The Impact of Active Travel Plans and LTN 1/20 on Equestrians

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Summary

All local highway authorities have to produce a Local Transport Plan in which they set out their plans for active travel. From the outset, Parliament included equestrian travel in active travel and equestrian travel is included in the Active Travel England Route Check User Manual. However, equestrian travel is often being ignored in the implementation of active travel plans by local highway authorities. Local Traffic Note (LTN 1/20) is the primary guidance for local highway authorities, but it is causing significant safety concerns for equestrians as it ignores equestrian travel. Equestrians have to use the road network to access off-road riding routes (byways, bridleways etc.), but measures which are being put in place to improve the safety of cyclists and walkers are compromising the safety and ability of equestrians to access the equestrian off-road network.

Twelve issues of concern are identified: lack of consultation, separation of user groups, path widths, infrastructure, furniture, signage, surfacing, bridge parapet heights, lighting, quiet lane designation, costs, and development within the boundaries of existing highways. How each of these is compromising equestrian safety is discussed. Recommendations are made for improvement.

The Society concludes that revised guidelines are needed for rural/semi-urban/urban fringe locations and that there should be default expectation that all cycle infrastructure must be inclusive of equestrian users unless a clear rationale exists for their exclusion.

Contact us

The British Horse Society
Abbey Park, Stareton
Kenilworth, Warwickshire
CV8 2XZ

02476 840 515
access@bhs.org.uk
www.bhs.org.uk

1. Introduction

1.1 Active Travel

All local highway authorities in England have to produce a Local Transport Plan in which they set out their plans for active travel. While some local highway authorities do include equestrians in their active travel plans (for example, the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-2036; the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Transport and Connectivity Plan) many do not. Since their introduction, it has become apparent that many local highway authorities omit equestrian travel from these plans.

In the absence of a statutory definition in English legislation there is significant misunderstanding over the correct definition of Active Travel by some local highway authorities and the purpose of active travel routes even though it has been made clear that equestrian travel, that is horse riding, is Active Travel. The Active Travel England Route Check User Manual[1], section 10.11 and footnote 4, published in 2024, states:

> *'Horse riding is explicitly included in active travel: House of Commons Transport Committee Active travel: increasing levels of walking and cycling in England Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19 Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report (London, 2019): "Active travel covers any journey that is made by physically active means, and covers such diverse activities as horse riding, skateboarding, roller skating, and riding a scooter." Para 6'*

From the outset, horse riding was included in Active Travel by central Government. On 5 November 2018 in a House of Commons debate on Road Safety, Jesse Norman, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, commented:

> *"We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders… Horse riders are vulnerable road users — there is no doubt about that, and there never has been - and they have been included in the work we are doing."*

In 2019, Dr David Drew (MP for Stroud) asked a question:

> *'To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to include (a) horse-riding and (b) horse-drawn carriages in his Department's support for the development of active travel and local walking and cycling infrastructure plans.' (HC Daily Report, 15.07.2019).*

This was answered by Michael Ellis, MP, when Minister of State for Transport:

> *'The Government's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Guidance notes that local authorities should consider the needs of equestrians where they have access to walking and cycling infrastructure such as off-carriageway routes. However, the Government does not intend*

[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e5b5fb7bc329e58db8c1c8/ate-route-check-tool-user-manual.pdf

to specify that all measures to support active travel must include a horse-riding or horse-drawn carriage element: decisions on this are a matter for local authorities. Nevertheless, the Government does encourage local authorities to support equestrians in their active travel plans.'

Inclusion of horse riding in Active Travel Plans needs to become the norm if accidents involving horses are to be sustainably reduced on the roads.

1.2 Local Traffic Note (LTN) 1/20

Local Traffic Note (LTN) 1/20 is the Department for Transport's primary guidance note to local authorities in England on the delivery and specification of Active Travel Plans and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). While the guidance offers good practice for the design of cycle infrastructure, there is limited recognition of equestrians and their requirements. As a result, equestrian use of the highway network and equestrian safety is being compromised, and equestrians are being put in danger on the highway network.

A holistic view is required in order to offer a safe and effective network of routes for all vulnerable road users. This is recognised to some extent in LTN 1/20 paragraph 1.3.1 which states that:

"The guidance should be applied to all changes associated with highway improvements, new highway construction and new or improved cycle facilities, including those on other rights of way such as bridleways and routes within public open space."

However, it needs to be made clearer that this must apply to all vulnerable non-mechanically propelled users, that is, walkers, cyclists, and equestrians.

