



CHESTER CYCLING CAMPAIGN

Working to Create a Cycle Friendly City.....

Route: Backford to Sainsbury's Roundabout, Boughton. A41.

This road is a main trunk road with heavy traffic to/from Chester and by-passing the city on the East side. It links a number of other routes and nearby key locations including: The Millennium Greenway (Mickle Trafford to Hawarden Bridge) and the Shropshire Union Canal Towpath (Chester to Ellesmere Port and Chester to Waverton) and also Chester Zoo and Cheshire Oaks Outlet Village.

To a large extent, it is capable of providing a 'missing link' in the cycle infrastructure of the area. Although cycle lanes (on and off road) are provided at various places, overall the route falls well short of being cycle friendly. Chester Cycle Campaign believes that with modest expenditure over a period of time, significant improvements could be made towards making it an integrated route that cyclists would use.

The route shown on the map below is from the A41/A5117 Backford Cross junction to the A41 'Hamburger' Roundabout near Caldley Valley (top left corner to bottom right).

This study attempts to identify the existing infrastructure and also to identify some of the current major difficulties with the route from Backford Cross as far as the A56 Hoole Roundabout. It suggests remedies, some of which could be effected quickly and cheaply, some which could be factored in to routine maintenance schedules and some which may require long term planning and significant funding.

The colours used represent different types of cycleway:-

Blue = an 'on-road' cycle lane,

Green = traffic free route,

Red = track physically separate from the carriageway (possibly a Shared Use Path {SUP} on the pavement)

and Purple = an 'aspirational' route i.e. a 'missing link'.

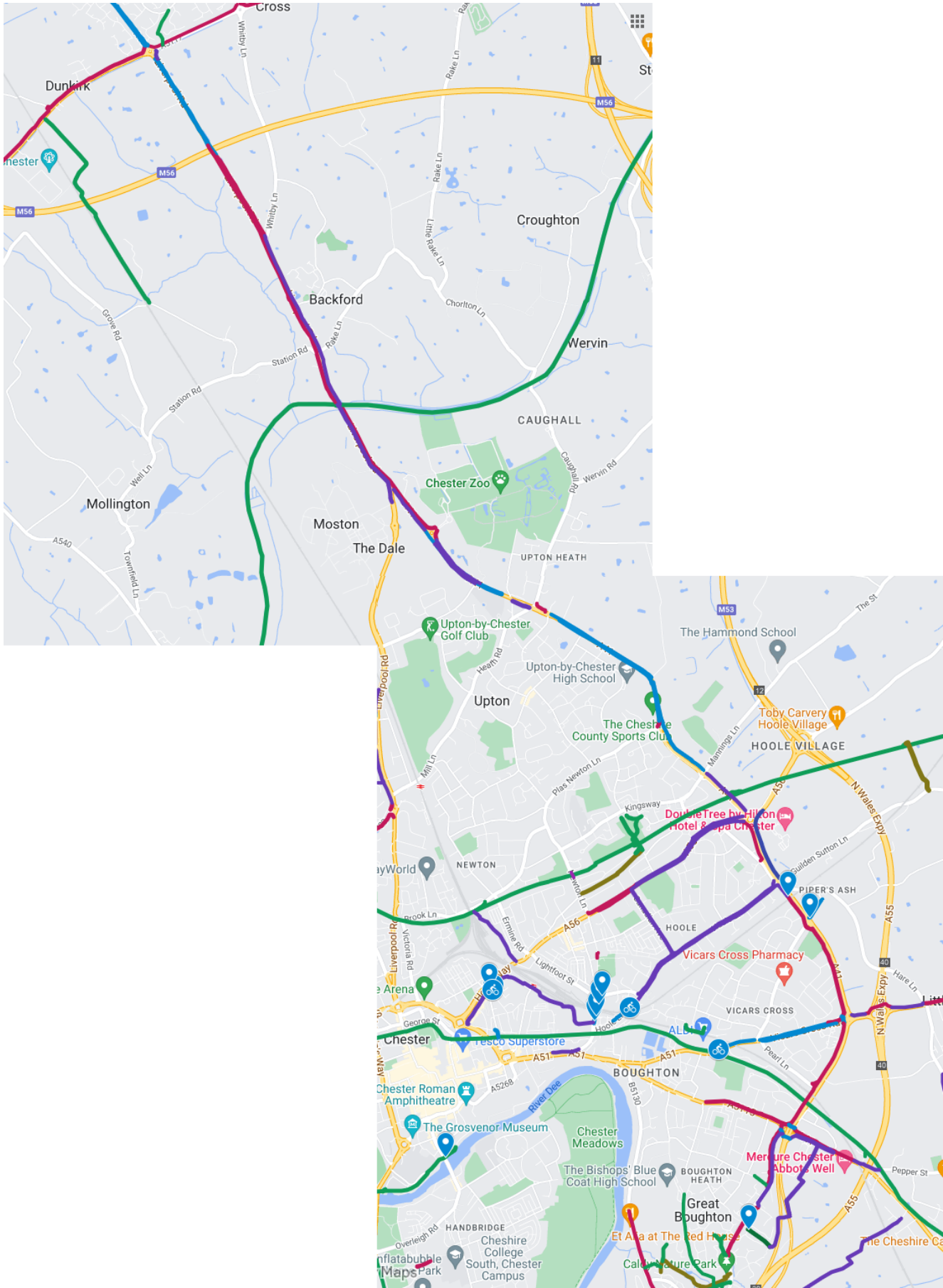
For more detail, please consult the zoom-able map on-line at:-

