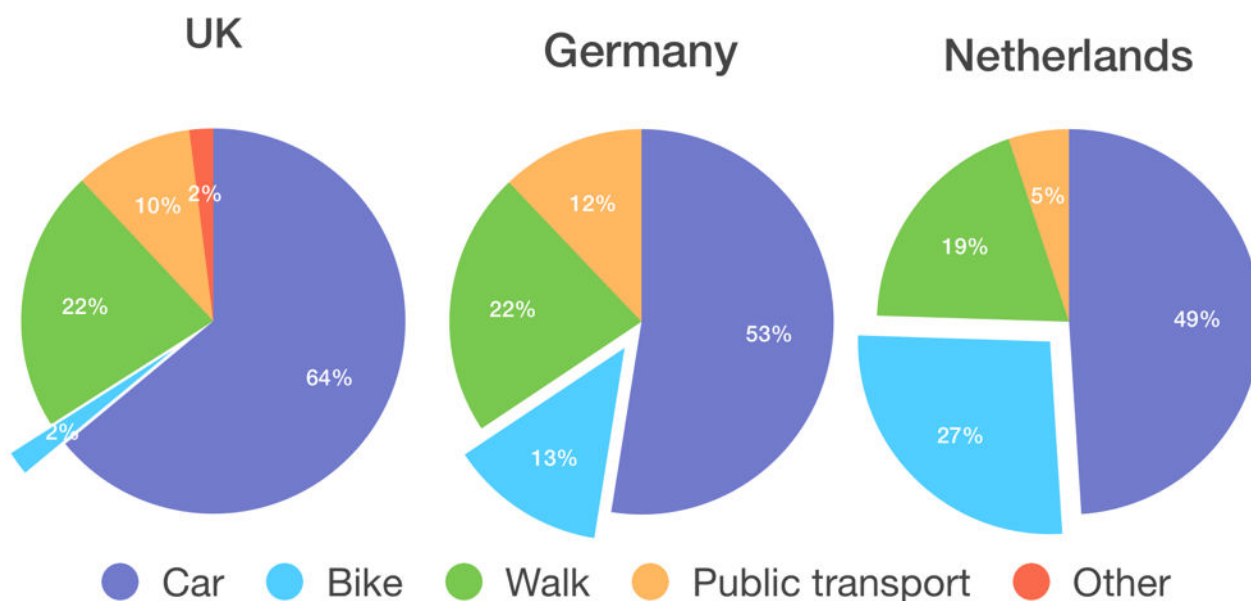


Godalming

cycling issues and proposals

The bicycle is one of the most under-used forms of transport in Britain. For the Dutch, over a quarter of trips are made by bike, for Germans it's around one in eight. Here in Britain, just one in 50 trips are made by bike.



As these charts show, cycling's transport role in Germany and the Netherlands principally displaces the private car, rather than walking or public transport. Reducing car travel from the 64% of trips in Britain to 53% or 49% as it is in those countries would contribute to:

- a reduction in congestion
- a more active, healthy population
- a reduction in air, noise and other pollution

Locally, more people cycling would mean reduced pressure on parking in the town centre and reduce congestion on the roads at key times. This is particularly the case if cycling is used as a mode of travel to work, when the roads are busiest.