LTN 1/20 guidance is compromising equestrian use of the highway network and equestrian safety in two ways. Firstly, by not recognising equestrian use of roads which are being adapted for cycling and, secondly, by the integration of public rights of way (PRoW), that is, bridleways & byways, into active travel networks.

Equestrians generally prefer to use PRoW in preference to roads, but most bridleways and byways have to be accessed by using roads. Concerns are being raised by equestrians that the design of new active travel infrastructure deters, or excludes, equestrians thus reducing the network of bridleways and byways available to equestrians. In some examples, denying equestrians to active travel infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, risks pushing horse riders onto the roads where they are at much greater risk of collision with fast-moving motor traffic. Those equestrians who have access to horse box transport are increasingly travelling their horses by road to reach safe places to ride, thus increasing diesel emissions. There is also clear frustration that what were essentially rural routes are being increasingly urbanised, and the distinctive character of these routes changed beyond recognition.

Since November 2010, the Society's records show that there have been 18,683 road incidents involving horses, in which 47 people and 697 horses have lost their lives. A further 1,782 people, and 1625 horses have been injured. While these incidents cannot be attributed to the introduction of active travel schemes, everything possible needs to be done to reduce these distressing figures. Proper consideration of equestrians in LTN 1/20 will help.

This guidance note identifies a number of specific issues within LTN 1/20 and makes recommendations for future guidance in the way it treats routes in the rural/semi-urban/urban fringe locations.

2. The detrimental impact of LTN 1/20 on equestrians: specific issues

2.1 Lack of proper consultation

The Society believes that a significant flaw in LTN 1/20 and its associated scheme review tools is the lack of clear instruction on consultation and inclusion of differing user needs. To properly ascertain demand and utility, it is important that equestrian users should be consulted at an early stage of route development.

Published guidance on the use of Active Travel England's route checking tool[2] currently sets out that: "you must first answer a question on whether horse riders are expected to use the route." However, it is the Society's experience that this is not being done, possibly because the need is not clearly stated in LTN 1/20.

Additionally, a missing element in the application of LTN 1/20 in rural/ semi-urban/ urban fringe locations is the lack of consideration of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP). Section 60(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) identifies that statutory responsibility for the provision of cycle tracks and other local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) sits within the RoWIP. It is a reasonable expectation that public authorities should take notice of this in development of any cycle networks, in rural/ semi-urban/ urban fringe locations.

The Society believes that the above has led to decisions to exclude equestrian use at an early stage. **The Society recommends for each route identified to improve cycling, an assessment is made whether there is current and potential demand for equestrian use (including horse drawn carriage drivers).Equestrian users should only be excluded from multi-user routes where an overwhelming safety justification exists. Any risk analysis must also consider the risk generated as a consequence of that exclusion.**

[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e5b5fb7bc329e58db8c1c8/ate-route-check-tool-user-manual.pdf

2.2 Separation of user groups

LTN 1/20 states:

> *"5.6.1: The design speed determines relevant aspects of horizontal and vertical geometry of cycle tracks. The design speeds in Table 5-4 should be used for cycle only tracks and for rural shared use facilities where there are few pedestrians – such routes should be designed as cycle tracks which pedestrians may lawfully use rather than a footway that can be cycled on. Cycle traffic should preferably be separated from pedestrian and equestrian traffic to avoid conflict and allow cyclists to travel at a comfortable speed."*

The result of well-meaning guidance such as this frequently becomes the application of a hard and fast principle. The inclusion of the statement that "Cycle traffic should preferably be separated from pedestrian and equestrian traffic to avoid conflict and allow cyclists to travel at a comfortable speed" has led to a widespread impression that shared use can never be acceptable, or that in choosing to permit shared use, authorities may become liable in the event of an injury. This has also, we believe, in some cases impacted on the choice of furniture and barriers (such as metal A-frames) that restrict equestrian and disabled use (see below).

The most concerning result has been where authorities have deliberately chosen to exclude equestrian users from facilities that could otherwise have provided safe multi-user access including equestrians. Exclusion risks horse riders being forced to continue to use unsafe sections of road, with an overall much higher risk profile from exposure to high-speed motorised traffic, in order to overcome a much lower potential risk resulting from potential conflict with other users.

The Society recommends shared use in rural and many semi-urban fringe areas is the most appropriate type of use and that segregation will not normally be required or represent best value.

2.3 Route Width

LTN 1/20 sets out a number of comments on width, including that for bridges and other paths. Paragraph 6.5.7 identifies a recommended minimum width for shared use routes carrying up to 300 pedestrians per hour of 3.0 metres.

