

OUR ACTIVE TRAVEL CHARTER

PROPOSALS FOR GETTING MORE PEOPLE WALKING AND CYCLING IN FLITWICK, AMPHILL, MAULDEN, WESTONING, HOUGHTON CONQUEST AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES

By members of Flitwick for the Future: Action Against Climate Change and Ampthill Climate Change Group.

Executive Summary

Active travel choices - walking or cycling - for leisure, and in place of short car journeys, benefit us as individuals and generate more vibrant, pleasant and prosperous communities. Flitwick for the Future and Ampthill Climate Change Group have put together this Active Travel Charter to show how our Town and Parish Councils and Central Bedfordshire Council can support active travel choices through specific actions and investments.

Reading this Charter

Sections 1 to 5 of our charter outline the changes we would like to see and the reasons we believe these changes to be necessary. Examples of investments and actions we would like to see are given in Section 3. Section 6 makes suggestions for individual and group involvement to bring changes about. Sections 7 and 8 give more detailed suggestions for improvements to the active travel infrastructure between and within our communities.

Our Big Vision

In 5 years, our towns and villages will be quieter and less polluted, but they will also be full of life. More people from all walks of life will be socialising, dining out, and even playing, in our streets. We will be walking and cycling for local trips - and only driving when we really need to. And all of us will be happier for it.

Our Active Travel Charter

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1. Introduction

We love our little corner of the world. It has beautiful countryside, lovely towns and villages, and a great sense of community. The recent COVID-19 pandemic reaffirmed our love of our home towns and villages.

We want to make it even better. There is an opportunity now for Flitwick, Ampthill, and the surrounding villages to be greener, more sustainable, healthier, and to tackle traffic-related issues that have been allowed to get worse over time.

We want to make it as easy for everyone - regardless of ability, age, or background - to get around on foot or by bike as it is by car.

Doing so doesn't just benefit people who choose to walk or cycle. More people walking and cycling reduces traffic on local roads. So for trips where the car really is essential, it's less busy.

This means we can allow our children to play in the street outside their home or school with less fear. It also means that walking between shops, services, cafes and pubs in our town and village centres is an easy and pleasant experience for everyone.

It means that people who have no option but to use the bus can do so while maintaining social distance.

It means that, little by little, we can get healthier every day, while pollution levels in our settlements decrease.

This does not mean that we are anti-car. We are pro-people. We want to make every street in every town and village in our area one that people can enjoy being in, regardless of what they are doing and how they are travelling.

These are our proposals for doing just that.

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2. Our Asks

We cannot deliver this on our own, and much of the delivery will be up to others. We will do what we can to help, but underpinning this is a series of asks that we have that we feel will make our area a nicer place to be.

A: Our streets should be accessible for everyone

Streets that are accessible for the most vulnerable people in society are accessible for us all. CBC are adapting bus stops for accessibility, but what about the journey to the bus stop? Maintaining pavements, installing dropped kerbs, making more safe places for pedestrians to cross roads, with good visibility, protection from inappropriate parking and signage for drivers, and installing more Zebra, Pelican and Toucan crossings will make our streets accessible for everyone. But especially the elderly, the disabled, and children.

B: Our main roads need to be safer

Our main roads are prioritised for traffic movements, even though people use them for all sorts of reasons. Many even live on them. They unfairly penalise people who either cannot or choose not to use a car, and even people who choose to use a car but need to walk the last 100 yards to their destination. Walking and cycling needs to start taking priority, and we can do this through protected cycle tracks, wider footways, more pedestrian crossings, and better designed access from side roads.

C: Our town centres need to be better places for people

Flitwick and Ampthill town centres are dominated by traffic. The 'pedestrian pound' is under-appreciated because it has not been given a chance. Our town centres should prioritise people visiting them and wanting to spend time in them, not driving through them. Pedestrians should not have to dive into shop doorways to make space for two vehicles to pass each other. Town and village centre signage and street design needs to free up people movement not car movement.

D: Our residential areas need to be made Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Our neighbourhoods should not be for traffic passing through, but for local trips for residents as well as servicing and deliveries. Less traffic also means children playing in the street, neighbours talking to each other, and less noise and air pollution. All our residential areas should be 20mph zones, and access only. Outside schools, 'School Streets' should be the norm, as by closing the road to inconsiderate parkers and passing traffic you open it up for people, and make it safer for children.

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E: Our parking needs to be properly managed

In some parts of our towns and villages, parking is like the wild west, with cars parked on every footway and every blade of grass. It needs better management. Space at the kerbside must be prioritised for those with disabilities, and loading and unloading. Existing restrictions on parking on footways and verges should be expanded to all areas, and be enforced. Every school, doctors surgery, leisure facility, town and village centre, employment area, major bus stops, and the train station must have high quality cycle parking outside or close by. Barriers to safe walking to these services need to be identified and overcome.

F: Our towns and villages need to be linked by, and interwoven with, safe walking and cycling routes.