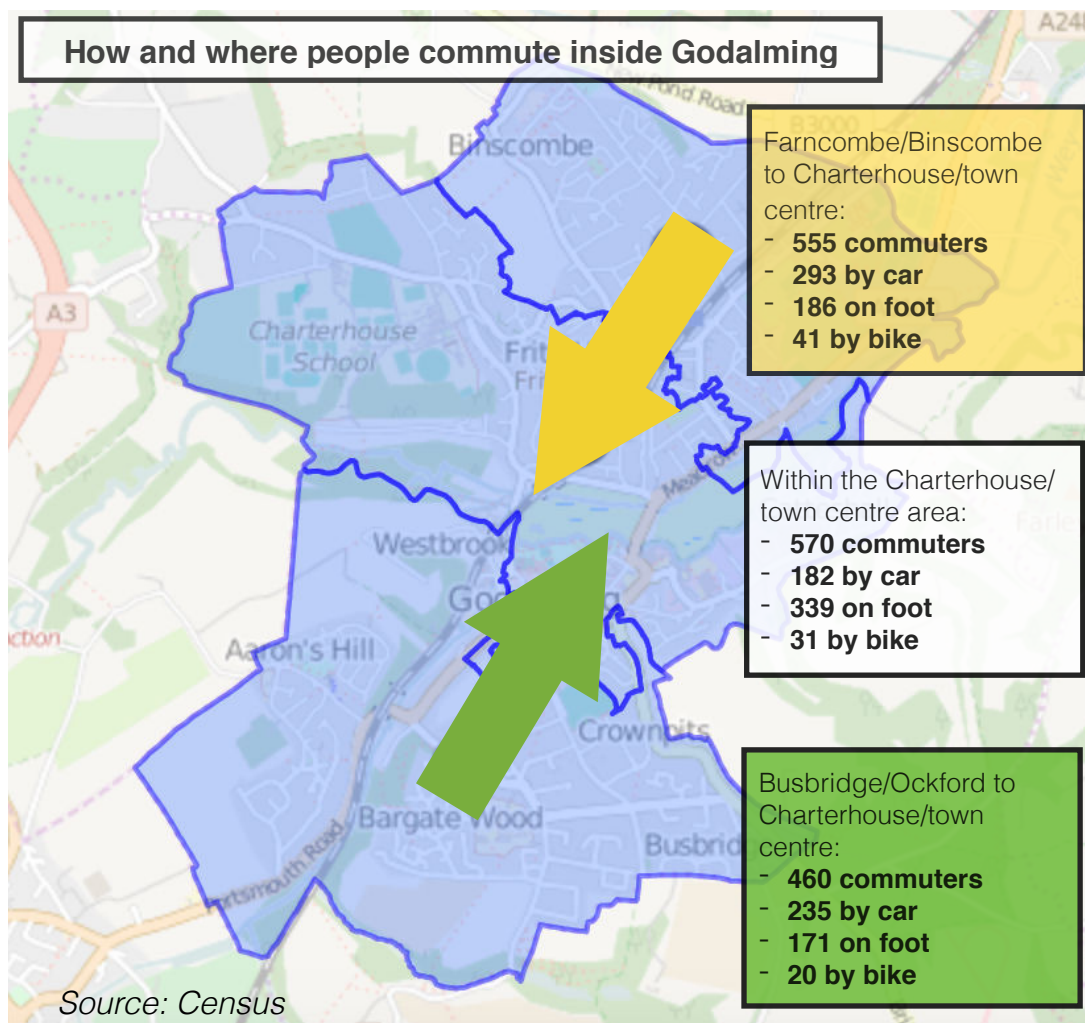
For instance, around 1,000 vehicles travel into Godalming along Meadow/Bridge Road between 8-9 in the morning. The evidence below suggests that as much as a quarter of these cars may be coming from as close as Farncombe or Binscombe and travelling elsewhere in Godalming. Even if only a third of these trips could be shifted to bike (or walking) this would contribute greatly to improving traffic circulation and reducing the impact of traffic.

The evidence below will show that there is a substantial opportunity to shift existing driving trips to cycling in Godalming.

Cycling in Godalming - current conditions

Although cycling is a relatively popular leisure activity, it is little used as a transport mode in Godalming. According to the 2011 Census only around 2% of trips to work are made by bike, slightly lower than the national figure. Only 1.8% of respondents to the survey indicated that they used the bike to go shopping.

Even for those travelling to work within Godalming (ie residents who work somewhere else in Godalming, but not at home), this rises to 5% (117 people), which is still very low. By comparison, 1037 people walk to work within Godalming, and an amazing 1123 drive.