As with other issues, experience has shown that this minimum width guidance has subsequently been interpreted as a mandatory stipulation for funding and/or improvement of routes, which is at odds with some Public Rights of Way (PRoW) provision. As a general rule, no firm width stipulation has been recorded on many historic PRoW yet different user groups share without problems. However, Planning

Inspectorate guidance[3] identifies that all new public path orders, definitive map modification orders, definitive map reclassification orders and rail crossing orders should include a width.

Therefore, there are many routes where either the recorded legal width of a bridleway, or the physical extent of a route, is considerably less than the 3.0 metres width identified in LTN 1/20 as necessary. But provision of a 3 metre width has been reported to create a significant challenge where authorities are seeking to negotiate the creation of new routes or upgrading of footpaths for shared use, particularly in rural areas where levels of use may be unlikely to exceed 300 users per week, let alone per hour.

The Society recommends route width should be contextual to the ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood, likely predominant use, and overall context of the location. Where existing routes are repaired or improved there should be flexibility in width criteria to reflect local circumstances. A minimum usable width of 3 metres should only apply to new routes.[4]

2.4 Infrastructure

Chapter 10 of LTN 1/20 Junctions and Crossings makes no reference to equestrians at all, but LTN 1/20 is being applied to rural/semi-urban/urban fringe locations where equestrians need to use the road network. This is putting equestrians in danger as explained by the example in the text box.

The lack of consideration of equestrians in LTN 1/20 is in stark contrast to the detailed guidance given by National Highways in their Design Manual for Roads and Bridges for trunk roads and in the Society's advice notes.

The Society recommends the guidance in LTN 1/20 on junctions and crossings is revised by referring to existing published guidance, or it is made clear that the present guidance relates only to urban locations where equestrians are unlikely to be found.

Case study at Chilton Road, Upton, Oxfordshire.

Lack of provision for horse riders at this signal-controlled crossing puts them in danger. Lengthy representations were made to the project managers by the Society at the design stage when National Cycle Route 544 was being upgraded. The project managers refused to acknowledge the Society's concerns that the design made conditions less safe for horse riders who are now likely to cross when a green signal for motor traffic is displayed because horse riders cannot access the signal control box safely. We believe this is because there was no clear guidance in LTN 1/20 on equestrian provision.

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rights-of-way-advice-note-16-widths-on-orders
[4] https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/1oal4dva/dimensions-0423.pdf

Image 1. Chilton Road, Upton, Oxfordshire

See [Oxfordshire road repurposed to put walking, wheeling and cycling first - Sustrans.org.uk]

2.5 Furniture

LTN 1/20 is generally to be commended for its clear messages on the impact of gates, barriers, and other physical furniture on users, particularly on the impact of such furniture on wheelchair and mobility scooter users and users of non-standard cycles (tricycles, recumbents etc.). Significant progress has been made by Sustrans in the removal of these barriers on the National Cycle Network. However, many barriers remain on other routes and at access points to other public open spaces.

One particularly notable issue is that in many urban-fringe and rural locations, concerns exist about access by illegal motorised users, in particular off-road motorbikes (including unregistered cross-country motorbikes and illegal high-power electric motorbikes). In many locations, significant pressure is put on authorities by local elected members and on occasion police crime-reduction officers to include physical barriers restricting motorbike use on both cycle routes and other accessible public open space, even though this has clear detrimental effects on accessibility for a wide range of users.

The installation of furniture such as metal A-frames and K-frames is likely to completely exclude equestrian users (including carriage drivers) from routes. Step-through barriers for horses can be a solution, ensuring continued equestrian use, but care must be exercised to ensure that solutions remain practical. On occasion significant overbuilding and cost implications have been witnessed, sometimes with an impression that the process and inclusion of barriers has become more important than their practical utility and accessibility to users.

Attention is drawn to extensive research work performed by Natural England on the accessibility of self-closing bridle gates [5], an important piece of work which helped inform the subsequent updating of British Standard 5709:2018 (Gaps Gates and Stiles)[6], which specifies field-measurable performance requirements for gaps, gates and stiles used on footpaths and bridleways as well as other routes used by the public. This standard includes an important guiding principle of defaulting to the 'least restrictive option' at all times.

The Society considers that it is a significant anomaly that a recognised British Standard exists, and is in regular use, regards the installation of furniture on Public Rights of Way, but is virtually unheard of on the National Cycle Network and other cycle infrastructure. This is an area where greater consistency is needed, and users should be able to expect the same basic principles and standard specifications to apply to all publicly accessible routes.

The Society recommends furniture (including gates and other barriers) on all cycle routes should be compliant with British Standard BS5709:2018 (gaps Gates and Stiles) including the guiding principle of 'least restrictive' option.

