CROSSING'.</p>	<p>Blacktop surface a 3m wide strip to allow for .cycling/wheelchairs</p> <p>We note that there is a proposal, still under consideration, to create a new roundabout at the southern end of the Byway – and this would give an opportunity to improve the access for bikes/wheelchairs and equestrians, whilst also preventing vehicular use.</p>
2	A1 Bridge	This section of Buckden Road cannot provide for cycling for all in its current form because people would have to mix with traffic under signal control. People wishing to access the byway to head west would have to turn right across traffic leaving the A1 and this is a risky manoeuvre. There is no provision for pedestrians other than a 1m hard strip under the overbridge with no buffer from traffic.	 <p>The image shows a white van driving under a bridge. The van has 'MICK GEORGE SKIPS' and 'DAS' written on its side. The bridge is made of concrete and brick.</p>	<p>Signalised solution: Add an additional traffic stage to the signal control at the current overbridge. This would allow a stage for 2-way cycling between the byway and the cycle track, which currently ends east of the A1. The time required for cycle traffic would be relatively short.</p>



3 Brampton Road path incomplete

Part of the work has included the provision of a new 3m wide “nonmotorised user” path shared by people walking, cycling and riding horses. The path currently ends on the approach to the A1 overbridge and with the “cyclists rejoin carriageway” sign, it appears that the new provision simply ends. This is not as shown on the approved drawings which shows the NMU provision going right up to the bridge and not forcing cyclists to go on this dangerous piece of road where traffic has just left the A1 and is travelling at speed. We consider the current situation very dangerous as it effectively gives the impression that people can cycle safely, and then abandons them at a dangerous point.



Continue the path to connect to the bridge footway, as shown in the original scheme consent.

4 Side road accesses on Brampton Road and the new roundabout

The NMU path is compromised at the side road junctions and accesses as cyclists need to check behind them before crossing and the entry radii are large which promotes high speed entry adding to the safety risks for people cycling. The crossing points do not have flush kerbs in all cases and the ramps down/ up from carriageway level with reduce the comfort for some users. Our observations at the roundabout suggest that the geometry invites high entry and exit speeds. The two-lane western approach gives some concern that in the event of slow-moving traffic in one lane, people wishing to cross will become “masked” by stationary vehicles. We also consider that the equestrian part of the crossing will be problematic in terms of people being able to judge a gap in the two directions of traffic within which to lead / ride a horse.



Amend junction radii to slow speeds. “Bending out” the cycle track from the main road at each junction or access by at least 5 metres would mean that the cycle track and access road would cross at right angles, thereby giving drivers and cyclists better visibility of each other. Cyclists especially would not have to look behind to see traffic. The radii of the side road and accesses should also be tightened to reduce turning motor traffic speeds. For the junction, if traffic flows prove a little higher, then an island of at least 2.5m should be provided to allow people to cycle (and walk) across in two parts.

A layout more akin to a Dutch rural roundabout would control driver entry and exit speed and set the crossing point back from the circulatory area to give people crossing a better view of drivers leaving the roundabout, and also drivers more time to see people crossing ahead. Priority would remain with motor traffic, but entries to the roundabout would be single lane width.