
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 4 December 2012
Subject: Park Lane, Henlow - Resolution of Objections to making an Experimental Contra-flow Cycle Lane into a Permanent Order
Report of: Paul Mason, Head of Highways
Summary: To report to the Executive Member for Sustainable Communities Services the receipt of objections to an Experimental Contra-flow Cycle Lane and to seek the Executive Member's views.

Contact Officer: Steve Hall – Senior Engineer
steve.hall@amey.co.uk
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Arlesey
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

To improve highway safety and facilitate the free flow of traffic

Financial:

The cost of introducing the permanent Order and undertaking the signing and road marking changes will be approximately £2,500.

Legal:

None as part of this report

Risk Management:

None as part of this report

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None as part of this report

Equalities/Human Rights:

None as part of this report

Community Safety:

None as part of this report

Sustainability:

Encourages cycle use

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Experimental Contra-flow Cycle Lane in Park Lane, Henlow be made into a permanent Order.

Background and Information

1. In March 2011 an experimental contra-flow cycle lane Order was introduced in Park Lane, Henlow. The road has an established one-way system in place and the experimental Order permits cyclists to travel against the flow of other traffic.
2. The proposal is part of a wider 'Safer Routes to School' scheme which seeks to encourage school trips to be made using more sustainable modes of transport, such as walking and cycling. The project also involves the implementation of measures to make those roads, such as Park Lane, which are used for school trips, safer and more attractive to use.
3. Although similar schemes have been introduced in other towns and cities, this will be the first contra-flow cycle lane to be introduced in this area of Central Bedfordshire. Therefore, implementing this proposal as an experimental Order enables the arrangements to be trialed and can be modified or removed at any time should the need arise.
4. An experimental Order only lasts for eighteen months. Therefore, a decision has to be taken now as to whether the scheme will be made permanent or removed.
5. Following the implementation of the experimental Order, interested parties had an opportunity to object to or comment on the scheme. Nine representations have been received all from local residents expressing concerns about the scheme. All of these are included in Appendix C.
6. A number of issues have been raised, but the main concerns are as follows:-
 - a) The road is not wide enough to safely accommodate cyclists travelling against the flow of other traffic.
 - b) It is dangerous.
 - c) On-street parking, particularly at school times, creates an extra hazard and further narrows the road.
 - d) Drivers do not expect to encounter approaching cyclists.
 - e) The signs are confusing, which possibly leads to drivers getting confused and driving in the wrong direction.
7. Bedfordshire Police accept the proposals and have raised no objection.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

8. Officers of Central Bedfordshire Council and Amey met with local councillors to discuss the operation of the contra-flow cycle lane and concerns over its signage.

Despite the low traffic flows there was a concern that cyclists are placed in conflict with motorists at the points where the road narrows and that priority at these points is unclear. The CBC Cycling Officer assured councillors that the weight of evidence was in support of these arrangements being safe. Contra-flow cycling was a regular occurrence on this road prior to it being officially introduced, without incident.

The arrangement encourages eye contact and interaction, in a give and take fashion, between road users and normal priorities apply - the vehicle arriving first at point where the road narrows takes priority. As the more vulnerable vehicle, cyclists generally take particular care on such approaches and are frequently observed to give way or to negotiate priority.

It was agreed that some alterations to the signage and additional lining would be provided in light of the concerns to better highlight the contra flow cycle lane, whilst not overpowering the area with unnecessary road markings.

9. The general congestion outside the school at dropping off time was also observed and discussed and the Cycling Officer suggested that a scheme to address this issue (possibly footway widening and further narrowing of the already narrow road together with revisions to the school keep clear markings) could be considered for inclusion in a future Local Area Transport Plan for the area.
10. It is recommended that the experimental Order be made permanent and that the aforementioned alterations to the signing and road marking be undertaken.