2.6 Signage

Chapter 13 of LTN 1/20 covers the use of traffic signs, road markings and way marking. The guidance rightly stresses the importance of signs on highways (including public rights of way) complying with Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD). However, the recommendations on signage ignore the possibility of equestrian use. Paragraph, 6.2.38 comments that:

> *Signs to TSRGD diagram 955 (preferred) or 957 are required to indicate the presence of the track to all users, and to give effect to the traffic order creating the cycle track – advice on sign placement is given in Chapter 3 of the Traffic Signs Manual. Cycle symbol markings to TSRGD diagram 1057 should be placed at regular intervals along cycle tracks. The cycle symbols should be placed in the direction of the flow of cycle traffic, and therefore in both directions on two-way tracks.*

A particular issue which exists here is that of equestrian use in rural/ semi-urban / urban fringe locations. Under TSRGD, diagrams 955, 956 and 957 all indicate that a route is "for use by pedal cycles and pedestrians only" The Schedule 3 general directions applying to the erection of this signage dictates that:

> *"The sign must only be placed to indicate the effect of an Act, order, regulation, bylaw, resolution or notice which prohibits or restricts the use of the road by traffic."*

[5] https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4580441024102400
[6] https://www.pittecroft.org/UnderstandingBS5709.pdf

This suggests that while the intent of erecting these signs is to positively indicate the presence of the route to cyclists and pedestrians, the legal effect of the erection of the signage is in fact to indicate the existence of a legal restriction meaning that only pedestrians and cycles can use the route.

However, equestrians are lawfully permitted to use all areas of the highway[7] except a footway alongside the carriageway[8]. No general restriction prohibits use of horses on cycle tracks (including both shared use cycle tracks alongside the carriageway and separated cycle tracks). As such, the erection of diagram 955 or 956 - rather than diagram 956.1 - may, in a number of situations, be contrary to the legislative scheme for erection of traffic signage under TSRGD. The Society is concerned that equestrians are being, incorrectly, deterred from using cycle tracks where no legal restriction exists. In addition, the use of signs 955 or 956 risks equestrian users resorting to riding in the carriageway where they are at risk from motor vehicles on their right, whilst also having cyclists pass them on their left, contrary to Highway Code rule 163 which states horses must not be passed on their left.

It should also be noted that Highway Authorities have a specific legal duty[9] to ensure the provision of:

> *"adequate grass or other margins as part of the highway in any case where they consider the provision of margins necessary or desirable for the safety or accommodation of ridden horses and driven livestock[10]."*

Where is the horse rider to go on this road?

As signed, the horse rider is in a potentially dangerous situation because motor vehicles are passing them on their right with cyclists passing them on their left, that is, the horse rider is sandwiched between two faster moving vehicles.

Image 2. Sign 956.1 must be used to allow horses to use the cycling/ walking path, not sign 956.

[7] https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2010/269.html para. 33
[8] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Will4/5-6/50/section/72
[9] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/71
[10] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/71

Image 3. Sign 956/1

Image 4. Sign 956

The Society recommends the default position should therefore be that diagram 956.1, rather than 955 or 956, is erected on cycle routes (including roadside verge shared-use facilities) in rural/semi-urban/ urban fringe locations except where a specific restriction (such as a bylaw, PSPO or Traffic Regulation Order) is in place restricting equestrian use of that route.

2.7 Surfacing

The Society accepts that in urban situations a sealed asphalt surface (Tarmac) may be deemed to be the most appropriate surface to use. However, in rural/ semi-urban/urban fringe locations, and especially where PRoW are being incorporated into active travel routes, the Society is seriously concerned about the effect that LTN 1/20 guidance is having on the surfacing of bridleways and byways with asphalt.

Para 1.6.1 of LTN 1/20 identifies that:

> *"Surfaces must be hard, smooth, level, durable, permeable and safe in all weathers. Surface materials should be easy to maintain, for example asphalt and other materials highlighted in Chapter 15. Materials such as brick and stone should generally be avoided on cycle routes. They are expensive, yet often quickly become dirty, ugly, broken and rough to ride on under the impacts of vehicles and can be slippery in wet weather… Materials such as loose gravel should also be avoided."*

This paragraph is supplemented by comments in Para 8.1.2 that:

> *"For year-round utility cycling, a sealed surface is necessary (see Figure 8.1), and street lighting should be provided. Where the purpose of the route is primarily for leisure trips, typically in rural areas, these features may be less important. However, loose gravel surfaces can be difficult or inaccessible for people in wheelchairs and some types of adapted cycle."*

Experience has been that, in practice, the application of this guidance has resulted in an impression that sealed surfaces, invariably asphalt, are the only acceptable surfacing options including on bridleways and byways which may be being 'improved' for cycling as well as on new and upgraded cycle paths. In addition, an impression is given that external funding will be refused for proposals that utilise any other

surfacing options than asphalt. Indeed, this impression is reinforced in the foreword to LTN 1/20 the following is stated that The Department for Transport will also reserve the right to ask for appropriate funding to be returned for any schemes built in a way which is not consistent with the guidance.