Local planning and transport policies must ensure that walking and cycling is prioritised, and that each new development in our area must make it better to walk and cycle around. Developments should be refused if they do not provide high quality walking and cycling. Link roads need reductions in speed limits, signage to ensure drivers are aware of walkers and cyclists, and key routes need new footways and segregated cycle lanes. Side road and major road junctions need safe crossing infrastructure. A safe, joined up, cycling and footpath network will increase cycling and walking locally and attract cyclists and walkers from elsewhere to the benefit of local businesses

G: Our public transport needs to be properly integrated with an improved walking and cycling network.

High quality, safe cycle parking should be provided at all of the busiest bus stops and at all local stations, including those on the Marston Vale line. At Flitwick station, the approach to the station needs to be much more cycle and pedestrian friendly and their needs prioritised in the new station interchange. The quality of the cycle parking at Flitwick station needs to be improved, but this will be under-utilised unless cycling is made safer along key routes between our communities. Walking and cycling routes to and from bus stops and the station should be of the highest quality to encourage people to walk and cycle rather than parking in nearby streets.

H: We need to promote the benefits of fewer car journeys locally

Some car journeys have to be made, but we are small towns and villages, so many of the short trips that people currently drive could be made by walking or cycling. Choosing to walk or cycle to work, or as part of a longer commute, will save fuel, maintenance and parking costs. For some households, in combination with increased home-working, it may enable a reduction in the number of vehicles owned, with resulting financial gains. As well as making streets safer, the benefits of more walking and cycling locally - such as improved mental and physical health, and reduction in air pollution - need to be promoted, and people encouraged to give it a try.

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3. Actions and Investments

These are the main actions and investments we would like to see delivered across our area.

A: Our streets should be accessible for everyone

In Ampthill:

- Upgrade crossing points along Dunstable Street and Flitwick Road, with increased parking management to ensure visibility.
- Improve the footways along Oliver Street and install a Zebra or Pelican crossing between the Arthur Street and Houghton Close junctions to improve walking access to the Doctors' Surgeries, and safe crossing for school children.

In Flitwick:

- Improve footpaths along High Street, by keeping vegetation cut back, and widening on the railway side.
- Upgrade the patrolled school crossing at The Blackbirds to a Pelican crossing

B: Our main roads need to be safer

In Ampthill:

- Install a mini roundabout at the Poppy Drive/Flitwick Road junction, to replace the noisy sub-standard raised platform and break traffic flow in both directions.
- Reduce the speed limit to 20mph on Oliver Street, from the junction of Willow Way uphill to Dunstable Street.
- Install the proposed Toucan crossing between the 101 and Froghall Lane roundabouts to allow safe transit for walkers and cyclists on this school route.

In Flitwick/Westoning

- Improve footpaths, add safe crossings and install warning signs to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety along the A5120 between Flitwick and Westoning

C: Our town centres need to be better places for people

In Ampthill:

- Formalise single file traffic at Dunstable Road Pinch Point, by painted hatching or footpath widening.
- Upgrade the Zebra Crossing on Bedford Street in the town centre to a Pelican Crossing.
- Install signage to make drivers aware that cyclists and pedestrians are a priority in this area

In Flitwick:

- Make the shopping parade area on High Street a viable, pleasant pedestrian space by banning pavement parking and adding infrastructure for people, such as benches and trees.

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D: Our residential areas need to be made Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

In Ampthill:

- All side streets from Dunstable Street/Flitwick Road declared 20mph Zones, including Oliver Street from Willow Way junction to Dunstable Street.

In Flitwick

- All side streets from Ampthill Road /High Street/Dunstable Road, Steppingley road, Maulden Road, the Avenue and King's Road declared 20mph zones

E: Our parking needs to be properly managed

- All sports clubs to encourage non-driving options for local and visiting spectators and training.
- Enforcement against pavement and verge parking, and double yellow infringements needs to be strengthened.

F: Our towns and villages need to be linked by, and interwoven with, safe walking and cycling routes.

Between Ampthill/Maulden/Flitwick:

- Abbey Lane/Flitwick Road/Maulden Road reduced to 40mph, with warning signage for drivers to protect cyclists and walkers.
- A separated cycle lane and new footway along Maulden Road, Flitwick, within the new Country Park area.
- A safe crossing at the A507/Flitwick Road/Maulden Road roundabout.
- Crossing provision at Ruuox Nursery linking the new cycle path from Flitton to the bridleway across the Country Park into Flitwick.

Between Ampthill and Houghton Conquest:

- Safe crossings of the B530
- Cycling safety signage and infrastructure on the B530 between Ampthill and the Houghton Conquest Junctions
- A new cycle trail linking Houghton Conquest to existing bridleway networks along the Greensand Ridge and into Ampthill

Between Westoning and Flitwick:

- Widened footpaths and possible cyclepath/shared use path along A5120

G: Our public transport needs to be properly integrated with an improved walking and cycling network.

In Flitwick:

- Improvements to the footway alongside the railway line on High Street, and increased safe road crossing opportunities along Ampthill Road and High Street to make the walk to the station safer and more pleasant.

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- Publicise existing back -road cycle routes through Flitwick to the rail station.
- Improve cycle storage facilities at Flitwick Rail Station, to include storage lockers.
- Ensure cyclists and walkers views are taken into account in the design of the new transport interchange for Flitwick.

