

Cycle Alton's response to the East Hampshire Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

November 2024

We welcome this draft East Hants LCWIP and the opportunity to comment on the proposed cycling routes, both across East Hampshire and specifically for Alton.

Introduction

Cycle Alton was formed in 2020 to campaign for safe cycling infrastructure. Our members include utility cyclists and representatives of Alton's five cycling groups. We regularly consult the wider community through engagement at markets and events.

Connections within Alton

Primary Routes

Of the five primary routes suggested in the East Hants LCWIP, we recommend the two Alton routes should be prioritised. Alton's Tier One Status in the emerging Local Plan means we have an urgent need for Active Travel routes in Alton to meet the needs of the current and new residents of the 1,700+ dwellings earmarked for development here. It is important to note that Alton is the largest town in East Hampshire. Developing the two primary routes which connect to most major sites in Alton would greatly increase the potential for cycling here:

Route 200 Alton – Holybourne to Alton Sports Centre.

Route 210 Alton – Medstead Road/ A339 to High Street.

We support the two primary routes in Alton as proposed, with two exceptions:

- a) Holybourne is a busy village with numerous parked cars and frequent traffic stopping at the local shop/post office. We therefore propose the alternative local route from Holybourne to Anstey Lane as a viable option to the Primary Route 200 in Holybourne. This would ensure safe passage for cyclists. (See our 'Five areas of concern and suggested improvements to the LCWIP routes in Alton').
- b) We agree that Primary Route 200 running straight through the town centre should have contra-flow cycle paths added. We request that these should replace the current on-street parking to provide safe transit along the length of the High Street, Market Street and Turk Street in both directions.

We suggest the following routes as an essential addition to the primary routes list:

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| A31 | Redesign the road layout from Four Marks to Farnham with cycle paths in both directions to enable commuting to work, shops, appointments etc along a fairly flat and direct route. The cycle paths must be separated from the road by an off-road route or a crash barrier. |
| A32 | The disused railway from just outside Alton goes south through Farringdon. Bringing it into use as a safe cycle/walking path between Alton and Farringdon would enable commuting from neighbouring villages, safe cycling for older school and college children and provide active travel access to businesses in Farringdon. |

Secondary Routes

We support the proposed secondary and local routes in Alton, as we can see that they link residents from our major housing developments to the main facilities and connect with the proposed primary route. However, there is one important omission:

The National Cycle Network 224 is already a complete and signed route through Alton but is not shown as such on the LCWIP map. This route shows variously as a primary, secondary or local cycling route and omits Vicarage Hill, Church St, Chauntsingers Rd, St Lawrence Rd & Victoria Rd. The omission of Victoria Rd is particularly notable as this is a sign-posted NCN 224 route well-used by local cyclists avoiding the main road.

Connections more widely in the East Hants area

There are no primary routes connecting the major towns or running north to south. This is a major omission as people need to commute between them for work, attending colleges and shopping. We therefore recommend safe routes connect the following: Alton to Petersfield; Alton to Bordon; Alton to Farnham; Alton to Farringdon.

The NCN route 23 connecting Basingstoke, Winchester and Alton is missing from the LCWIP. This is another important omission.

Barriers to cycling in Alton

Alton is a major thoroughfare for traffic traveling north to south across the county from Basingstoke to the ferry ports. It has busy roads, dangerous intersections and roundabouts, poor air quality, and speeding car and lorry traffic driving too close and without care. There are no safe crossing points for cyclists at junctions.

Despite being the largest town in East Hampshire, and due to expand significantly over the next 5-10 years, there is no comprehensive dedicated network of cycle paths. The one short section of shared use cycle path near Eggars secondary school becomes too congested with pedestrians at school arriving and leaving times to be used for cycling during those hours. There are four very short and completely isolated sections of shared use walking and cycling path, some of which are blocked by residents' parked cars. Our only cycle route (NCN 224) is indirect, has poor crossings, and stops at the railway station.

Improvements to safety and cycling take-up

We are aware that when planning infrastructure, the LCWIP must take account of the 2020 government guidance (LTN 1/20) and that safety is one of its five principles.

Numerous surveys have highlighted that safety is of paramount importance when people are considering whether to cycle or not and we have seen repeatedly in our town that cycle routes must be on paths separated from motor traffic to be safe.

We are concerned that there are proposals in the LCWIP indicating that if a road isn't wide enough for separate infrastructure, cyclists must mix with traffic through unenforced 20mph zones. Cycle Alton's strong response is that these proposals are unsafe for the volume of traffic and dangerous intersections. Instead, separate cycle paths must be provided and connected in a safe cycling network.

Finally, our rural lanes in East Hampshire offer no protection for cyclists or pedestrians in most cases, and we support a nationwide lowering of speed limits as a first step.



Cycle Alton's five areas for concern and suggested improvements

- **Holybourne Primary Route 200.**
On-road parking makes this route difficult & unsafe for cyclists to navigate.
We propose the safer off-road secondary route (from Anstey Park, behind Treloar College to Holybourne via Howards Lane and Church Lane) should be prioritised as Primary Route 200. At the western end it would need a toucan crossing to Geales Crescent.
- **Draymans Way – Turk Street roundabout on Secondary Route.**
We are aware of two cycle/car collisions very recently. This dangerous roundabout is the only route to cycle from the High Street to the well-used community facilities at Alton Maltings Centre.
We propose
 - a) **A tiger or toucan crossing across the junction and**
 - b) **The on-street parking in Turk Street be replaced with a contra-flow cycle lane on the southern side into the centre of the High Street.**
- **High Street/Market Street. Primary Routes 200 and 210**
The LCWIP acknowledges narrow roads, on-street parking and one-way systems as barriers to cycling and suggests re-modelling the High Street to allow contraflow systems.
We support the need for contra-flow cycle lanes on Crown Hill, Turk Street, Market Street and the rest of the High Street. Buses, taxis and disabled parking could still be accommodated.
- **Corner of Northfield Lane and Chawton Park Road. Primary Route 200**
This is a busy, narrow and dangerous blind bend with no footpath and buses every 15 minutes. National Cycle Network route 224 crosses this corner and it is on a popular route for commuters, students and walkers between Four Marks and Alton. The NCN cycle path through the farmland urgently needs improvement.
We propose a toucan crossing by the Cricket Club car park entrance, and a shared-use path on the western side down to the corner. This will safely link the NCN 224 between Four Marks and Alton Town Centre. We suggest the farmland cycle path be upgraded.
- **Junction of Chawton Park Road and Whitedown Lane. Primary Route 200**
There is currently no safe way to cycle from The Butts to the shared-use path under the Butts Bridge or to the Sports Centre. We welcome the LCWIP suggestions for improving this junction.
The shared-use path from outside The French Horn should be extended north to the entrance to Chawton Park Road with a light controlled crossing to access NCN 224 into the town centre.

Please submit your comments by 17th November. Thank you very much.