

Safety at Girton Corner

Summary Statement

Plans are being approved to redesign parts of Girton Corner. These however leave many safety concerns unaddressed, and we wish the Highways Authority to address them by the following means.

- 1. That the speed limit be reduced to 40mph at the A14 bridge, and 30mph before the College entrance.**
- 2. That the redundant post in the shared-use path be removed.**
- 3. (a) That the cycle lane from Girton College be merged with the road at the point where the bus lane ceases, with an illuminated KEEP RIGHT bollard to protect cyclists;
(b) that the cycle access to the road be made more smooth than the present double-right-angle;
(c) that south of this the pavement be no longer shared-use;
(d) that the cycle lane be made to the DfT recommended width of 2m from here to at least the Thornton Road junction;
(e) that any hatching necessary to preserve the narrowness of the motor traffic lane should be on the nearside, between that lane and the cycle lane;
(f) that the northbound cycle lane also be upgraded to 2m.**
- 4. That the direction sign on the central island at Girton Corner be raised to a height where it will not restrict visibility for any road user.**
- 5. That the railings to the kerb on the north of Girton Corner be removed.**
- 6. That hatchings be added on the shoulder of the north access to Girton Road to encourage vehicles to take the corner as wide as possible.**
- 7. That the bus stop immediately south of Girton Road be moved southwards to the next lamp post, and a bus stop be marked on the road (with a stop on Girton Road shortly before the corner for buses running through Girton Village if necessary).**

Preamble

As part of the planning conditions for the 300-dwelling estate at Wellbrook Way Girton, the Developer was obliged to improve access to Huntingdon Road at Girton Corner. The changes are due to be implemented shortly. As far as they go, the plans have been sympathetically thought out. However, there are a number of safety issues which were not in the remit of this obligation and which remain a major concern. There have been 3 serious injuries to cyclists at the corner over the past few years, one fatal, and several minor collisions between motor vehicles¹. Other accidents have occurred in the vicinity². Cyclists seem generally agreed that it is an unpleasant experience to negotiate the corner, and the Safety Audit commissioned by Girton Parish Council highlights many problems³. This document has been prepared by members of Girton Parish Council, Girton College, Cambridge Cycling Campaign and other interested persons.

1 Data from Safety Audit undertaken by the County: see Appendix 1 pages 3--4

2 Data supplied by the Girton College Safety Officer.

3 The Audit is attached as Appendix 1.

The amelioration of access required in the planning process was specifically and exclusively targeted at traffic travelling in the rush hours. But both Huntingdon Road and Girton Road are heavily trafficked during the whole of the working day, particularly by students at Girton College⁴. In agreeing to the developer's plans for Girton Corner the Parish Council decided also to approve this statement and these recommendations for improved safety, which we commend to a wider audience and urge the County Council to implement. We believe that the measures called for would be cheap to implement and, if implemented as a coherent package, effective in improving safety for all.

However, in the long term the major problem of Girton Corner will remain: the acute angle at which the two roads meet. Only a major redesign, involving purchase of land from Girton College, could achieve this, and the College has not ruled such a solution out as being unthinkable.

Issues of concern

1. Excessive speed

Speed kills. 90% of pedestrians hit by a vehicle at 40mph die, 20% at 30mph and only 2.5% at 20mph⁵. For cyclists hit by vehicles the differential effect of vehicle speed is likely to be similarly significant.

Much of the traffic travelling southwards to Cambridge along Huntingdon Road will have recently left the derestricted A14 and the speed limit at the corner is still 40mph, though many vehicles appear to be travelling in excess of this. Given the number of pedestrians and cyclists using the corner, we believe such speeds to be excessive.

The distance from the bridge to the current 30mph zone is slightly under 1.4 miles: a speed reduction here would therefore add at most 40 seconds to journey times.

We recommend **that the speed limit be reduced to 40mph at the A14 bridge, and 30mph before the College entrance.**

2. Shared-use pavement

From Girton College entrance to a point some 40m before Girton Corner there is a shared-use pavement, in which are embedded two posts, one now entirely redundant and acting only as a hazard to those using the pavement.