H: We need to promote the benefits of fewer car journeys locally

In Flitwick:

- Publicity in Flitwick rail station and Tesco car park of potential savings of switching from the car for the station journey.

In Ampthill:

- Local shops making space for and encouraging use of shopping trollies for transporting goods, offering packaging options for cyclists and walkers; offering “hold it til you’ve finished”, so items can be collected after visits to other shops/services.
- Use Saturday closures of Church Street, between the Waitrose car park entrance and the mini-roundabout to promote local businesses.

In all areas:

- Better publicity for existing safe cycle/walking routes
- Publicity for existing bike parking and new bike parking facilities
- Promote the health and financial benefits of using the car less
- Collaboration with businesses to support non-car journeys to work, to include a business parking levy and subsidy for alternative travel choices.

4. Why are you doing this?

It’s simple really. We care.

We are doing this out of a love of the places where we live, and how we feel they could be better. We certainly do not think that walking and cycling everywhere will solve all of our ills. But it will be a big help in tackling a few of them.

Traffic is a major issue in our towns and villages

When we talk to people, this is both the level and speed of it. In 2017, 10440 vehicles passed down the High Street in Flitwick on average every day¹. Whilst that is not the same level as the nearby M1, it is enough to be noticeable, and certainly enough to discourage all but the hardest of cyclists to mix with HGVs and buses. Rising traffic levels and speeds have been raised as issues in all local neighbourhood and parish plans.

We want to make it feel safe to walk and cycle

¹ Department for Transport (2020) Road Traffic Statistics.
<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/80674>

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Very few people want to cycle in front of a bus or a lorry. Speeding traffic passing a few yards from us is startling. We know that the chances of us actually being hurt on a bike or on foot are very low. But it doesn't feel safe compared to driving. So we want to make it feel safe.

We want to do our bit for climate change

We also cannot ignore climate change. Everyone is doing their bit to reduce their carbon emissions, which is amazing. But according to government data, transport makes up half of Central Bedfordshire's annual carbon emissions². And whilst our total carbon emissions have gone down by 20% since 2005, our transport emissions have gone UP by 6% in the same time period.

We know our community wants to help the most vulnerable

We also believe that most of the people who live in our area want to do the best for the most vulnerable that live here. 11% of households in our area do not own a car.³ People who do not own a car are often the most vulnerable people in society, such as those on low incomes, those with disabilities, the elderly and the young. When our towns and villages become car dominated, chances are they are the ones who lose out the most.

We want our towns and villages to have life to them

Parents don't let their children play in the street due to concerns over traffic. No wonder that 90% of parents want streets outside of schools shut during school pick up and drop off⁴. Research shows that people like streets which are nice to walk around, don't have lots of traffic passing by, and have places to sit and just watch the world go by⁵.

We want our local businesses to succeed

Believe it or not, there is little evidence that shows that more, free parking = more trade for shops, even if it feels it should be true. But people actually value nicer places to visit and shop much more. Prioritising people who walk increases footfall on shopping streets, and can boost the intake of shops by up to 40%⁶. We want our local shops to thrive.

We cannot build our way out of this

It's a natural reaction. When there is a new development, we ask "what do we do with the extra traffic?" Just giving more space to traffic, building more roads, and squeezing out that extra capacity at junctions results in more traffic. Evidence over 50 years shows this to be true. But the reverse is also true. Reducing capacity, and discouraging non-essential car trips, actually reduces

² Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (2020) UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2018>

³ NOMIS (2020) QS416EW - Car or van availability. <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/qs416ew>

⁴

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/news/2019/september/nine-out-of-10-parents-want-traffic-free-roads-outside-schools>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pubs/pdf/streets_people.pdf

⁶ <https://www.justeconomics.co.uk/uploads/reports/Just-Economics-Pedestrian-Pound-Living-Streets.pdf>

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traffic. We have to change the question that we ask from “what do we do with the extra traffic?” to “how do we make sure that extra traffic never materialises?”

We want to make it easier to get between our towns and villages

We do not exist in a vacuum. We need to travel to nearby towns and villages to take the kids to school, for work, and even pop to the shop in the next village because we just prefer to shop there. But there is no opportunity for us to walk and cycle safely between the towns and villages. Which is a shame, as we have some truly beautiful countryside!

We want the experience of COVID-19 to mean something

During the COVID-19 lockdown, traffic levels nationally reduced to a level last seen in 1957. It had a profound impact on us all, and much of this was not good for the most vulnerable. But for a few weeks, we saw another world. One that was quieter, had more people doing things locally, was less polluting, and had a strong community spirit. Now, traffic levels are returning to normal again. We believe that this other world is possible, without a pandemic, if we try.

5. Our Big Vision

In 5 years, our towns and villages will be quieter and less polluted. But they will also be full of life. More people from all walks of life will be socialising, dining out, and even playing in our streets. We will be walking and cycling for local trips, and only driving when we really need to. And all of us will be happier for it.

This sounds like fantasy, doesn't it? But change is possible. Just as lots of people working from home was impossible a few months ago, more people walking and on bicycles and fewer in cars seems impossible now. But if places like Waltham Forest and Cambridge can start to make the change, so can we.