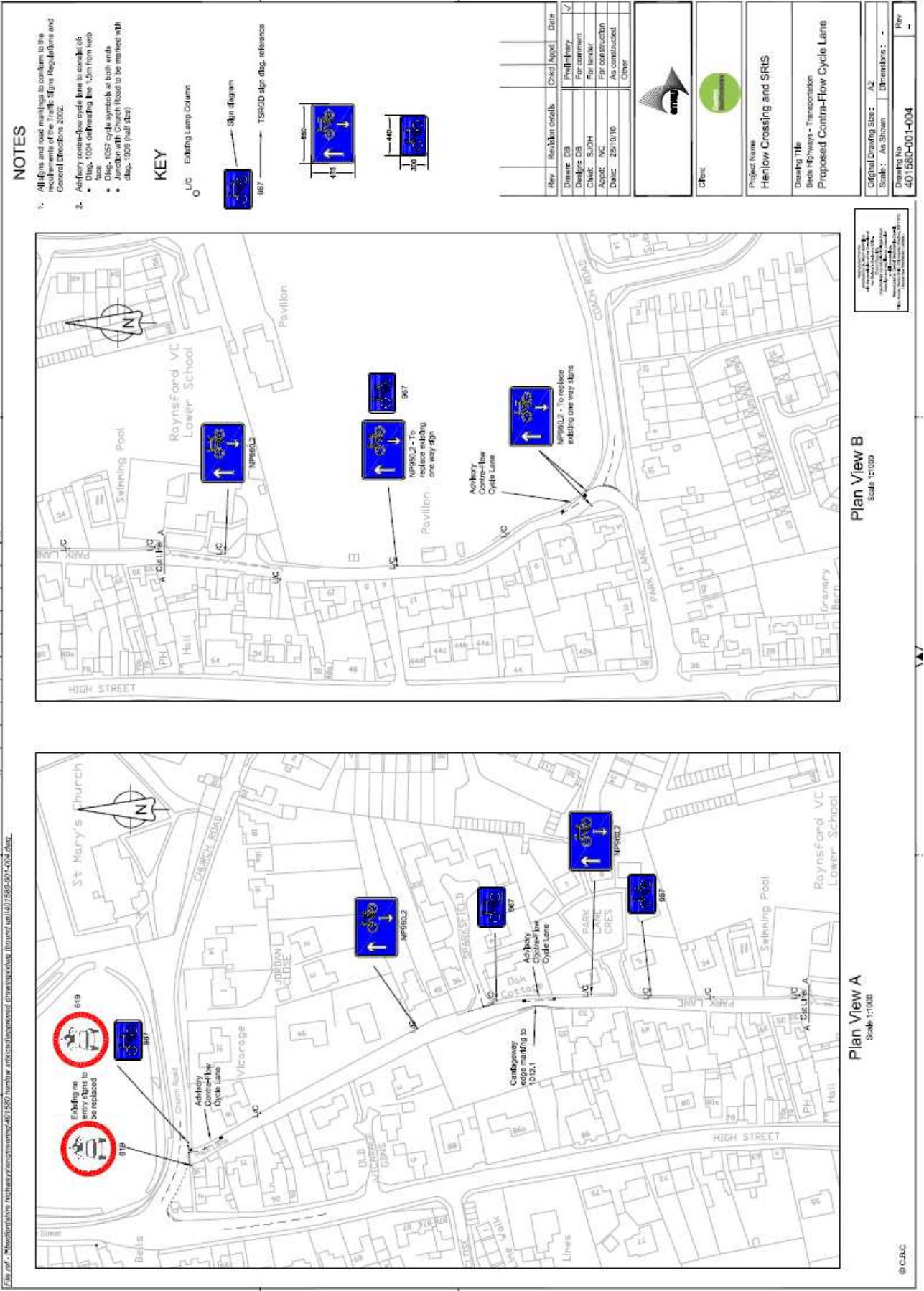
Appendices:

Appendix A – Scheme drawing

Appendix B – Public notice

Appendix C – Representations

APPENDIX A





PUBLIC NOTICE

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL (THE BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (PARK LANE, HENLOW) (ONE-WAY) ORDER 1962) (EXPERIMENTAL VARIATION) ORDER 2011

Notice is hereby given that on the 14th March 2011 Central Bedfordshire Council made an Order under Section 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as follows:

Effect of the Experimental Variation Order:

The Experimental Variation Order will amend the 1962 Order to exempt cycles from the Park Lane One Way Traffic Order. This will allow cyclists to travel against the flow of traffic for that length on Park Lane in Henlow, which extends from its junction with Coach Road to its junction with Church Road.

Reason for Experimental Variation Order: The proposal is part of a wider 'Safer Routes to School' scheme which seeks to encourage school trips to be made using more sustainable modes of transport, such as walking and cycling. The project also involves the implementation of measures to make those roads, such as Park Lane, which are used for school trips safer and more attractive to use.