The major flows (over 200 commuters) within Godalming are summarised above. In total 1,585 people commute to the town centre or Charterhouse area, either from the two other areas, or within that areas. Of that total 45% drive, 44% walk, 6% go by bike and 3% bus.

Many of these car trips are very short - just a mile or so, and many could easily be made by bike if conditions were better.

Challenges

So why are cycling levels in Godalming so low?

Busy roads

The principal barrier for most people to cycling more is the perceived danger of roads. Although traffic levels have not increased in Godalming over the last ten years, there is no evidence that people feel that this has happened.

Of the question posed in the Godalming and Farncombe Neighbourhood Plan survey, **82.9%** of respondents agreed with the statement that “some people believe that the roads in the area have generally become more dangerous for cyclists, walkers and unsupervised children.”

Part of the problem for cycling lies with the fact that for most trips there are no alternatives to using the busy ‘distributor’ roads, such as the A3100 from Meadrow to Ockford Ridge, or Charterhouse Road. Other roads have had measures to restrain traffic, with speed cushions, or even one, small 20 mph limit (outside Loseley Fields School). Such measures can help to slow traffic, but are not considered appropriate for the busiest roads.

Hills

Godalming’s topography of hills is considered a problem for some of those living in or on the hills of Busbridge, Ockford Ridge, Aaron’s Hill, Charterhouse and Frith Hill.

However, adverse topography hasn’t reduced cycling’s popularity as a mode of transport in other places, particularly Bristol, where cycling has increased rapidly as a mode of transport thanks to investment in new facilities.

Furthermore, modern bikes are well equipped with adequate gears to cope with most hills, while more and more people are opting for **electric bikes**, which eliminate the discomfort or difficulty associated with hills. In mature cycling countries, electric bikes now constitute a high proportion of sales.

There are also a few ways in which roads can be redesigned to make cycling up hills more comfortable. Cycling uphill, for instance, at low speeds, is more uncomfortable than downhill, where most people can easily reach 20mph or more, reducing conflicts with overtaking traffic.