6. So What Can I Do?

If you're reading this, and finding ideas you want to see happen, there are things you can do.

Support this Charter:

- Share it with friends, on social media or by actual talking.
- Contact your Town or Parish Council and your CBC Ward Councillors and ask whether they have read it and considered taking any ideas forward.
- Pass it on to organisations you think might help, including national charities and lobby organisations
- Let us know what you think, on Facebook, or by email to info@amphillclimatechange.co.uk

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Support a particular improvement:

- Contact local councillors and CBC Ward Councillors and ask how the improvement can be achieved. Councillor surgeries are a good way to do this.
- Speak at a Town or Parish meeting, or committee meeting (Planning & Highways or Community Engagement) - anyone can have 3 minutes to speak on any topic. For best impact, ask well in advance and ask for the item to be included as an agenda item, so it can be discussed at the meeting. Have a specific action for the council to commit to.
- Get together with friends, neighbours, others concerned about the issue. Ampthill Climate Change Group and Flitwick for the Future can help link you up and can support your specific ideas.
- Gather evidence. Photographs are really helpful. Examples of problems faced at the location or benefits that come from similar developments elsewhere. A evidenced report helps make a case. Ask for your report to be considered at a Town or Parish Council meeting and submit it to CBC Ward Councillors.
- Use CBC's reporting systems to report problems.
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/55/transport_roads_and_parking/588/report_or_track_roads_and_highways_problems_-_potholes_street_lights
Some things do get sorted quickly.

Share your experience:

- If you are trying to walk more, or cycle more, talk about it, share on social media. Tell people about the benefits and be genuine about difficulties.
- Let ACCG and Flitwick for the Future know about positive developments that help you walk and cycle locally, and improvements that you would like in place to make your walking or cycling easier.

People you may want to contact:

Our Central Bedfordshire Council Elected Representatives:

CBC link: [Your councillors and register of interests](#)

Ampthill Ward Councillors (Ampthill, Maulden and Clophill)

Mike Blair mike.blair@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Paul Duckett paul.duckett@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Mark Smith mark.smith@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Flitwick Ward Councillors

Neil Bunyan neil.bunyan@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Charles Gomm charles.gomm@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Gareth Mackey gareth.mackey@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Westoning, Flitton and Greenfield

James Jamieson james.jamieson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

(Cllr Jamieson is the Leader of CBC, and Chair of the Local Government Association)

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Houghton Conquest

Rebecca Hares rebecca.hares@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Your Town or Parish Council

Websites:

<https://www.ampthilltowncouncil.org.uk/>

<https://www.flitwick.gov.uk/>

<https://www.westoningparishcouncil.org/>

<https://maulden-pc.gov.uk/>

<https://houghtonconquest-pc.gov.uk/>

<https://flittonandgreenfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

<http://www.millbrook-pc.gov.uk/>

Email: (some councils have email forms on their websites)

council@ampthilltowncouncil.org.uk

info@flitwick.gov.uk

parish_clerk_westoning@outlook.com

enquiries@millbrook-pc.gov.uk

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7. Linking Our Communities

Safe Crossings for the A507 –Linking Ampthill and Maulden to Flitwick.

The A507 is the dividing road between Ampthill/Maulden and Flitwick. It is also an effective barrier stopping the flow of non-motorised traffic. However, there is a solution which has already been implemented elsewhere locally to enable safe crossing of the A507.

Image 3.1 below is the toucan crossing at the Millbrook roundabout across the A507 near Centre Parks.

Toucan crossings are also required at the 101 Roundabout and at the Maulden/Flitwick Road/A507 roundabout.

A Toucan Crossing, for pedestrians and cyclists has already been proposed at the 101 roundabout, for completion in 2020, but there is no sign of it yet. Urgent action is needed here to protect schoolchildren and local residents wanting to access the Little Waitrose. The new Aldi development will add to foot traffic at this crossing. The crossing allows safe connection of cycleway/footways through the Froghall Road housing developments and on to Flitwick Rail station.

Safe crossing at the Maulden/Flitwick Roads roundabout connects to routes to workplaces, Flitwick Rail station and town centre and the network of footpaths and bridleways eastwards from Flitwick, including the new cycle track to Flitton.