However, the above guidance in LTN 1/20 conflicts with extensive guidance from other public agencies and highway authorities on the issues of surfacing suitable surfaces for horses. The Countryside Agency published its good-practice guidance document CA213 (On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes)[11] in 2005 and this was endorsed by the Society in 2006[12] and updated in 2024[13]. This guidance included research on the 'slipperiness' of various asphalt compounds and the risk to horses caused by inappropriate surfacing.

CA213 "On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes" [14] identifies that:

> *"In general, sealed surfaces are rigid and not preferred by horse-riders and many runners, although they may be appropriate for use on short sections where routes cross vehicular access points. Sealed surfaces can be acceptable where a large grassy verge is available. Asphalt surfaces can be intrinsically slippery or become slippery when wet and covered in decaying vegetation"*

And goes on to comment that:

> *"In rural areas, where horse-riding and carriage driving are likely to be more prevalent, the need for soft surfacings which allow faster speeds should be recognised. Bridleways may be popular with horse-riders because they offer this facility, and changes to surfacing to accommodate other user groups should not jeopardise this use if at all possible."*

Additionally, it advises that:

> *…surfaces which can encourage fast cycling speeds should be avoided for routes with steep gradients and poor forward and peripheral vision, or the surfacing should include chicanes or other features to reduce cycling speeds.*

The use of sealed asphalt surfaces has additional negative issues for all user groups. Firstly, in winter months the non-porous nature of the surface can lead to problems with standing water after rain and result in sheet ice which can be exacerbated by the collection and mulching of leaf-litter. Concerns have also been raised over the impact of repeated freeze-thaw cycles causing delamination of asphalt surfaces in the absence of adequate drainage. These issues are accentuated by the lower levels of use, and inevitable reduced levels of maintenance (including lack of gritting, vegetation clearance and drain maintenance) encountered in rural locations.

[11] https://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/wiki/uploads/OnTheRightTrack_CoAgSharedUseGPG.pdf
[12] https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/uctjszb3/horses-and-highways-surfacing-leaflet.pdf
[13] https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/fldid1aq/surfaces-0524.pdf
[14] https://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/wiki/uploads/OnTheRightTrack_CoAgSharedUseGPG.pdf

Secondly, there are genuine concerns over the urbanising and environmental impact of sealed asphalt surfaces in protected landscapes and other sensitive sites such as heathland and ancient woodland sites, including the likelihood of tarmac having a detrimental effect on nature conservation. Scientific research commissioned by Natural England[15] identifies that:

> *"…in general terms the conversion of an unsurfaced path to a surfaced path tends to be highly damaging to the invertebrate interest, both in terms of a barrier effect, but also in removing potential nesting and foraging sites for species associated with bare ground. Where surfacing is required due to health and safety considerations or other reasons then aggregate is preferable to tarmac and the choice of aggregate should be appropriate to the site geology."*

Thus, significant consideration should be given to the impact of surfacing, particularly the impact of asphalt surfaces, in order for public authorities to comply with their Section 40 biodiversity duty[16]. Guidance produced in 2023 by Paths for All [17], identifies the benefit of self-binding aggregates which can be chosen to create an attractive surface that blends well with the landscape, which they identify as being particularly important in more sensitive heritage and environmental settings.

Thirdly, anecdotal evidence indicates that use of sealed surfaces increases the speed of cyclists on these routes to the detriment of other users. However, so far, little empirical evidence appears to exist on the issue of increased speeds as a direct result of resurfacing, or on the impact of this on other users. **The Society strongly recommends further research needs to be done in this area.**

In conclusion, the Society accepts that a higher standard of surfacing may be required where there is a high level of utility cycling such as routes to local facilities (e.g. schools and/or rail stations) and routes linking outlying villages to nearby towns. However, the Society strongly recommends the use of modern rubber-crumb aggregate surfaces such as Flexipave and nu-phalt in preference to asphalt in these locations. These modern hybrid surfaces have been well received by horse riders and other users (including runners) in a number of locations, for example the Britannia Greenway on the outskirts of Bacup in Lancashire[18]**.**

The Society recommends on PRoW (bridleways and byways), well-constructed, non-sealed routes using self-binding aggregates provide an accessible, firm, and stable surface that is more suitable for a wider range of users including many wheelchair and mobility scooter users. It is likely to offer a more cost-effective solution than sealed surfaces, particularly where levels of use are lower than in urban areas and where no mechanically propelled use is expected.