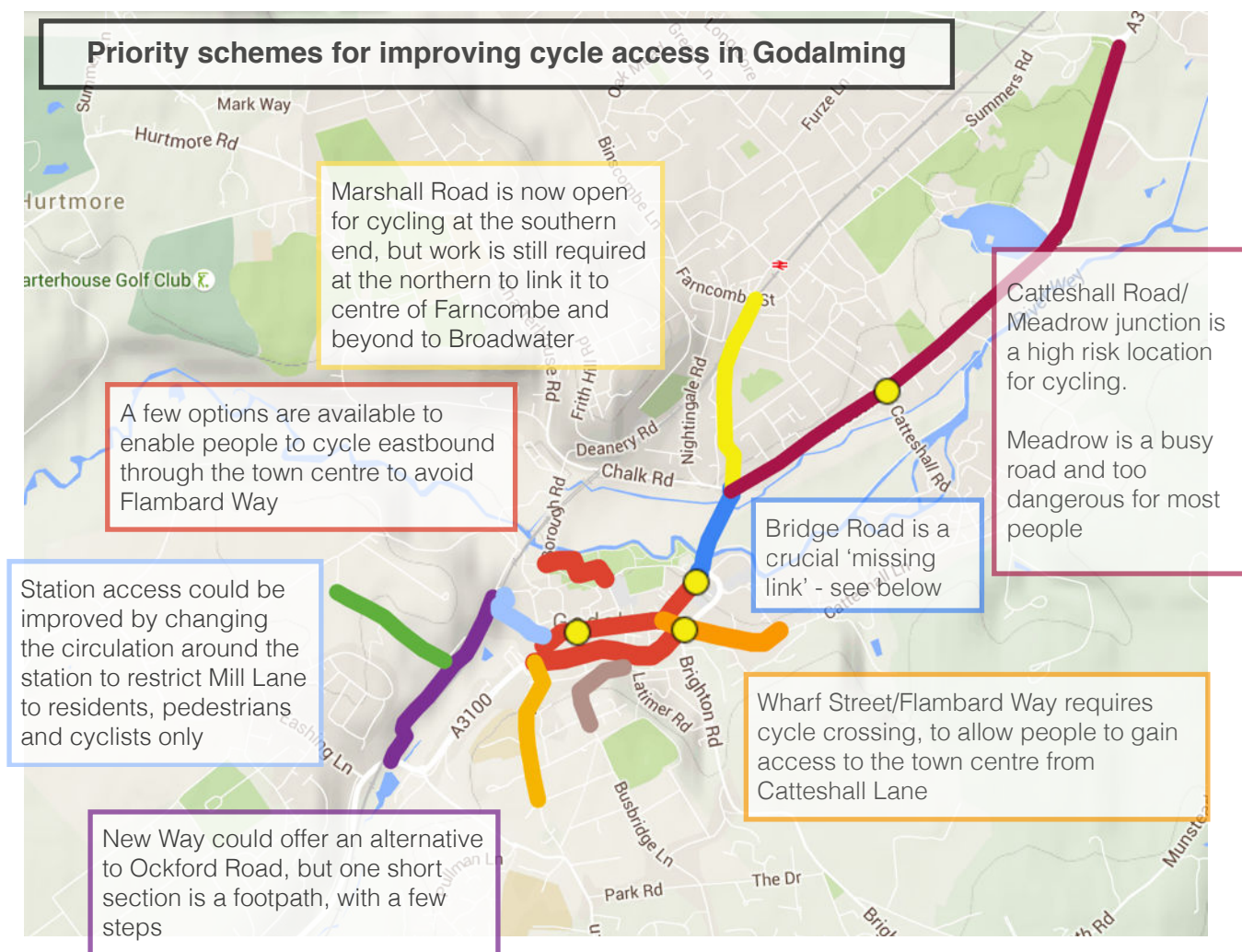
By designing uphill ‘crawler cycle lanes’ (similar to those for heavy traffic to allow overtaking on hills), the difficulty of climbing these hills could be reduced somewhat. Such lanes could be built by repainting the centre line to have slightly narrower main carriageways with a single, uphill cycle lane (minimum 1.5 metres wide). Candidate roads for this approach would be Holloway Hill, Charterhouse Road and Eashing Lane.

Driver behaviour

In a few cases, poor driver behaviour can deter people from cycling. Speeding, close overtaking, aggressive manoeuvres or inconsiderate parking can all make cycling more difficult and unpleasant. This is restricted to only the minority of drivers, but better enforcement of existing traffic laws (for all road users) would help to improve conditions for cycling.

Solutions

The Godalming Cycle Campaign have compiled a list of schemes that have long been seen as priorities for many years. A few of the most prominent of these are summarised on the map below.



The schemes aim to tackle the main barriers for people: the busy roads that pass through the town, especially the A3100, which cuts the town in two. Many more trips could be made from the flatter parts of town, such as Farncombe, Binscombe and Catteshall, if a few key links were made better.

There have, of course, been some improvements recently. The widening of the footpath into a cycle path at Marshall Road, one of two schemes identified over 10 years ago - see

below, has helped both cyclists and pedestrians, but now needs to be connected with good facilities to ensure that there is a continuous network for cycling (and walking).