We recommend **that the redundant post in the shared-use path be removed.**

3. End of Bus Lane

From north of the A14 bridge there is a southbound bus lane along Huntingdon Road. This terminates about 100m before Girton Corner, allowing vehicular traffic to travel in two lanes, although some 40m before the junction a (mandatory) cycle lane suddenly appears as cyclists are directed off the shared-use pavement onto the road.

⁴ See Appendix 2 for a survey of traffic.

⁵ Figures from *Which?* Magazine, March 2005, page 20.



This cycle lane is 1.15m wide, significantly less than the DfT recommended 1.5m *minimum*⁶ and the access to the road demands an awkward manoeuvre for a cyclist.



At this point the road is artificially narrowed on the offside by painted hatching, pushing motor vehicles and cycles into greater potential conflict. A driver who passes this point just as a cyclist arrives may be completely unaware that the cyclist

is now on the road beside him/her.

We recommend **that the cycle lane from Girton College be merged with the road at the point where the bus lane ceases, with an illuminated KEEP LEFT bollard to protect cyclists; that the cycle access to the road be made more smooth than the present double-right-angle; and that south of this the pavement be no longer shared-use. That the cycle lane be made to the DfT recommended width of 2m from here to at least the Thornton Road junction (beyond which Huntingdon Road narrows). Any hatching necessary to preserve the narrowness of the motor traffic lane should be on the nearside, between that lane and the cycle lane. That the northbound cycle lane also be upgraded to 2m.**

4. Visibility

The direction sign on the central island at Girton Corner is in such a position that it obscures the view. This is apparently a deliberate ploy by traffic engineers, intended to slow traffic down. In practice it does not achieve this goal, but merely causes a blind spot which particularly endangers cyclists, and motorists turning right into Girton. We cannot believe that the deliberate creation of dangerous situations, in the hope that motorists will respond by reducing their speed, can be conducive to overall safety.



We recommend **that the direction sign on the central island at Girton Corner be raised to a height where it will not restrict visibility for any road user.**

5. Railings

From the pedestrian crossing southwards to Girton Corner on the southbound side there is a length of visirail which extends to the very edge of the kerb. This ensures that if there is a cycle-vehicle conflict here the cyclist has no possibility of escape. The railing appears to serve no useful purpose, since very few pedestrians using the crossing from east to west will come from positions where they might be tempted to 'jump the light' by crossing south of them.



We recommend **that the railings to the kerb on the north of Girton Corner be removed.**

⁶ See *Cycle Friendly Infrastructure* published by the IHT, *Cycling by Design* §5.39 (the Scottish version on-line at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library2/cbd/cbd-07.asp>), and the DfT document LTN 1/04, on-line at <http://tinyurl.com/famks>.

6. Left turn into Girton Road from Huntingdon Road (southbound)

The fatal accident at Girton Corner last year was the result of a collision between a south-bound cyclist and a left-turning vehicle. Although the case is still *sub judice*, it is clear that it is too easy for motor vehicles, particularly large lorries and artics, to cut the sharp corner very closely.

We recommend that hatchings be added on the shoulder of the north access to Girton Road to encourage vehicles to take the corner as wide as possible.

7. Bus stop



There is a bus stop (though no road marking) immediately to the south of Girton Corner: motorists who expect a bus to stop here will routinely overtake before Girton Corner. Buses typically stop with the bus tail only a metre or so beyond the point at which the Girton Road cycle lane is planned to meet the cycle lane on Huntingdon Road. Thus any cyclist entering Huntingdon Road from Girton Road is immediately put into a position of conflict with southbound vehicular traffic, or in danger of being pushed into the kerb by a stopping bus.



We recommend that the bus stop immediately south of Girton Road be moved southwards to the next lamp post, and a bus stop be marked on the road⁷.

Appendix 1: Safety Audit commissioned by Girton Parish Council, and undertaken by Mr John Franklin

Appendix 2: Sample traffic figures collected by GHOST

⁷ If it is felt that this makes the distance between stops for buses through Girton too great, a further stop might be provided on Girton Road shortly before the corner.