<https://tinyurl.com/Chester-Cycle-Map>

The map can also be accessed, together with details of the conventions used and an explanation as to how to access additional features, via:-

<https://www.chestercyclecity.org/campaigns-trailblazing-mapping-project/>

A 41 Potential Route Improvements



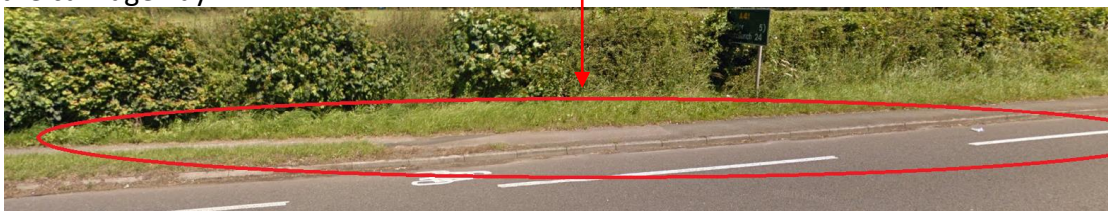
Travelling South.

A5117/A41 Backford roundabout.

The footpath provides an off-carriageway route on SE segment of the roundabout, but feeds back on to the A41 some 20m before the cycle lane white lines start. The footpath is not in great condition, but there is no ramp or dropped kerb to facilitate access to the on-road lane at this point – the first such access is significantly further down the road.



An angled dropped kerb at the point shown below (just beyond the end of the purple line in the picture above) is needed to facilitate access to this lane. Ideally, of course, a fully fledged Shared Use Path (SUP) would be installed on the verge and off the carriageway.



770m to south of M56 bridge.

Currently a cycle lane on single carriageway, delineated by dashed white line.

610m to traffic lights.

No path markings, but there is signage indicating a Shared Use Path (SUP) on the pavement.

Whitby Lane (A5032) traffic lights.



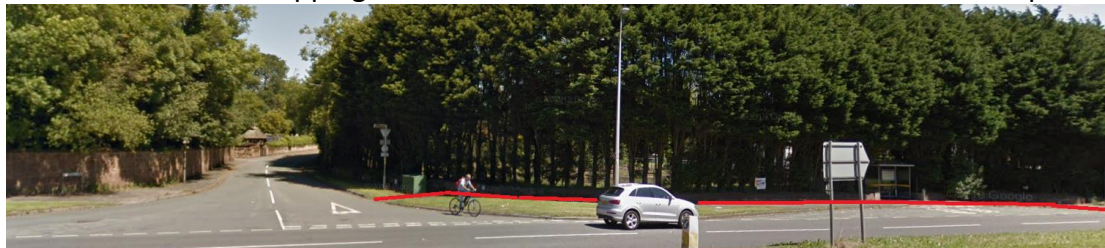
There is an Advanced Stop Line (ASL) on the A41 at these lights which will suffice for confident cyclists. But for the less confident (or mobility scooter users), there are raised kerbs (at points marked X) which prevent access to the other side. The work completed at this junction in 2020 did not address the problems presented by these kerbs.