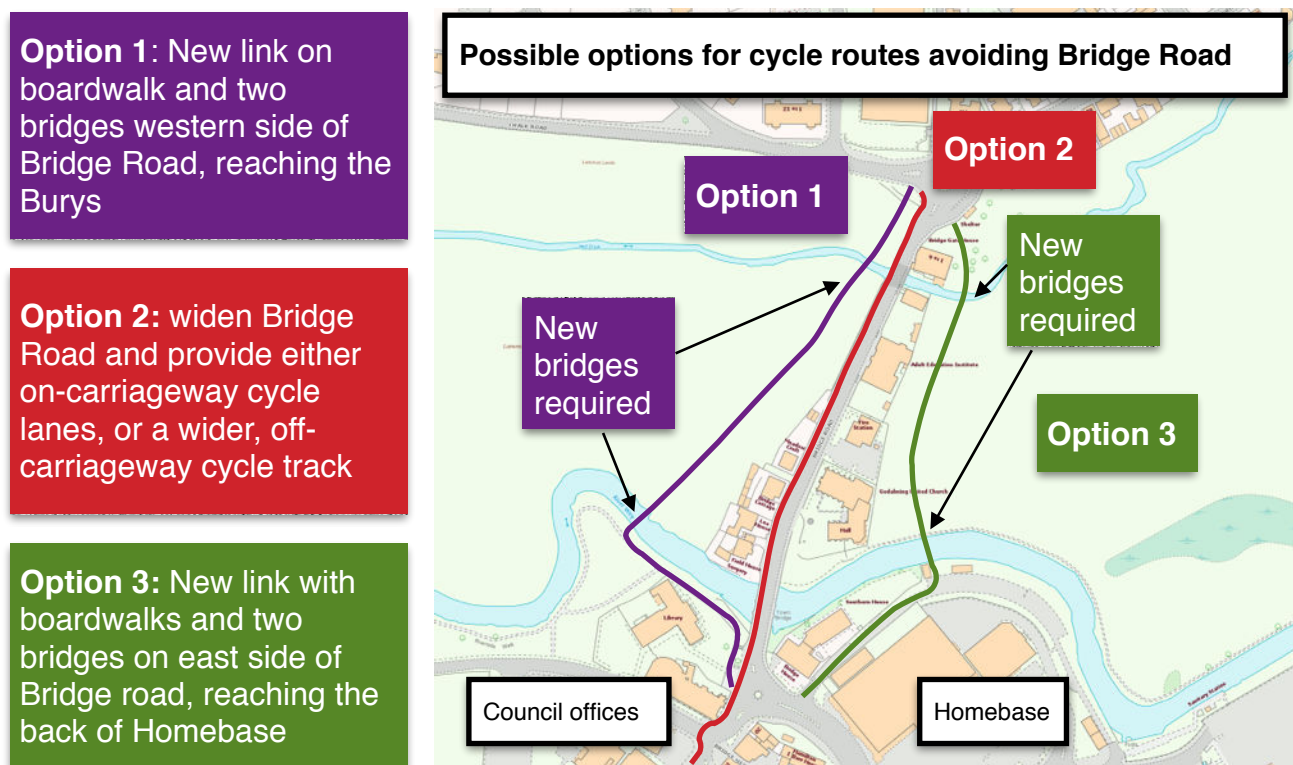
In 2002, the Waverley Local Plan identified two priority schemes for Godalming:

Extract from Policy M7 of the Waverley Local Plan 2002 (Ch. 12, p. 8)

- (e) widening the public footpath between Marshall Road and Chalk Road to form a shared footpath and cycle route;
- (f) a new footpath and cycle route, with associated footbridges over the River Wey, between the Wey Inn roundabout and the road behind the Homebase store;

While the first of these schemes has been completed, the second of these schemes has yet to be considered in detail.

Three possible options exist, which have their benefits and drawbacks.



Option 1 might infringe on residents views, would create a path through an area which is currently not used, and would mean a bridge in the middle of the Burys.

Option 2 would be difficult to achieve, unless existing road was narrowed slightly to accommodate a wider shared footway/cycleway. This is improbable.

Option 3 is that proposed under the Waverley Plan, but bridges would have to be fairly high to allow navigation up to the Town Bridge, adding to the cost.