[15] https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/44006
[16] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/40
[17] https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resource/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-download
[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NMm5LZo0IE

Case Study - The Mere Way byway in Cambridge: detrimental development

The Mere Way is a rural route (classified as a Byway open to all Traffic) in Cambridgeshire, with vegetation on either side which was already accommodating walkers, cyclists, and horse riders. The route was redeveloped as part of an active travel scheme in 2022 as a result of nearby housing development and the Local Authorities desire to create an active travel route to link to this. Recommendations from the BHS and other user groups for the creation of a new route were rejected in preference for the redevelopment of the Mere Way.

Image 5. The Mere Way byway, Cambridge - before

Regrettably, the Mere Way has now lost much of its rural nature and heritage as an ancient route. The vegetation has been removed with a consequential significant loss of biodiversity, and a clear change in the character of the route.

Image 6. The Mere Way byway, Cambridge - after

The Society strongly believes that such a drastic change in character, the surface used, the excessive loss of vegetation was inappropriate in this location and should be prevented in similar locations. Whilst repair and improvement of existing rights of way is to be applauded, it must be done in a manner sympathetic to the existing use of such a route and its surrounding environment, without significantly changing the character of the local area.

2.8 Bridge parapet heights

LTN 1/20 states:

> *"10.8.14: A parapet height of 1.4m is recommended on new overbridges where the cycling surface is immediately adjacent to it (1.8m if equestrians also use the bridge). It should be noted that Highways England now specify a minimum parapet height of 1.5m for new structures on trunk roads. However, the lower 1.4m height is acceptable for cyclists on other roads."*

With regard to guidance on issues such as bridge parapet height or tunnel/overhead restrictions, these can often be overcome simply through signage recommending that horse riders' dismount. Equestrian users are generally pragmatic and would rather see this in place than see their access to the route be restricted. Established BHS guidance exists on these issues [19 & 20].

The Society recommends for those that are below the recommended standard, signage recommending that horse riders dismount should be erected. Equestrians should only ever be excluded from multi-user bridges where an overwhelming safety justification exists, and that any risk analysis must also consider the risk generated by that exclusion.

2.9 Lighting

Para 15.3.2 of LTN 1/20 identifies that:

> *"It is not expected that routes outside built up areas used primarily for recreation would normally need to be lit except where there were road safety concerns, such as at crossings or where the track is directly alongside the carriageway."*

The Society agrees with this guidance but would take the opportunity to highlight the successful use of photoluminescent studs to mark the edge of some routes, such as the Britannia Greenway in Lancashire, as a successful and low impact solution where required.

The Society recommends routes outside built up areas, used primarily for recreation should not normally require lighting save where it is needed for safety reasons.

2.10 Quiet Lanes Designation

Chapter 7 of LTN 1/20 discusses the use of quiet lanes designation, under the Home Zones and Quiet Lanes (England) Regulations 2006[21]. The guidance discusses that formal designation of routes with fewer than 1000 daily vehicle movements may be appropriate in order to help drivers to anticipate the presence of cyclists, walkers, and equestrians within the carriageway.

[19] BHS Guidance bridges, gradients and steps: https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/ibxmhotr/bridges-0224.pdf
[20] BHS guidance on width, area and height: https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/1oal4dva/dimensions-0423.pdf
[21] https://www.legislation.gov.ukuksi/2006/2082/contents/made

From an equestrian point of view, the effect of the 2006 regulations appears to have been minimal, and potentially much less impactful on the usability and character of routes than originally expected. One reason for this may potentially be the scarcity of use of speed-orders as an adjunct to quiet lanes designation. The regulations permit authorities to issue a speed order reducing the speed limit on any designated quiet lane route which, otherwise, given the nature of many unrestricted singletrack country lanes, would invariably be the national speed limit.

A further significant reason for the limited effect of the 2006 regulations appears to be that many of the routes which would benefit most from quiet lane designation are used as 'rat runs' by motorised traffic and that formal designation has done little to change this. It is commonly believed that many of these rat-run routes are in fact habitually used by a minority of drivers with an established daily journey (e.g. home-work commute) who elect to bypass known congestion spots. As such, it is possible that steps such as quiet lane designation, traffic calming and removing routes from the sat-nav database will fail to result in the desired behaviour change, as routes are already known to drivers.