850m Whitby Lane to Rake Lane.

There is no current cycling provision on this stretch.

The dual carriageway lanes are narrow and traffic speed is high' so definitely cycle unfriendly. Footpath is cycle-able with care but not designated an SUP, not really wide enough and not in great condition.

The exit from Church Lane could be made safer by making the footpath on the corner an SUP and dropping a kerb to lead back onto the road after the bus stop:-



The footpath does have a dropped kerb when it reaches Rake Lane and a short cycle lane on the other side, but this latter is only to facilitate crossing to access Station Road on the other side of the A41:-



The footpath on the western side from Station Lane to Whitby section was re-surfaced in Spring 2021 along with the carriageway and, after intervention by MP Chris Matheson, has now been designated and signed as an SUP. It is now immeasurably safer than using the road. It has the additional benefit of by-passing the traffic lights and joining with the existing pavement SUP beyond. As the picture

shows, it is subject to verge creep and overhanging branches/hedges and these will need scheduled maintenance.



Ideally, the field gate entrances would also be marked to show clear SUP priority and to discourage obstructive parking.

1000m Rake Lane to Dale traffic lights –

a) Rake Lane to canal



It is clear from the signage that the path from Rake Lane down to the canal is not considered to be a cycleway (although it is so designated from the canal to Moston Lights, despite there being no access to it from the A41).

The canal exit to the Northbound A41 has a cycle-able ramp. That to the Southbound A41 has steps, which are impossible for anyone with non-conventional bikes, mobility scooters etc. Whilst the A41 is not a pleasant or safe road to have to cross, dropped kerbs would make it easier.



The northbound path from the canal to Station Lane is signed as an SUP. It is in reasonable condition but narrows towards the top end and has poor road markings across the small industrial estate at the top.

b) from Canal to Dale-Moston traffic lights (S-bound)

There is an SUP but it is difficult to access if one has not used the footpath from Rake Lane as the first dropped kerb only comes about half way up the hill. For those cycling south on the carriageway, there is a need for a dropped kerb to allow them to access the SUP before starting to climb the hill. Without this, it is difficult to see for whom the SUP is intended as the first access is half way up the hill. Whilst the full length is theoretically be accessible from the canal, the access from this E side is only by steps, so most cyclists would use the ramp on the W side and then have to cross the very busy main road.

400m Dale-Moston traffic lights to Zoo roundabout.

Shared use path. No markings /signage. An improvement could be made in the current section of cycle lane opposite Moston Garage by installing double 'give way' markings. The first two photos show the current situation:-



By installing markings such as those shown on right, the use of the cycle path would be made significantly safer.



Zoo roundabout to Flag Lane N

On the SE carriageway, the cycle path used exit to the road from the Zoo side at right angles to the road, leading straight into the oncoming traffic and with the arrow moving the vehicular traffic out of the on-road painted cycle lane some 50 metres further on. This was significantly improved in 2020 but, as the picture below shows, there is still the opportunity for a 'step-change' improvement:-



The current footpath could be widened and modified to become a Shared Use segregated Path for much or all of the way to the traffic lights.

There is a similar opportunity on the other side of the same stretch of road (NW direction):-



This might be a little more difficult to achieve as the lamp posts may need re-positioning, but if done, this would give continuous route from Damage Lane and possibly from Flag Lane.

The Zoo offers a discount to people arriving by bike. The installation of off-road lanes from Upton lights to the Zoo would dramatically increase safe accessibility for families who at present are too scared to use the on-road lanes.