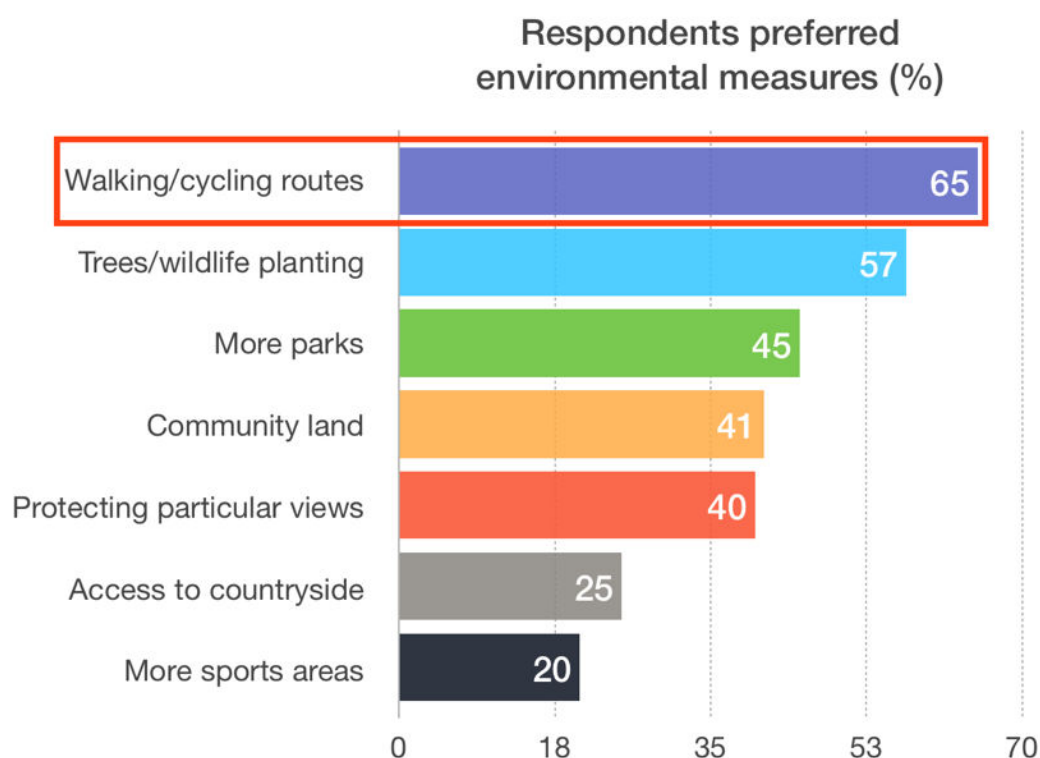
New bridges/boardwalks would likely cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, if not millions.

Conclusions

Cycling in Godalming is a little used mode at present, but could play a much more significant role in transport. Cycling levels similar to Oxford (16% of commuting) or Cambridge (27%) would have an immediate, substantial effect on congestion and people's perceptions of the safety of their streets.

To achieve even a slight increase in cycling levels, better conditions are required, particularly on the busiest roads.

The responses to the Neighbourhood Plan show clearly that people feel that better routes are needed - '**better walking/cycling routes**' scored highest amongst residents top three priorities for environmental improvements - see below.



When asked '**what would encourage you to walk or cycle more**' 49% of respondents wanted to see existing paths better maintained, while 48% wanted to see more paths. 37% specifically want to see more cycling facilities, while 27% want lower speed limits. For only 13% of the population, nothing would make them walk or cycle more. Many of these respondents are likely to be infirm.

The results of the survey, and the evidence from the Census show that cycling could play a much more significant role in transport and that there is support from residents for better conditions. The lack of safe routes, particularly on the major roads, severely restricts the number of people who currently use cycling as a mode of transport.

Produced by Chris Peck with assistance from the Godalming Cycle Campaign - 3/12/15