Image 3.1:
Toucan Crossing at the Millbrook Roundabout on the A507



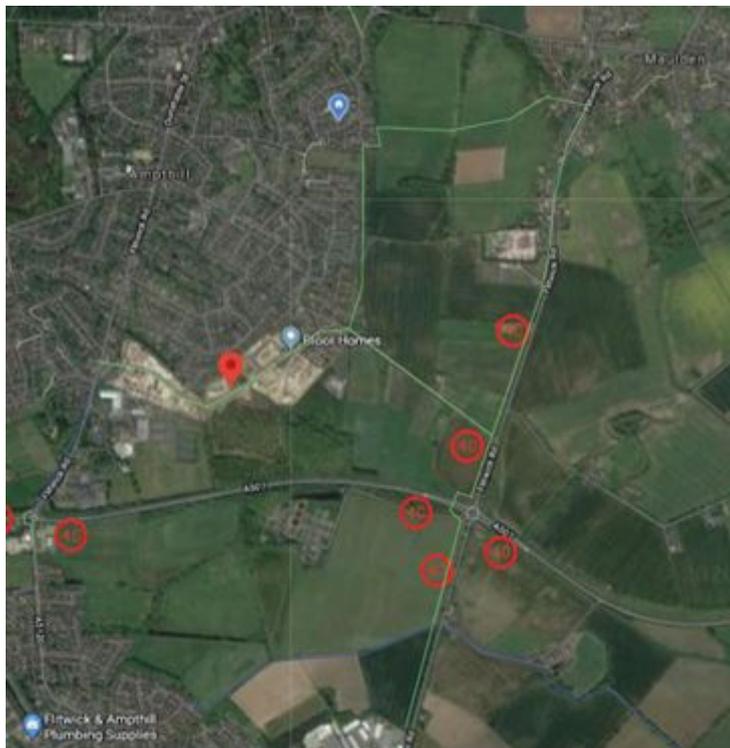
(Asks A, B, F and G)

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Cycle Connections between Maulden, Flitwick and Ampthill.

There are some great potential options for safe cycle routes for our towns which would require a blend of traffic management solutions on existing roads and creating new separate paths. A proposal is detailed briefly below:

Image 3.2 – Map of the proposed route.



The proposal:

A new path is created on the Flitwick Town Council land alongside Maulden Road heading north to Maulden to the A507

- Install a new pelican crossing at the A507
- Proceed up Flitwick Road Maulden which is adapted with a reduced speed limit (40mph) and management features as Froghall Road, and Fordfield Road in Flitwick, including safety signage.
- Maulden to be linked to Ampthill by a new cycle path along the existing footpath across Summerfield's land – this subject is to be discussed with Maulden Parish Council as they already are working on a proposal via Neighbourhood Planning.
- This path could then link to the new Poppy Drive in Ampthill (see image 3.3 below)
- Poppy Drive would then connect onto Flitwick Road Ampthill and Redborne School.

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Image 3.3 Poppy Drive, Ampthill

(Asks A, F, G and H)

Poppy Drive Link through Ampthill

This is the new road in Ampthill which connects Abbey Lane through to Flitwick Road right through the new housing estate (Ampthill Gardens etc). There is some conjecture as to whether this will be a throughway for cars due to the fears of the road being used as a rat run. The town has a golden chance to create a connection that will enable children, teachers and parents a safe avenue from the south and east of the town to travel to Redborne School by foot or on a bike.

The following is required:

- It MUST be an urban clearway; parked cars lead to danger for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Well lit
- Clearly Marked
- Traffic Management as appropriate

Original planning permission specified a change of priority at the Abbey Lane/Poppy Drive junction to slow traffic entering Ampthill up Oliver Street. This has not yet been completed, despite work being scheduled for April 2020.

Additionally, the junction at the top of Poppy Drive, with Flitwick Road in Ampthill, is sub-standard, fails to slow traffic as planned and needs replacement. A mini roundabout here would help break traffic flow along Flitwick Road, providing more safe crossing opportunities for pedestrians.

(Asks A, F and H)

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Houghton Conquest Cycleway Improvements

By Lisa Guinness

[Route Map](#)

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1I5PKlnVyJE3rDjJ9OshjvJr2YFvt6uGb&usp=sharing>

Cycle links between Houghton Conquest and surrounding areas are desperately needed. There are no dedicated cycleways or safe crossings anywhere around Houghton Conquest but there are very busy roads with 60mph speed limits, making it very unpleasant and unsafe to cycle on. Families and new cyclists are particularly affected by the lack of connections. As one resident put it, Houghton Conquest is like an island to cyclists.

Route 1: Houghton Conquest – Stewartby

This route would connect the villages of Houghton Conquest and Stewartby across the B530 (Amphill Road) and would require a cycle crossing in the form of a bridge or underpass so as not to disrupt the flow of traffic. This could be positioned anywhere between How End and the Stewartby turn-off. A dedicated cycle path is required to run northwards to Stewartby from the crossing, adjacent to the existing road, separated from it by a physical barrier, keeping cyclists safe from motor traffic.

The benefits of connecting Houghton Conquest to Stewartby are the attractions of the Millennium Country Park, Cycle Route 51, and the Marston Vale Railway, for commutes to Milton Keynes, Bedford and eventually, Cambridge.

Route 2: Houghton Conquest – Wilstead

A short section of dedicated cycle path, physically separated from motor traffic, connecting Houghton Conquest at Chapel End Road to the Wilstead turn-off on the A6 with a similar crossing to above. Once in Wilstead there is relatively safe cycling all the way to Bedford via Wixams and Elstow. Alternatively, could we consider upgrading one of the cross-country footpaths to a cycleway, which would provide a safer and more direct route to Wilstead, Wixams or both?

Route 3: Houghton Conquest – Amphill

Connected to the Stewartby route and crossing above, in the opposite direction, a similar, physically separated cycle path is required to Amphill along the B530. There are significant traffic issues in Amphill and this route could help reduce this load from visitors from Stewartby and Houghton Conquest. It would also connect those villages to the Chequers pub as well as provide some access to Millbrook village, although another crossing would be required for this.