This conclusion would appear to be supported by the results of a yearlong trial in Cornwall, titled the Truro Quiet Lanes trial [22], which restricted through-use of over 10 miles of country lanes in rural Cornwall. The trial concluded that legal restrictions alone had failed to deliver a material shift in the behaviour of motorists using those roads.

The Society recommends combining the designation of quiet lanes with both speed limit reductions to a maximum of 20mph and the partial closure of designated routes to through-use by motorised traffic (including filtered permeability through the erection of physical barriers) is likely to offer the most cost-effective and practical solution to increasing safety and reducing traffic on many minor roads/quiet lanes.

2.11 Cost of Active Travel Schemes

The Society has serious concerns over the financial impact of the significantly raised standards specified in LTN 1/20 on already strained local and national budgets and believes these standards to be unsustainable considering the challenges facing the public purse.

The budgets involved in development of routes to LTN 1/20 standards frequently dwarf that allocated to PRoW creation or maintenance. For example, the redevelopment and improvement of an approximately 4.5 mile cycle route from Keswick to Threlkeld in the Lake District National Park in the aftermath of Storm Desmond attracted a capital budget in the region of £7.9 million (£1.7 million per mile)[23] and with a deliberate decision to exclude equestrian users. Similarly, the development of the 'Saints Trails' in

[22] https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/truro-quiet-lanes
[23] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/full-steam-ahead-for-keswick-to-threlkeld-railway-path

Cornwall, a project part-funded by National Highways designated funds and open to cyclists, walkers and equestrians attracted some £11 million in external funding[24] for a planned creation of nineteen miles of new routes (approx. £0.5 million per mile).

By way of comparison, the recent Coast to Coast National Trail upgrade project has an estimated budget of £5.6 million for trail improvements across the length of a 197 mile route (£28,5000 per mile), including the creation of approximately eighteen miles of new public rights of way (nine miles of footpath and nine miles of bridleway).

The Society recommends a more flexible funding formula to allow schemes to deliver benefits over a much wider scale/overall distance than can be achieved within the current LTN 1/20 framework. In the rural context, the delivery of a continuous traffic free route - even if delivered to a lower standard (which could potentially be improved in the future) - is strongly preferable to the delivery of a shorter or non-continuous route completed to a higher standard.

2.12 Development within the boundaries of existing Highways

One reason for the high cost of cycle infrastructure is an over reliance on development within the margins of the existing highway network. Cycle routes constructed alongside or within the carriageway - which may require new dropped pavements, installation of traffic lights and/or resurfacing of existing carriageway or footway features - all result in rapidly increasing costs. Costs could often be significantly reduced through the creation of new public rights of way further away from the existing highway network.

In addition, costs incurred though compulsory purchase for creation of routes under the road/cycle track regime could often be decreased through the utilisation of PRoW creation order powers which, as a result of S28 Highways act 1980, incur only the costs of compensation for loss in value rather than the full cost of compulsory purchase. In many cases, this cost may be significantly lower than the costs and disruption incurred as a result of carriageway works.

Many users have expressed a preference for routes that travel parallel to existing roads but ‘on the other side of the hedge/fence’ in order to give a greater distancing from traffic and enhance the ‘natural’ feeling of routes. The Society considers that these routes are likely to be both safer and more attractive to equestrians, as well as cyclists and walkers, than routes within the existing highway boundary.

Furthermore, the creation of new routes outside the existing highway boundary often offers significant opportunities for enhancement of biodiversity through tree/hedgerow planting and enhancement of routes for floral and invertebrate conservation, plus associated health and wellbeing benefits to users from increased exposure to, and connection with, nature.

[24] https://nationalhighways.co.uk/article/saints-alive-cyclists-hit-the-trail-across-cornwall-thanks-to-national-highways-funding/

The Society recommends consideration should be given to the creation of new routes through highway creation powers in preference to the adoption/alteration of popular equestrian routes, and consideration of the provision of routes that travel parallel to existing roads but on the other side of the hedge/fence to give a greater feeling of safety due to greater distancing from traffic.

3. General conclusions and recommendations

LTN 1/20 has a number of serious weaknesses in its lack of consideration of equestrian users and its wider applicability to rural /semi-rural/urban fringe locations. These weaknesses are compromising equestrian safety and deterring equestrians from using roads and the public rights of way network. In places, LTN 1/20 ignores previous guidance, for example, the British Standard BS 5709:2018, the Countryside Agency's CA213 (*On the right track: surface requirements for shared use routes),* National Highway's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges plus the Society's advice notes.

