

TOP TEN ASKS

The Future of Cycling including walking for Canterbury

Introduction

On 25th June 2020 many cycling, environment experts, campaign groups and enthusiasts met to discuss the future of cycling and walking in Canterbury. We pulled together to come up with our Top Ten Asks for Canterbury.

Background

The Covid crisis has cut traffic and opened the roads to more active travel. With less traffic and fewer poisonous fumes, walkers and cyclists have felt safer on the roads and have come out in droves. This is great news for public health and the sustainability of life as we know it. The health imperative of avoiding enclosed spaces filled with crowds of people makes the time right for a rapid expansion of the number of journeys on foot and by bike. At the same time, the Government has promised limited funds to help local authorities make this fundamental shift in how we move around our district.

Current emissions from transport in Canterbury district are around 250,000 tonnes CO2 per year. This is nearly 40% of all greenhouse gas emissions from energy in the district.

The Scattercities.com project that makes projections on what is needed to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement projects that:

- By 2030, people need to be travelling 25% fewer miles per year on average.
- The proportion of private vehicle miles needs to decrease by 51% by 2050.
- By 2035 all cars and buses need to be electric-powered.

Although the current transport strategy for Canterbury district prioritises active travel when it comes to funding, 80% of the money is spent on roads and parking.

In this context, in May 2020 the Government announced an Active Travel Fund of £225m of which £8.024m is allocated to KCC for use throughout the county. This will not go far but can signal the beginning of a major change in transport priorities.

Our Top Ten Asks will assist Canterbury District to achieve the target to cut CO2 emissions to net zero by 2030 whilst creating a sustainable, inclusive and green transport infrastructure.

1. Modal shift – an attitude change which promotes the principle of cycling as an essential form of transport through educational means

A fundamental **attitude change** in the way inhabitants view transport, especially for journeys of 2 km to 10 km, is needed in an **environmentally conscious modern city**. There must be a shift in funding. Eighty percent goes on roads to the neglect of cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure.

To promote a future modal shift a rigorous campaign is needed to **educate** and encourage **changes in attitudes**. **This will highlight** the value of bikes and new technologies (such as e-bikes) within the idea of **travel solutions** – including to enable people with various levels of mobility issues to access active travel options.

To help achieve the modal shift, we recommend the idea of a **‘Community Bike Project’**, for example offering bikes for job seekers (amongst other residents) and working alongside businesses and schools to promote the importance of cycling.

We emphasise the key idea that **cycling is an essential form of transport, not an optional recreational add-on**.

Increasing demand is vital - if you build additional cycle paths, more people will use them, increasing the popularity of cycling as an essential mode of transport.

Conversely, **vanishing demand** is created by limiting space for cars, and car users will eventually find alternative routes and means of travel. We therefore advocate **infrastructure change**.

2. Promoting safety for cyclists and pedestrians - 20 mph zones

In residential areas there should be a default 20 mph speed limit.

A **reduction in traffic speed** is needed in built-up areas near schools and walking routes, and dedicated spaces for cycles are necessary to **improve safety**.

Traffic calming planters, bollards etc. should be an inherent part of planning to ensure that traffic speed does not endanger walkers and cyclists.

'Rat runs' (short cut routes) in the inner city area increase danger to cyclists and pedestrians and should be curtailed to increase road safety.

Specific examples of deterring rat runs would be to place planters at:

- a north/south cycling route in the area of Sun Street
- Marlowe Avenue and Stour Street; these would remove the route for cars between Castle Street and Watling street

3. A complete cycle network – to increase participation and enthusiasm by providing a comprehensive alternative to car use.

Today, **connectivity** between some villages and Canterbury/Whitstable does exist in part. The network should be expanded and current paths clearly and safely linked, especially through Canterbury city centre.

Priorities should include:

- Whitstable to Seasalter – this project started but stalled.
- Canterbury to Sturry. A continuation of the cycle route towards ASDA is needed with an extension to Sturry on the riverside route.
- Whitstable connection - The Crab and Winkle Way needs to be improved to make it safer to ride on, improving the surface which would not be damaging to bikes.

Further motor traffic free routes should include

- Barham and Bridge to Canterbury.
- Faversham to Canterbury.
- Herne Bay to Canterbury.
- Completion of the Stour route through to Thanet and Herne bay.

Illustrative examples of network improvements in Canterbury include:

- Segregated cycle paths from Station Road West to link to north/south cycle routes – producing an integrated cycle/rail alternative to the car.
- Contraflow cycling in St Georges Street with specific implementation of two-way cycling through St George's Lane.
- Re-positioning pelican crossings, e.g. in North Lane there is a badly positioned pelican crossing showing a poor understanding where bikes and pedestrians need to cross. Once changed and tested, other adjustments can be rolled out at other problematic crossing points throughout the city.
- Improving how Wincheap could be developed to become more pedestrian/cyclist friendly and better linked to other localities through a detailed study and its implementation.