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A cycle route here would also benefit walkers, residents, and workers at Lockheed Martin on the approach to Ampthill as the section up the hill into town is precarious, which is why we are suggesting the additional safety measures below.

Route 3: Speed Limit Reduction

Houghton House, managed by English Heritage, is a popular local attraction. The junction for its access road, also used by residents, is highly dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars as it's on a blind bend at the top of the hill. There is often (before lockdown) a queue from the centre of town that can back up to the top of the hill where speeding traffic can suddenly appear. A reduction in the speed limit to 30mph is necessary before this junction as traffic heads towards the town, indicated with a red pin on the [route map](#), bringing it forward from the other side of the hill near the town centre.

Route 3: Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing

A pedestrian/cycle crossing near the Houghton House access road is needed to connect residents and visitors to the town. There is no footpath on the Houghton House side into town, so everyone is forced to cross the busy road with no way to see cars approaching. On the other side of the road is an entrance to the Ampthill Great Park.

With the creation of a new woodland, accessible from the Houghton House track, and with the potential of more cyclists from Houghton Conquest visiting Ampthill at this point, a pedestrian/cycle crossing would be essential and help complete a walking trail to the Ampthill Great Park from Houghton Conquest.

Whether it is also a cycle crossing will depend on how any cycle path is implemented.

Route 4: Houghton Conquest – Kempston Interchange and Bedford

We've had feedback from residents who are desperate for safe cycling access to the retail park and Bedford.

Continuing from the proposed cycleway to Stewartby, a physically separated cycleway adjacent to the B530 the rest of the way to the retail park, past Greenlakes Rise, under the mainline railway and over the A6. This would provide access for workers and shoppers.

We realise that a lot of this section of cycleway would fall into the jurisdiction of Bedford Borough, however, a good cycle network, like a road network, needs to be joined up across county boundaries.

Cross-Country Trail to New Woodland

Proposed to Central Bedfordshire Council via the Rights of Way Officer, Christopher Dorow, copied to Steve Lakin. An email was sent from lisa@guinness.me to Planning on 6th May and then to Customer Services on 5th June, to which I had a response from the RoW Officer on 8th June requesting more information. Bec Hares, the Houghton Conquest Parish Councillor, and Tracey

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Fry, representing the equestrian community, have also submitted a request for this trail. Ann Kennedy of the British Horse Society has written to Christopher Dorow and the Forest of Marston Vale offering support.

The Forest of Marston Vale is planning to plant a new woodland adjacent to the ancient protected Kingswood starting winter 2021, containing cycle trails and bridleways. However, despite it being in the parish of Houghton Conquest, there is no direct cycle or equestrian access to it from the village.

This proposal is for the existing footpaths around the outskirts of the protected meadows (FP7 in Figure 1) to be upgraded to accommodate bicycles and horses, providing much needed access to the new woodland and onwards to Ampthill.

There are many benefits to having cycling access from our village directly:

- Horse riders from the village will be able to make use of the new woodland
- Residents will not have to drive to Ampthill to access the woods by bike
- Cyclists and horse-riders will have a safe off-road trail to Ampthill
- If combined with a cycleway to Ampthill from How End it would form a circular route, bringing additional cycling traffic to Houghton Conquest, boosting local businesses (2 pubs and a general shop & Post Office)
- Encourage determined cyclists away from the protected meadows and ancient woodland.
- Reduce conflict with walkers in the protected areas.

I placed an article about this proposal in the August edition of the Houghton Conquest parish newsletter and have had support from some residents in response. The trail could include fencing and pedestrian gates to prevent cyclists straying off the route, addressing some residents' concerns.

The new woodland presents an amazing opportunity if it were accessible to everyone in the village, whether walking, cycling, or riding a horse, particularly as there are very few other options for cyclists and horses there.