The Society concludes that new guidance is required for rural/semi-rural/urban fringe locations where there should be default expectation that all cycle infrastructure must be inclusive of equestrian users unless a clear rationale exists for their exclusion. New guidance should clarify the contextual nature of standards of construction and maintenance though reference to the established legal duty of a highway authority to render the highway*, "in such good repair as renders it reasonably passable for the ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood at all seasons of the year without danger caused by its physical condition."* Cycle infrastructure must not result in equestrian exclusion where less restrictive solutions (such as recommending that riders dismount) would suffice.

A number of **detailed recommendations** are made in the text above. These are summarised as follows:

1. **Consultation**: For each route identified to improve cycling, an assessment is made whether there is current and potential demand for equestrian use (including horse drawn carriages). Equestrian users should only be excluded from multi-user routes where an overwhelming safety justification exists. Any risk analysis must also consider the risk generated as a consequence of that exclusion.

2. **Segregation of user groups**: Shared use in rural and many semi-urban fringe areas is the most appropriate type of use and that segregation will not normally be required, appropriate, or represent best value.

3. **Route width** should be contextual to the ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood, likely predominant use, and overall context of the location. Where existing routes are repaired or improved there should be flexibility in width criteria to reflect local circumstances. A minimum usable width of 3 metres should only apply to new routes.

4. **Infrastructure**: The guidance in LTN 1/20 on junctions and crossings is revised by referring to existing published guidance or it is made clear that the present guidance relates only to urban locations where equestrians are unlikely to be found.

5. **Furniture**: Furniture (including gates and other barriers) on all cycle routes should be compliant with British Standard BS5709:2018 (gaps Gates and Stiles) including the guiding principle of 'least restrictive option'.

6. **Signage**: The default position should be that diagram 956.1, rather than 955 or 956, is erected on cycle routes (including roadside verge shared-use facilities) in rural / semi-urban / urban fringe locations, except where a specific restriction (such as a bylaw, PSPO or Traffic Regulation Order) is in place restricting equestrian use of that route.

7. **Surfacing**: On Public Rights of Way (bridleways and byways), well-constructed, non-sealed surfaces using self-binding aggregates provide an accessible, firm, and stable surface that is more suitable for a wider range of users including many wheelchair and mobility scooter users. It is likely to offer a more cost-effective solution than sealed surfaces, particularly where levels of use are lower than in urban areas and where no mechanically propelled use is expected. The Society recommends that further research is undertaken to ascertain the impact that sealed surfaces have on the speed of cyclists.

8. **Bridge parapet heights**: For those parapets that are below the recommended standard, signage recommending horse riders dismount should be erected. Equestrians should only ever be excluded from multi-user bridges where an overwhelming safety justification exists, and that any risk analysis must also consider the risk generated by that exclusion.

9. **Lighting**: Routes outside built up areas used primarily for recreation should not normally require lighting save where it is needed for safety reasons.

10. **Quiet lanes**: Both speed limit reductions and the partial closure of designated routes to through-use by motorised traffic are needed for the most cost-effective and practical solution to increasing safety and reducing traffic on many minor roads / quiet lanes.

11. **Cost of Active Travel Schemes**: A more flexible funding formula to allow schemes to deliver benefits over a much wider scale/overall distance than can be achieved within the current LTN 1/20 framework. In the rural context, the delivery of a continuous traffic free route - even if delivered to a lower standard - is strongly preferable to the delivery of a shorter or non-continuous route completed to a higher standard.

12. **Development within the boundaries of existing highways**: Consideration should be given to the creation of new routes through highway creation powers in preference to the adoption/alteration of popular equestrian routes, and the provision of routes that travel parallel to existing roads but on the other side of the hedge/fence to give a greater feeling of safety due to greater distancing from traffic.

Finally, **a good example where equestrian needs have been catered** for is the East Leeds Orbital Route where there was early consultation with the equestrian community, the use of appropriate surfacing, and the provision of Pegasus crossings.

Case Study – East Leeds Orbital Route

A prime example of access for equestrians being properly included in active travel schemes is the East Leeds Orbital Route (ELOR) www.elor.uk. The 7km bridleway along the ELOR which serves as an orbital route for moving traffic through the east of the city keeps horse riders safely off the road with light-controlled Pegasus crossings to ensure horses can cross the connecting roads safely.

When the ELOR was being planned there was a lot of stakeholder engagement with the stakeholder community in the area to ensure that there was the correct design of the route and associated facilities, and appropriate surfacing.

Image 7. The first equestrian use of the ELOR, supported by West Yorkshire Police Mounted Section.

BHS press release following the launch of the route: www.bhs.org.uk/about-us/latest-news/actor-martin-clunes-comes-to-leeds-to-see-the-award-winning-equestrian-infrastructure-on-the-east-leeds-orbital-route