Although similar schemes have been introduced in other towns and cities, this will be the first contra-flow cycle lane to be introduced in this area of Central Bedfordshire. Therefore, implementing this proposal as an Experimental Variation Order will enable the Council to monitor the scheme once it has been installed and modify or remove the scheme at any time should the need arise.

It is proposed that the Experimental Variation Order will be in operation for eighteen months. Central Bedfordshire Council will be considering in due course whether the provisions of this Experimental Order should be continued in force indefinitely.

Date of Operation: The Experimental Variation Order will come into operation on the 28th March 2011.

Further Details: of the Experimental Variation Order, a statement of reasons for making the Order and plans showing the lengths of road affected may be examined during normal opening hours at Shefford Library, High Street, Shefford SG17 5DL.

Objections: The Experimental Variation Order will remain in operation for up to 18 months and before its effects can be continued in operation by a permanent Order all objections lodged during the trial of the Experimental Variation Order will have to be considered. Objections, in writing, should be sent to the Transportation Manager, Bedfordshire Highways, Woodlands Annex, Manton Lane, Bedford MK41 7NU or e-mail centralbedsconsultation@amey.co.uk to arrive no later than 30th September 2011.

High Court Challenge: Any person who wishes to question the validity of the Order or of any provision contained therein on the ground that it is not within the powers of the relevant Section of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 or on the ground that any requirement of that Section had not been complied with in relation to the Order may, within six weeks of the 14th March 2011 make application for the purpose to the High Court.

Technology House
239 Ampthill Road
Bedford, MK42 9BD

Basil Jackson
Assistant Director for Highways

18th March 2011

APPENDIX C

Re: Experimental contra-flow cycle lane at Park Lane, Henlow

Dear Sir,

As regards the above, so far so good! As far as I know there have been no head on collisions of bicycles and motor vehicles, and cyclists are now riding in a much more responsible way

BUT!!

- 1) Why do adult cyclists use the footpath - both ways - north and south? There is no need and surely it is illegal?
- 2) Motor vehicles are still coming the wrong way i.e. from north to south
- 3) Would it really be so expensive to

relocate the "Park Lane" sign at the north end to the other side of the road, where it could not be seen by vehicles approaching from the north i.e. Langford. These are mainly vehicles going to Champneys, though trade vehicles do the same thing!

This is not the first time I have requested this simple change, surely far less expensive than all the white lines painted on the road! I am tempted to knock the sign down and prop it up on the other side!!!

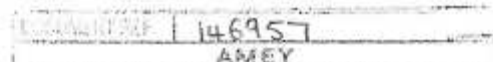
Yours faithfully

Re: Two way cycle access to Park Lane, Henlow

Get a grip and stop wasting ratepayers money. I shudder to think how much money you have wasted on meetings, paperwork, signs and work etc.!

You initially painted some random lines along Park Lane which nobody had an idea of what they were suppose to convey. You obviously decided they were in the wrong place so they were painted out and new lines put down, again which nobody had any clue as to their meaning. Are they intended for car drivers, cyclists, boats perhaps!

I have lived here for twenty five years and during this time cyclists have been cycling in both directions along Park Lane with no problems whatsoever so why confuse cyclists now?



Dear Sir or Madam,
Re- Experimental
contra-flow cycle lane in Park
Lane Henlow.
I dont believe this will work
as the road isn't wide enough
especially with the parked cars
Yours faithfully

With reference to the Experimental contra-flow cycle lane at Park Lane, Henlow, I wish to strongly object to this being developed on a permanent basis.

When it is school arriving or leaving time the parking along this road is tremendous already, allowing only room for one vehicle to come through. To have to also look out for cycle riders coming along towards you is another obstacle.

Also, I wish to point out that the entrance to the above address is on the right hand side of the One-Way flow of traffic. It is also on a very steep slope and visibility is not clear until we stop at the edge of the pavement.

I fear that with cyclist riding along on a contraflow lane, particularly children, it is an accident waiting to happen.

We as residence might be used to coming out slowly, but workmen or visitors have to put a lot of thrust on the accelerator to avoid skidding on the gravel drive and therefore could come out with force.

I beg you to please think again as it could be very dangerous.

U 9 SEP 2011

COPIES

7th Sept 2011

Re: Experimental contra-flow

Cycle lane at Parkhane Henlow

I'm writing to express my concerns and objections of the above.