Our Active Travel Charter

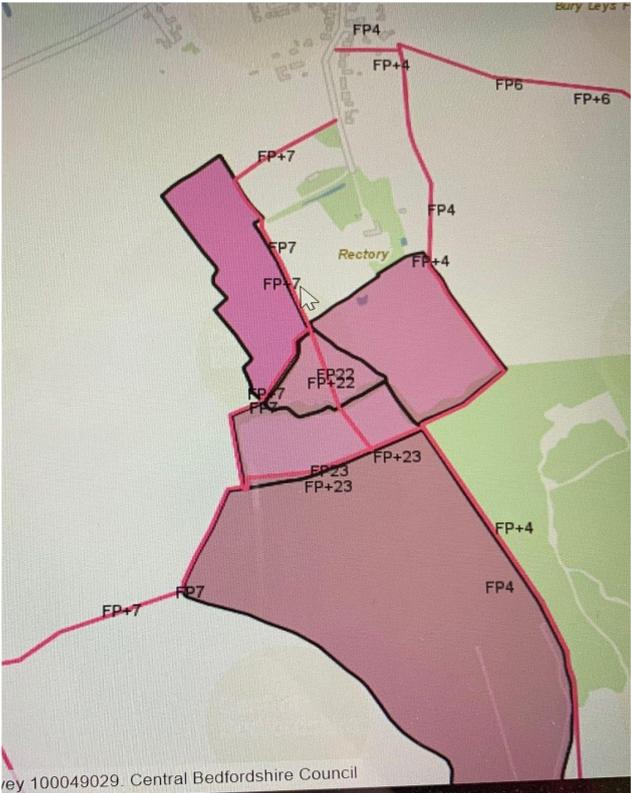


Figure 1: Footpath map

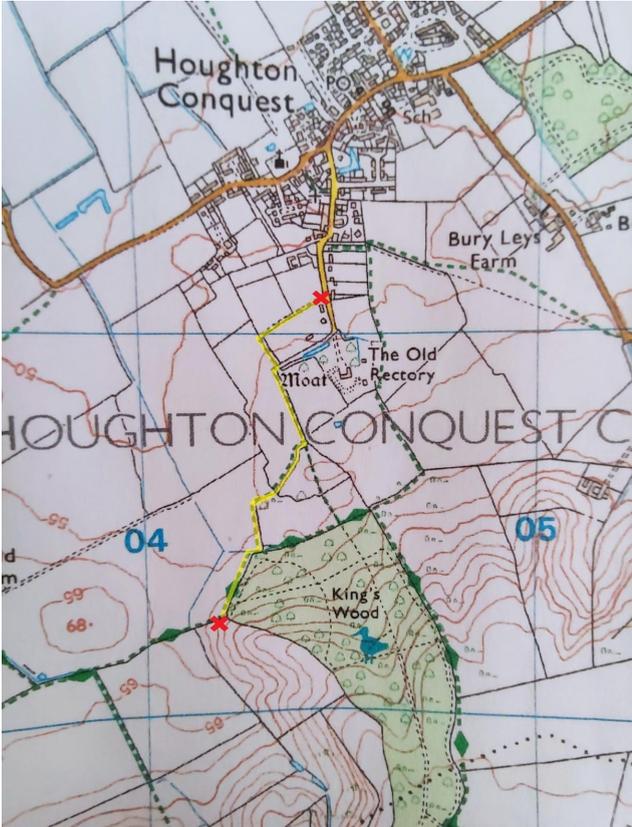


Figure 2: OS Map with highlighted trail

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Figure 3: What the trail could look like

(Asks B, F and H)

A5120 - Linking Westoning and Flitwick

The short journey, (around 1.5 miles), from Westoning to Flitwick is one that many undertake regularly as part of their daily lives - for commuting, shopping and schools for example. This should be a pleasant 30 minute walk or 5-10 minute cycle within the capabilities of most people but, sadly, most choose to drive as the route is not walking or cycling-friendly.

There are a number of issues with the current route from Westoning to Flitwick with regard to active transport:

- It is along the very busy A5120 which is frequently used by lorries.
- The pavement is very narrow in many places and there is no separation between traffic and pedestrians.
- Pedestrians have to cross this busy road between 2 bends with limited visibility both ways. In addition, they also have to contend with traffic exiting the Cricket Club and Flitvale Garden Centre next to them. Pedestrians that cannot cross the road very quickly feel that they cannot cross safely - for example, parents with pushchairs and some more elderly pedestrians. This also means that parents do not feel that they can allow older children that could walk to school themselves to do so, as the crossing place is just too unsafe.
- The road has quite a few bends which, in conjunction with the weight of traffic, means that safe overtaking opportunities are limited - increasing the likelihood of motorists illegally 'close passing' cyclists or attempting to pass when the view of oncoming traffic is insufficient.

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These pictures show how narrow the pavement is and how close pedestrians are to the traffic. These drivers were considerate and moved over a little but this isn't always possible if traffic is coming the other way.



These photos show the limited visibility afforded to pedestrians when attempting to cross the A5120 to visit the Cricket Club, Flitvale Garden Centre or walk towards Westoning.

Our Active Travel Charter



Pedestrians also have to contend with traffic exiting Flitvale Garden Centre and the Cricket Club when attempting to cross the A5120.

Potential Solution:

A shared-use footpath and cycleway, with separation from the traffic, between Westoning and Flitwick would encourage far more people to undertake this journey using active transport. It would allow children to safely cycle, scoot or walk to school with the numerous health benefits and increased concentration at school that has been proved to come from travelling to school in this manner. It would also encourage some that commute from Flitwick Station to leave their car at home, or perhaps even allow the household to get rid of a car that is only/predominately used for this purpose. This could produce not only health benefits but financial gains too.

For much of this route, there is probably sufficient space alongside the existing footpath to considerably widen it and to put barriers between the traffic and the footpath. However, there are a number of obstacles where this would not be possible such as where private residences extend to the A5120. If, due to route constraints, crossing the road was still required then a safe crossing should be provided, allowing all pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely regardless of their physical ability.

(Asks A, B, F and G)

Our Active Travel Charter

8. Improving Our Communities

Managing Parking

Image 3.4 below is Church Avenue in Ampthill



Many of our streets are blocked up with cars – whether they belong to residents, commuters or visitors. Parked cars can be a danger for other road users and for pedestrians especially wheelchair users and pushchairs. Crossing between parked cars on Oliver Street and Dunstable Street in Ampthill is hazardous. The school crossing patrol site in Ampthill has visibility issues due to parked vehicles. Vehicles parked on footways create significant difficulties, often forcing pedestrians to walk on the road.