Just before Flag Lane North, the on-road path goes to a short stretch of off-road. This stops at Flag Lane N. The pavement in front of the new houses up to the traffic lights is signed as a shared use path. This leads round to Caughall Road where there is a dropped kerb to enable crossing to the other side to continue on the A41.

Unfortunately, this is on a blind corner where anyone crossing is in grave danger from vehicles coming off the A41 into Caughall Road. The whole structure of this junction needs re-addressing. There is an ASL on the carriageway at the lights and this should be maintained.

The next 350m. The current SUP through Caughall Rd traffic lights junction is rather strange and confusing. For those planning to continue SW on the A41, then the lack of a continued coloured path is misleading in that it appears that the cycle-path has already terminated (unless one spots the blue sign). There appears to be no purpose in the sharp angle in the coloured path which turns at right angles into the road before the pedestrian controlled lights. This turn should be at the traffic lights for those wishing to cross the road.

The cycle sign indicates that the on-road cycle lane doesn't start until 50m or so beyond the junction with Dulas Court, but it is not clear whether the stretch before that is shared use.



The sign a little further along indicating the NCN56 turn into Marina Drive comes too late to make that turn. It should be indicated from the pedestrian controlled lights already passed.

Once the road is crossed at the lights, the coloured path on the SW side of the road then goes to Marina Drive, but the pavement between it and the end of the Long Lane cycle-path is not designated as shared use.

On the Southbound carriageway, the road has double yellow lines incorporated into the cycle-lane (opposite Weston Grove). This narrows the apparent cycle-path to about 50cms which makes it feel much less secure for less experienced cyclists.

As a general principle, wherever an SUP or cycle track crosses a minor road junction, the cycle path should be given priority by the use of double stop lines as in this example:-



We were pleased to note that this was implemented for the Duttons Lane junction (but not for the Dulas Court junction) during the 2020 re-surfacing works.

Fundamentally, the whole A41/ Caughall Rd/ Heath Road junction is dangerous for cyclists and needs a complete design and re-work.

1150m Marina Drive to Plas Newton Lane traffic lights.

Cycle lane on single carriageway, indicated by dashed white line (solid for a short stretch). The on-road path at the beginning of this section also has double yellow lines within the cycle path, making it appear very narrow – a distraction for less experienced cyclists. There is also a need for regular hedge trimming and gutter cleaning on this section.

Plas Newton Lane traffic lights. **Update this section**

The traffic light by-pass when travelling NW to SE is too narrow at 86 cms (widens to 99cms where it drops back onto the carriageway – still too narrow). There should be an absolute minimum of 1.5m – preferably 2m. This could be accommodated by cutting back the hedge and moving the kerb. There is a minimum of 2.5m to the boundary fence (4m in places) so there is room.



As for cyclists turning right into Plas Newton Lane at the lights, the current arrangement is unsatisfactory and unsafe. It appears that the intended route is via the little island just before the crash barrier starred in the photo above. It has a number of deficiencies –



- a. it is not obvious
- b. it requires a move that is unlikely to be anticipated by a following motorist
- c. it is too small and narrow to be used by unconventional cycles or two cycles at once (see picture above)
- d. it is not signposted.

The preferred solution for this right turn from the A41 into Plas Newton Lane would be an Advanced Stop Line (ASL). Ideally, there would also be a ‘feeder’ lane to access it so that a cyclist trapped between cars waiting to turn right could reach it ahead of the lights changing.

This same small island is possibly the intended route for those coming up Plas Newton Lane and wishing to turn right to travel SE on the A41. All the points about deficiencies made above apply equally for this turn and in addition, the cyclist is then confronted with having to cross two lanes of potentially moving traffic to access the very (at this point) narrow cycle lane.

If such a routing was the original intention, it is not signed from Plas Newton Lane and would not be obvious or instinctive. In addition, there is only a 1.2m gap between the traffic light pole and the speed sign (DoT minimum recommended 1.5m).



Again, the most acceptable solution would be an ASL with a feeder lane. The turn is on a slight hill and this crossing can be intimidating as there may be cars on the left hand side waiting for the lights to change to allow them to access Plas Newton Lane.