Firstly, I see no benefit in creating a contra-flow for cycles, mainly because I feel it's extremely dangerous for the cyclists + unsuspecting motorists (the road signs are confusing to my visitors and probably to others as well).

Secondly, As I live in Parkhane I see all sorts of activities passing my house, mainly walkers or rambles, and parents taking children to the School next door to me.

As there is no ² pavement for the first third of the lane (from North to South positions), only the road itself and a bit of mucky grass verge, all the pedestrians have to walk on the road until they reach Sparksfield.

Therefore they have their backs to the contra-flow cyclists at all times + may not be aware of their presence.

As a point, because of the young age group of the school children, I've yet to see any pupils cycling to school.

Thirdly, It is very congested with cars etc at school arrival + departure times, plus some residential parking, and being a narrow lane anyway, it makes overtaking very tight.

Therefore a permanently marked cycle lane would make things particularly difficult.

Also it causes³ / or will cause problems for residents' visitors and for any loading or deliveries etc. Not to mention reversing in or out of our drives.

I think if somebody could come and see the lane when active, the conditions would speak for themselves.

Perhaps after reading my remarks and any other letters of objections, you may consider and think about this issue again.

yours faithfully

I write to object to the Experimental Variation Order exempting bicycles from the Park Lane one way traffic order in Henlow.

As a Park Lane resident I was never convinced of the need and desirability of this change. Park Lane is too narrow to permit two way flows, especially in those sections where there are cars parked.

The experimental change has been carried out in summer, when light is good. I think the dangers are much greater in winter when visibility and conditions are poorer. The majority of those cycling Park Lane, in any direction, are children and I rarely see any of them with lights on their bikes.

Despite the signs drivers are not expecting to see cyclists, often weaving around the road, coming in the opposite direction and there is little room for manoeuvre. I would rather see cyclists ride (illegally) on the pavements than be lured into a false sense of security that this scheme brings about.

Since the change in signage I believe there has been an increase in cars travelling the wrong way down Park Lane, which is another source of danger

Again as a resident, the thought of hearing a screech of brakes and the sound of a body hitting a windscreen is not a pleasant prospect. It is one I believe to be inevitable at some stage and will be responsibility of those who proposed this misguided change.

We have lived in this house for over 47 years. Having a lot of changes, in that time, but consider the contra-flow cycle lane, the most dangerous, to date.

There has always been, cars coming the wrong way down Park Lane, at speed. Not from the Church Road end, but from people visiting, the school, Park Lane Crescent, Spaxfield. Plus other houses on the opposite side of Park Lane. On many occasions my husband or I have stopped motorists. Pointing out its a one way lane, the answer, is always, we didn't realize it was all one way, We have come out of the school car park, or been visiting friends etc.

Hence in our opinion, the contra-flow cycle lane is not a good idea. Just adding another hazard, waiting for an accident to happen.

We would like to feel our views are taken into consideration

I live at the far end of Park Lane, the last drive before the junction with Church Road.

The experimental contra-flow allowing cyclists to cycle against the flow of traffic is, in my view, dangerous for the following reasons.

1. Coming out of my steep drive visibility of cycles coming from the right is very poor and they are upon our vehicle before they can be seen.
2. Cyclists do not keep to the left hand side of the road but cycle all over the lane and straight in the face of on-coming traffic.
3. Other two wheel vehicles are now using the contra-flow, including motor bikes.

The signage which was put up when this new system was instigated is confusing and the bike lane is only marked in three short lengths of the entire lane which is some half mile long - but to paint a proper bike lane along the whole length would be inappropriate to the rural atmosphere of this area.

The lane has always been a one way system and has worked safely and well and been understood by everyone. Now your experiment has caused confusion and will probably lead to an accident occurring.

As a local residents of fifteen years, my husband and I would ask you to please remove the contra-flow and put the lane back to the safe one way system it has always been.

Re experimental Contraflow cycle lane at Park Lane, Henlow.

Park Lane is not wide enough for cyclists to avoid oncoming traffic that is often exceeding the speed limit, ~~and~~ overtaking parked cars. It would be much safer to make it clearer to cyclists and motorists that Park Lane is a one way street, especially to motorists leaving Raynsford School car park who often go the wrong way. Also a means of slowing down the traffic would be a good idea.