

Cycling on Green Lanes

We received an email recently from a local cyclist concerned about the cycling routes being proposed for the Cycle Enfield scheme (a.k.a. Mini-Holland):

Hi, I am concerned that the proposed cycle route will be too dangerous. Nothing would induce me to cycle down Green Lanes or cross the A406 at the Green Lanes interchange, even with a cycle lane and a 20 mph speed limit. Why would you want to take cyclists down one of the busiest and most polluted roads in North London and across a notoriously dangerous junction. Yes, we need more cycle lanes and less pollution. There are too many buses/bus stops and lorries on this route. But I do not believe the mini Holland proposal is the answer. Surely there is a safer alternative. There is a perfectly good underpass at Connaught Gardens that could be utilised. A much safer place for cyclists.

Here's our reply, courtesy of David Hughes:

Thank you for getting in touch with us about the proposed changes to Green Lanes; the pros and cons have been part of our thinking for some time. Nevertheless the detailed planning and consultation have only just got off the ground so all sorts of changes to make the road safer for cyclists (and nicer for pedestrians) on parts of the route may yet be chosen. For example, Enfield Green Party has been looking at Shared Space (for outline details try Google) for Palmers Green and perhaps elsewhere.

However, the thrust of your message is that you would prefer a quieter route via mainly residential streets. And I'm afraid that there are problems with that for a Party which values equality:

- *commuting cyclists in particular, and some others, like fast, direct routes without lots of stopping at street junctions;*
- *cyclists are as entitled as drivers to choose the route which is most convenient for them (it's a question of the democracy of the roads);*
- *if cycling takes off as a means of local travel as the council hopes lots of fast-moving cyclists on residential streets could be as big a problem as speeding cars.*

The A406 is not pleasant in the middle of a city, but as a cyclist I don't feel the junction is an especially dangerous one for teenagers and adults; nasty and polluted yes, but it is traffic-light controlled. Young children are probably best kept away from it, but, if needs must, it would be possible to dismount and walk to a pedestrian crossing with their parent/supervisor.

Now 77 years of age I returned to cycling a few months ago after a break of some 25 years. Friends pleaded with me not to do it for the sort of reasons you give. But I've not been fazed by the traffic on Green Lanes which I use two or three times a week as far south as Wood Green and north as far as Enfield Town, and I've found most car drivers willing to give me space, be a little patient and sometimes even to anticipate my needs as a cyclist. That is something to build on, and with calmed 20mph limits in key places much can be achieved.

Pollution is indeed a big problem and statistically a much more dangerous threat to life and health than the risk of an accident on Green Lanes, which is one of the council's reasons for promoting cycling for shorter journeys. On the other hand cyclists are in a better position than drivers – measured and discussed in a Channel Four programme only a few weeks ago – in that in urban areas the air drivers breathe is likely to be more polluted than outside air. This is because car ventilation systems pick up pollution and keep it in the car when stationary at traffic lights and other congestion points.

On the question of the proposed cycle lanes a little over 3 people are killed or seriously injured per million cycle journeys in London, and as you probably know a significant contributor to that proportion is a particular situation: lorries turning left at junctions. It's an avoidable type of accident for cyclists so the statistics could be quite a bit lower, and for the future there is much that can be done by better lorry and junction design. Transport for London and our local traffic engineers will of course be bearing the issue in mind for the junctions on Green Lanes.

If current ideas are implemented Green Lanes cycle lanes are likely to be 'lightly' segregated from the traffic by so-called Armadillos (low humped barriers intended to persuade cars not to enter the cycle lanes) spaced at regular intervals along the route except at junctions. Beyond that we already know from the exhibition the

council staged at The Fox pub in Palmers Green recently that the council is seeking ideas from local residents to maximise safety and reduce mistakes, particularly at junctions. We therefore think, and we know local cycling groups think, that cyclist safety will be significantly enhanced. However, lightly segregated lanes like this can be abused, especially by parked vehicles which does increase risk for cyclists, but until we have specific proposals, we are unable to comment further. Many cyclists would prefer much more heavily protected cycle lanes, partly on safety grounds, partly to prevent car parking on their route. So far the Enfield Green Party hasn't taken a view.

Finally you mentioned bus-stops as a problem, and we know that the relationship between them and cycle lanes is concerning many people, including keen and experienced cyclists. However the council has gathered designs from around the world so there's a good chance that safe and convenient solutions will be found. It's unlikely that reducing the number of stops would be an option because the needs of pedestrians, and especially pedestrians with mobility problems, need to be provided for.

Hope this puts our position in perspective. Probably no design or combination of designs will suit everyone, but we will be working hard for the best overall solution bearing in mind the Green Party's preference for much more cycling and walking on environmental grounds.

David Hughes

Enfield Green Party