A **comprehensive cycle network** will **promote cycling to work/school** in Canterbury and the surrounding areas by residents and others. This will only be possible by **connecting routes** between where people live and where they go to work or school.

4. Cycle parking – increasing the number of safe areas to park and store bikes

The city needs to increase the number of **bike stands and locked bike rooms**. This will increase bike use and make Canterbury and district more **welcoming for the cyclist**. Locked rooms in new commercial buildings and within the city centre should be promoted to make bike parking more secure. This would noticeably reduce damage to and theft of bikes.

Secure bike hangars should be installed in areas where many flats and houses have no space for bike storage.

A rent-a-bike scheme should be introduced around the city.

5. Inner city ring road cycle route – redesign

Focus must be placed on a ‘Design Space’ to **create a safer travel experience for cyclists and pedestrians, e.g.:**

- A pedestrian/cyclist friendly lane
- traffic reduction to one lane with barriers removal, combined with a speed reduction

These measures would strengthen the vision of a city and district which gives a priority to cyclists and pedestrians.¹

6. Public transport strategy links - an all-inclusive alternative to the car

A **wider sustainable strategy** is needed to integrate, walking, cycling, and public transport, within the idea of a **shared solution**. To understand this concept better an understanding of other cities with these principles should be examined e.g. Oxford

‘Mobility as a service’ must be championed to enabled residents to travel with confidence whatever their age, highlighting sustainable journeys as a core principle.

¹ An external company was hired in 2017 by KCC to analyse the possibility of increasing traffic capacity in Canterbury by completing the ring-road. The found the following:

Overall, the model points towards the need to generate a significant modal shift of about 15-20% from car to sustainable modes, notably cycle, walk and bus but also car/taxi sharing. Junction layouts will need to change to allow for and encourage this mode shift and give sustainable modes priority, especially for walking and cycling.

7. One-way street for cars – two way streets for bikes

Many cities improve the cycle network by creating space for cycles to travel in both directions along some streets which are one way for cars. Examples in Canterbury where this could be done are on St Georges Lane, the north end of Burgate, and St Radigunds Street between Church Land and Duck Lane.

8. Connectivity – increasing sustainable travel routes as an easily understandable alternatives to car travel

Inner city connections between North/South/East West points of the city need to be addressed. Producing a **conclusive alternative to car travel** which includes all modes of **sustainable transport** would allow the production of a **user-friendly map**, highlighting:

- East/west cycle route improvements.
- North/south cycle route additions.
- Effective inclusion of south Canterbury² and Wincheap³
- Old Dover Road, New Dover Road/ St Georges Place, Longport/St Martin's Hill (currently also very difficult areas to cycle in)
- Solutions to other current areas of concern, e.g. the one-way system on Sun Street, and access to the south-west of the city, particularly Watling Street/Old Dover road)

9. Accessibility - making cycling and walking more accessible

Roads must become more accessible for cyclists; an example of the **need for improved accessibility** is on key parts of the A28 where a safe cycle path is required which is not affected by

² South Canterbury is cut off in terms of cycling. There is the Stour path which is excellent but it isn't convenient for many trips starting or ending in and around Wincheap let alone further to the East.

³ Wincheap is probably the most hard done by in terms of cycling within its area and connections to elsewhere.

large vehicles. The answer could be found in physically segregated cycle paths. In most cases, **accessibility and safety are inextricably linked.**

Accessibility (and safety) involve:

- Major infrastructure changes
- Establishing criteria for undertaking the changes (e.g. is a route accessible, and safe, for children to use independently?)
- A reduction in pavement parking and enforcement of rules
- Accessible footpaths, cycle routes and bus stops according to the terms of the Equalities Act 2010
- Development of attractive open spaces, wide level pavements and traffic free areas for walkers.
- **Cycle and walking path maintenance, including all weather surfaces**

If accessibility and safety concerns are addressed, people who live on the Canterbury outskirts and within surrounding villages would cycle to work and there would be an efficient, sustainable, environmentally friendly **alternative to car traffic entering the city.**

The conversation must improve concerning specific funding models and the need for an alternative to the car. Housing development money (under Section 106 of planning regulations) must be used to secure wins for cycling - there is an opportunity within the next two years during the 'Local/District Plan Review' and updating the 'Transport Strategy', for dramatic changes concerning how we see the future of cycling and walking and how it can tackle the problems caused by the overuse of cars within and around our city.

10. Be ambitious, create a vision, rethink the future of cycling and walking.

Mel Dawkins – Councillor

Alister Brady – Host

Matt Banbury – SPOKES

Martin Vye – CAST

David Ewens & Peter Smith – Environmental Sub Group/Labour Party

Martin Ashton – XR