There are solutions, with parking managed successfully in many areas of Fliwick for example, by timed parking restrictions. Better infrastructure can help.

Image 3.4 – an example of a street with car management: squeeze the car not the cyclist or pedestrian



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There are many impacts when considering the problem of parking. People coming in cars contribute to the economy of the town whether it be through employment, shopping, socialising or partaking in sport. Many older housing areas do not have driveways so street parking is needed. The suggestions can be endless however the key point is: Let's think about people first, and fit parking around safe movement and active travel choices.

(Asks A, B,D, E)

Pedestrian Friendly Ampthill

Setting and Issues

However people get to Ampthill town centre, they all become pedestrians when accessing the shops and services there. High footfall and the ability to move between retail, hospitality and service outlets on the streets are needed by town centre businesses. In Ampthill town centre, there is currently two-way traffic on all roads with a cross-roads in the centre of town. The difficulties this causes for pedestrians in the centre of town are:

- Narrow pavements. People cannot pass each other at all on the pavement on some short sections. This occurs on all 4 roads leading into the centre.
- Narrow roads, particularly on Dunstable Street, where two standard cars can barely pass each other, making it impossible for pedestrians to pass each other safely. Traffic mounting the pavement or passing too close to the kerb is a threat to pedestrians, especially the less mobile, and those with small children. See figure 1 below: Dunstable Street, Ampthill



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- Hazardous road crossings, especially at the bottom of Woburn Street. Pedestrians use the natural crossing points at Sweet Sensations and across from The Amphill Kitchen/Deli, despite poor visibility for oncoming traffic from the roundabouts.
- The unsafe zebra crossing on Bedford Street is frequently obstructed by traffic, meaning that pedestrians cannot see/be seen by vehicles in the opposite lane. This crossing is poorly lit making it additionally hazardous in winter months.
- The town centre is an Air Quality Management Area with pollution above recommended rates at peak times. The level of traffic and associated pollution does not make it conducive to the encouragement of walking and cycling and spending time in the town centre.

Changes and complications due to Covid-19

- It is currently advised that people should stay 2m away from others to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This may change to 1m in the future however, the government and medical advisors have made it clear that 1m increases the risk of transmission of the virus and that 2m is still the preferred distance.
- There is a need for shops and businesses to set up procedures for social distancing which generate queues on the pavements and pedestrians have no choice but to walk on the road. Areas of particular concern are outside the chemist and post office on Church Street, between the butchers and café/deli on Bedford St, and outside Sweet Sensations on Dunstable Street where the footpaths are one person wide.

Our Proposals

- Place warning signs "Caution! Pedestrians in Road" on all roads into the central junction; the top of hill on Woburn Street, adjacent to the Prince of Wales pub on Bedford Street, at the Chandos Road junction on Dunstable Street and at McColls on Church Street. This will give greater confidence to pedestrians and indicate to drivers that they are entering an area where pedestrians need extra consideration.
- Paint hatching on Dunstable Street to indicate traffic single file only. Vehicles give way as now, but this protects and effectively widens the pavements. Formalising the need to give way makes the situation clearer for drivers new to the town and will reduce the instances of kerb mounting as drivers misjudge the space available. This also produces breaks in the traffic flow on Dunstable Street, making crossing easier for pedestrians.
- Up-coming Highway Code changes should make it safer for pedestrians to cross side roads, such as Woburn Street, as vehicles will be placed under obligation to give way for them. This should be reinforced on Woburn Street by a mini-zebra (Boardman Crossing) and or "Pedestrian Priority" signing.
- Replace the Bedford Street zebra crossing with a pelican crossing. A traffic light controlled crossing is vital here for safety reasons. Additionally, breaking the traffic flow here will ease multi way congestion at the mini roundabouts and provide opportunities for safer road crossing elsewhere.

Our Active Travel Charter

- Saturday Street Closure: Close Church Street to traffic, except buses and emergency vehicles from Waitrose Car Park entrance to roundabout 9.30am to 4.30pm on Saturdays. This allows expansion of table space in the Market square, provides safer queueing for the Chemist and Post office and, aids Priestley Farm Shop stall. Additional retail stalls could utilise Market Square space, making Ampthill an even more attractive weekend destination. The traffic diversion would be via Church Avenue, Lea Road, Queens Road, Oliver Street. Access through Waitrose car park remains unchanged.
- See figure 2 below: Church Street, Ampthill. Proposed area for Saturday Closure



The Benefits

Taken together, these measures will make it safer and more pleasant to walk around the centre of Ampthill, and enable those with mobility issues or youngsters in tow to move more easily between shops, cafes and services. Covid-19 social distancing will be supported as will the expansion of retail and hospitality onto the pavement space to increase custom.

Making the town centre more inconvenient to drive through will reduce through traffic and having a more pedestrian friendly centre will encourage local residents to come to the town centre by foot or bicycle, and visitors to use parking opportunities further from the centre.

If there is planning for people on our streets, there will be more people on our streets.

(Asks A, B,C and H)