When the cycle lane here is gained, the lane is still only 1m wide – again there is about 3m to the hedge boundary and plenty of room to widen it.

It should be noted that the current speed limit on Plas Newton Lane is 30mph despite the vicinity of a pedestrian crossing and primary schools in the area. The option of extending the 20mph zones to cover this road should be (re)considered.

In order to joining the cycle path shown in the picture above, the entrance (which is well positioned for those coming from Long Lane) is at right angles to the carriageway. This makes it difficult (particularly for those with trikes, tandems or cargo bikes) joining from Plas Newton Lane. The entrance is only about 2 cars back in queuing traffic waiting for the lights to change and another access point from the junction with the sports club would be useful, enabling bikes to leave the traffic queue earlier and more safely.

420m Plas Newton Lane to Mannings Lane. **Update this section**

The cycle-lane on the single carriageway is well de-lined by double white line and cross hatching on the bend. If the lane past the lights were to be widened as suggested, then the possibility of continuing it off carriageway might be considered which would then provide a physical separation from the carriageway.

There are recently painted road markings in the carriageway to Mannings Lane, including one which says “end S/D”. The meanings of these are not clear.



The on-road cycle lane approach to Mannings Lane traffic lights is strange. It goes from being a solid line ('mandatory' – i.e. cars forbidden) to dotted (cars should avoid but allowed to enter) without any change in width. Ideally, the solid line should be extended to the actual junction to make it clear to motorists that it is a cycle lane. If this is not possible because of property access issues, then cycle lane symbols in the lane would help to inform motorists that they should not use it.

A better alternative here might be to make the pavement an SUP. There is sufficient width except at the very end and round the corner (the Vet's Garden)

For a cyclist turning right from the SE bound carriageway of the A41 to Mannings Lane, an ASL at the lights with feeder lane would be the optimal solution.

Similarly, an ASL at the top of Mannings Lane for those wishing to turn right onto the A41 would be beneficial.

Mannings Lane to Greenway access. **Update this section**

If travelling straight on at these lights (towards Hoole Roundabout), the 'cycle lane' is very short before stopping in the middle of traffic. The clear need here is for an SUP into Greenfield Crescent. There is a wide enough pavement to accommodate this at least as far as the bridge and it could be continued over the bridge, if necessary by slightly re-aligning the carriageway and sacrificing a small part of the very generous central reservation.

There is no safe way to cross the A41 near the Greenway access point. This should be converted into a Shared Path to allow cyclists and those on mobility scooters to get to the traffic lights. (There is a dropped kerb which could be used to make a [pedestrian/push] crossing point before the bridge but it would be difficult to meet safety requirements).



Hoole Roundabout (and beyond to 'Hamburger') **Update this section**

There are significant and multiple issues here:-

Currently whilst there are paths that allow the navigation of the roundabout there are no traffic controls, thus obliging cyclists & pedestrians have to wait for a gap between vehicles. This can be extremely difficult, even if not at rush hour.

Furthermore, drivers are all looking right to check for vehicles on the roundabout, and are not looking out for pedestrians or cyclists who are waiting to cross from the left. The roundabout has a 50mph speed limit, and vehicles exiting the roundabout are often travelling very quickly.

One easy issue to deal with is that the A41 northbound from the roundabout to the Plas Newton Lane lights is unsuitable for cycling. Signage is needed to encourage the use of the parallel Greenfield Lane.

The other issues, such as continuing S on the A41 are more complex, even once the cyclist has accessed Greenfield Crescent. We are aware that there is a major examination due of the 'Hoole Road Corridor' and consider that this would be best tackled as part of that study. There could also be improvements to the route South of Hoole Roundabout.

As part of this further study, means by which the Greenway can be accessed from the Greenfield Lane side of the A41 must be considered, as should cycle access from all directions to the Hoole Hall Hotel side of the A56.

Again, as part of that study, the access to/from Crossley Crescent should be considered. The current access path is steep & at a difficult angle and there is a simple solution, i.e. to re-site the path across the grass verge, so that it is easily accessible to/from the crossing point. Note that a "desire path" already exists.