

Paul Troop – Bicester 20mph Speed Limits

Bicester Streets Historically Managed for Cars

The county is required to manage the street network for all users. But in Bicester, this has not been happening. To date, the network has been built almost exclusively for cars, often with comfortable, wide, and multiple-lane carriageways but narrow, unprotected, footpaths and few, if any, cycle paths.

Risk Increases Exponentially with Speed

A person riding a bike hit at by a vehicle at just over 30 is likely to die, but if hit at just over 20 is likely to survive. Speed is therefore a massive risk and disincentive to cycling. It discourages many but the brave and foolhardy and explains why cycling rates are so terribly low in Bicester compared to towns where the streets are properly managed.

Benefits of Cycling being Choked

Cycling is a policy 'no brainer'. It should be quick, convenient, enjoyable, healthy, mentally stimulating, sociable, quiet, good for the environment, and support the local economy. But at present, it is much too difficult to cycle in Bicester.

Network Not Resilient

The historical approach also puts all the transport eggs in one, very vulnerable, basket. This was shown this Tuesday when the closure of the M40 routed much of the traffic through Bicester, bringing many vehicle movements to a halt, and the town to a standstill.

Change Less Consequential than Imagined

The consequence of changing speed zones for many drivers is also much less than some imagine. For instance, average daytime speeds along Queen's Avenue, the main arterial route through Bicester are already below 20. Other arterial roads have averages only a little over 20.

Too Conservative

However, the proposals do little other than reflect much of the status quo. The 20 zones are almost exclusively closed residential neighbourhoods where the vehicle speeds are probably closer to 10-15 mph already. The main arterial roads that pose the danger due to non-existent or poor cycling infrastructure are largely untouched and remain at 30, or even 40. We would have liked to see many of these revert to 20, particularly around the town centre. To facilitate and encourage cycling, the whole route from home to destination needs to be safe, not just portions of the route.

Qualified Welcome

Therefore, we give a qualified welcome to the proposals as a small step in the right direction but ask that speeds on the arterial routes are reviewed soon.