

Chester Cycling Campaign

Response to CWAC's Climate Emergency call for evidence

October 2019

Introduction:

Chester Cycling Campaign fully supports CWAC's declaration of a Climate Emergency. We are encouraged by CWAC's acknowledgement that genuinely challenging policy decisions will need to be taken. We believe that, with ambition, more active travel with consequently fewer emissions can be achieved.

Public support for action on the Climate Emergency means that, given the chance, people will move to more active travel. CWAC must help them to do so.

Background:

We know (because people tell us!) that very many people would love to cycle in Chester. They want to be able to cycle safely from their homes to their work, school, leisure, shopping, etc. But they don't even try because currently they do not feel safe to cycle around Chester. We experience a common reaction from non-cyclists which is "you're brave" to cycle in Chester. What an indictment!

A blogger who cycled into Chester commented "The centre of Chester - a walled city founded by the Romans - is surrounded by busy arterial roads. There was no real attempt to provide a hospitable cycling environment either on those roads or to carry cyclists across them" "the routes through Chester had not taken cyclists' needs as their starting point".

(<http://invisiblevisibleman.blogspot.com/2016/09/a-long-ish-ride-confusing-signs-and-why.html>)

Current government & local authority policy results in the unintended consequence of most people being actively prevented from choosing active travel, because it's too dangerous.

Chester Cycling Campaign's experience is that the abundant good practice guidance which already exists on providing facilities for active travel, is unfortunately not implemented, nor even followed sufficiently, despite the Council having been responsible for Public Health since 2013. The requirements for provision to be made for active travel are routinely demoted to insignificance. Chester Cycling Campaign has had to campaign repeatedly for implementation of the smallest of measures, eg cycling parking outside a redeveloped supermarket on Hoole Road, or 2-way cycling on Frodsham Street.

Cities like Oxford, York & Leicester have made great progress towards their residents walking and cycling more. Chester & other towns & villages throughout CWAC can easily join them & make our historic & beautiful Borough an even better place to live. Political will & leadership can bring about the required change.

Here are Chester Cycling Campaign's suggestions:

1. **Council commitment & ambition.** We welcome that the Council is moving to “thinking climate emergency & active travel” in everything it does. We look to the Council for real commitment & ambitious policy decisions.
2. **Funding.** Switch a meaningful proportion of road funding to active travel infrastructure and soft support measures. How are cycle routes in CWAC currently funded? Make active travel safe, convenient & attractive and people will adopt it. An example is the canal towpath in Chester, now well used by pedestrians & cyclists (although lack of maintenance is a problem & we have heard of cyclists who have stopped using it because it has become too bumpy).
3. **Set the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) higher.** Include an ‘active transport’ contribution per square metre across all classifications of development. So far, we believe that CWAC has set CIL at 0% in all but a handful of development classifications. This is a missed opportunity to generate significant sums to develop the infrastructure to encourage modal shift for local journeys towards walking and cycling, both within new developments and also from the development to other places locally.
4. **Recognise cycling as a means of everyday transport. Re-allocate road space from general traffic to sustainable modes.**
Make cycle & pedestrian routes the most direct & convenient way to get around. Ensure that routes are safe & practical for users of adapted cycles & trikes, bikes with trailers, cargo bikes, etc. Ensure that routes are safe enough for a 12-year-old to cycle on their own. Then they will be safe enough for everyone.

Direct:

Put safe cycle routes on major routes. CCC recognise the high cost of segregated routes, but safer facilities can be provided at low cost, eg:

- a. Review traffic flows into & out of the city: change roads into a wide cycle path plus a vehicle lane, segregated, and change traffic flows where necessary to one way into or out of the city.
- b. Paint realistically wide cycle paths on every road.

- c. Use cheap segregation barriers between cycles & cars like planters or “armadillos”.
- d. Ban vehicles from parking on pavements as in London and currently being considered by Cheshire East.

Convenient:

- a. Invite a cycle hire/sharing service, including electric bikes, to Chester & the larger towns, to avoid the need for people to buy & store their own cycles.
 - b. Schools already have travel plans, but individual travel plans are needed, showing how each pupil can travel safely by cycle or foot from their home to school.
 - c. Check that every CWAC resident is able to get on a bike outside their house and cycle safely to work/school/shopping/leisure.
 - d. Alter traffic light signalling so that they prioritise pedestrians & cyclists by changing quickly to reduce waiting time (& the associated impression that people in cars have priority over people on foot or on cycles).
5. **Management of demand** is vital i.e. deter car use with car parking charges and by reducing car parking provision. This makes active travel more convenient and therefore attractive.
6. **Implement The Chester Cycle Masterplan.** Produced in 2010, it has been incompletely implemented by the Council to date. It presents a prioritised programme of improvements in physical infrastructure and signage for cycling in Chester city centre and is ready to be implemented.
7. **Implement Chester Cycling Campaign’s Ten Year Vision for Cycling in Chester**, which includes developing the following routes to enable direct and fast cross-Chester travel, which is difficult currently:
- a. Wrexham Road cycle lane linking Business Park & new southern housing developments to city
 - b. New Huntington to Handbridge River Dee crossing
 - c. Upgrade The Meadows riverside path to make it suitable for cyclists and link to new bridge
 - d. Make Duke’s Drive accessible to cyclists and link to Business Park
 - e. Create a Chester Orbital Cycle Route by using new River Dee crossing and fixing missing links.
8. **Implement 20mph in all residential areas of CWAC, ie including “distributor roads”.** CCC fully supports CWAC’s implementation of 20mph in residential areas, but we need to go further and change the roads currently left at 30mph to 20mph. Roads left at 30mph are barriers, as people need to cycle along or cross them to reach their destination.

Every road within a town needs to be 20mph, so that people can cycle along them or cross them more safely. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends active travel to combat heart disease, obesity and diabetes. The Climate Emergency & the Public Health requirement should outweigh Department for Transport guidelines on speed limits, which were set with no requirement for consideration of health or climate emergency.

9. Enforce Speed limits. Villages where 20mph zones have fairly recently been implemented report that there has been no significant change in behaviour by vehicle drivers who are still driving as if the limit was 30mph or more.

10. Greatly improve the Local Transport Plan. The Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Strategy 2011-2026 is weak, lacks ambition, detail and measurable targets. We could learn from York, (a comparable city to Chester) which has a 20-year Local Transport Plan, which focuses on sustainability and active travel (City of York Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2031 (LTP3)). One of its 5 themes (and the first listed) is “Providing Quality Alternatives to the car to provide more choice and enable more trips to be undertaken by sustainable means”. It works to a “Hierarchy of Transport Users” with pedestrians deemed the most important, then people with mobility problems, then cyclists, and so on, with car borne commuters at the bottom. York has also focused on breaking down the barriers that stop many people from choosing to cycle.

Similarly, Hertfordshire’s Local Transport Plan Draft for Public Consultation November 2017, “accelerates the transition from a previous transport strategy that was largely car based to a more balanced approach which caters for all forms of transport and seeks to encourage a switch from the private car to sustainable transport (e.g. walking, cycling and passenger transport) wherever possible”. It also includes the concept of Transport User Hierarchy.

Edinburgh’s Active Travel Action Plan (ATAP) encourages an increase in walking and cycling journeys in the city to a level that meets health and local environment objectives, with slower speed limits being a key factor.

Portsmouth has reduced speed limits successfully in large areas of the town.

The Local Transport Plans of towns where cycling rates are increasing, eg Manchester, should be studied for measures CWAC might adopt.

Incorporate the CWAC Cycling Strategy into the Local Transport Plan. CWAC has a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan in development, but we need it implemented with far-reaching measures to really change the infrastructure, making it safe for everyone.

11. **Strengthen the Cycling Strategy.** Currently it lacks details & has very few targets. There has been no publication of data on targets specified in the current Strategy. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans will complement the Cycling Strategy.
12. **Strengthen the Low Emission Strategy** which lacks ambition, focus and detail. The shift measures proposed are commendable and should be implemented, but on their own are insufficient to change behaviour and will not shift people to public transport, cycling or walking. Consequently, emissions will not be reduced.
13. **Enforce a ban on stationary idling .** Educate residents about the harmful effects of stationary idling on air quality and the fact that stationary idling is currently a Highway offence. Ban stationary idling on all Council owned Car Parks and premises and outside busy locations like schools, railway stations and hospitals. Implement a stationary idling ban on CWaC employees who drive CWaC vehicles, on contractors working for CWaC and on licensed taxi drivers.
14. **How does CWAC reply to the following questions?** This will focus development of active transport.
 - a. Why do only a minority of CWAC residents cycle as everyday transport?
 - b. How many people would cycle if they perceived it to be safe?
 - c. How are numbers of cyclists in CWAC measured?
 - d. How many households in CWAC do not have access to a car/vehicle? ie their transport choices are walking, cycling or public transport.
 - e. How do CWAC employees get to work? If they don't walk or cycle, why not?
 - f. Why hasn't CWAC got good cycling facilities already?
 - g. Why don't many school pupils in CWAC cycle to/from school?
 - h. Does CWAC have a plan for how any resident can cycle safely from their home to their work/shops/leisure?
 - i. What has been the impact of CWAC's Cycling Strategy? What are CWAC's conclusions from analysis of monitoring required by the strategy?