



Cycling England

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**Professional Support**

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**A390 West of County  
Hall Truro for Cornwall  
County Council**

**Final Report**

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# 1 Introduction

This report was prepared on behalf of Cycling England by Alex Sully of Transport Initiatives and checked by Adrian Lord of Arup. It follows a request from Cornwall County Council (CCC) for advice on cycle measures on the A390 on the western outskirts of Truro. The reason for this request was to help explore whether any additional opportunities to encourage cycling could be identified to supplement current proposals for this corridor.

## 1.1 Background

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Cornwall County Council is currently developing an eastbound bus priority corridor to link a new 'park and ride' scheme on the western side of Truro with the city centre. As a consequence, sections of inbound bus lanes are to be provided along the A390 to the west of County Hall where space permits. These will be available for use by cyclists.

This route is the busiest commuter route in the county. It is often congested during peak periods and remains busy for much of the day. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this route is not used by many cyclists. This is possibly do to the high levels of traffic but more likely due to the nature of the topography which often requires steep climbs to join the A390. This road may be loosely described as following the undulating crest of a ridge running east to west. Cycling is further discouraged by the climb out of the city centre that faces cyclists heading in a westerly direction.

Despite these obvious deterrents there is potential for increased cycle traffic generated by the mixed land uses along the ridge. Alongside the 3 km or so stretch of the A390 between the small community of Threemilestone and County Hall lies a mix of residential development, Truro College, Richard Lander secondary school and a number of employment generators including the Royal Cornwall Hospital. It is evident that opportunities to provide for cycle access were not pursued during recent commercial development and the expansion of the hospital but some of these, including improved access to the hospital will be remedied during works either currently underway or programmed for the near future.

A cycle track to the south of the A390 links Threemilestone and the existing Richard Lander secondary school. This cycle track is currently in the course of improvement. It is understood that the school is to be relocated westwards to a new site between Threemilestone and Truro College on the southern side of the A390.

Included within the long term aspirations for this area is a southern relief road which would, if built, take traffic off the A 390. The potential impact of this proposal has no bearing on this corridor at this time since it is not currently programmed to be delivered within the current Local Transport Plan period.

## 2 Methodology

The A 390 was cycled from County Hall as far as the existing pedestrian crossing which crosses the dual carriageway to the west of the hospital. This included cycling both on the carriageway and on the available sections of cycle track. In view of the absence of clear signing, sections of footway were also cycled. In addition a short length of the A 390 was cycled to the east of County Hall, including the cycle track which links to the National Cycle Network to the south west.

During the course of the site visit (from approximately 1.30 to 2.45 pm) five cyclists were observed, two cycling on the carriageway (eastbound), one using a section of cycle track (indistinguishable at that point from the footway), one using the footway and one, a woman, encountered within the grounds of County Hall. When questioned, this cyclist expressed the view that the carriageway of the A390 was hazardous to ride on and for this reason she sought alternatives whenever possible, especially to the use of the roundabout next to County Hall.

Following the site visit discussions were held with members of CCC about the bus lane and cycle proposals.

## 3 Observations and Recommendations

### 3.1 Observations

The A 390 west of County Hall is not a cycle-friendly environment. This results primarily from the speed and volume of traffic and the presence of a number of roundabouts.

On-road conditions are not helped by the presence of at least one central island which leaves too little room for a cyclist to be overtaken by motor traffic. This is close to the top of a rise and cyclists heading west at this point will be travelling slowly because of the gradient. This is likely to be perceived as impeding the passage of motorists who are unable to overtake and must slow down and match the speed of the cyclist.

The existing off-road cycle facilities encountered were poor, with inadequate detailing, and of a variety of widths; some less than the desirable minimum standard. There was also ample evidence of poor maintenance of surfaces and overhanging vegetation. The existing cycle facilities suffered an almost complete lack of legibility, and the extent of legal opportunities to cycle off the carriageway were equally ill-defined, due to an absence of signing. There was, however, physical evidence of works in progress to address these issues in a number of places.

A Toucan crossing has been constructed to create a cycle link (currently incomplete) to the hospital. In other respects opportunities for cyclists to cross are poor although there are proposals to convert an existing Pelican adjacent to the secondary school to joint use.

The link to the hospital is understood to be primarily to provide access to the existing cycle parking. Whilst this is acknowledged as desirable, the hospital site is large and of a kind that lends itself to the provision of parking in a range of locations rather than just one centralised point. This link also fails to make connections to the commercial development beyond the hospital (as does the pedestrian-only crossing and access further west).

The opportunities to link the residential and employment areas along this corridor to the city centre by routes away from the A390 are limited due to the topography and other constraints such as the need to cross the railway but discussions suggest that there may be some worth exploring.

### 3.2 Recommendations

It is acknowledged that little can be done to improve on-road conditions for cyclists at the present time and only limited scope exists for extending off-road provision. There are, however a number of short and longer term activities that could potentially encourage cycling within the corridor as follows:

Recommendations	Comment
1. Reduce the speed limit from 40 mph to 30 mph westbound from the hospital roundabout	It is understood that the target road widths comprise bus lanes 3.0m wide and general traffic lanes 3.5m wide. The width of the bus lanes means that buses will not be able to overtake cyclists in busy periods because they will not be able to leave the bus lane to do so. This could result in bus drivers either trying to squeeze past with dangerous consequences or intimidating cyclists perceived as holding them up. At 30 mph the speed differential will be less, especially as cyclists have the benefit of a downhill gradient for much of this section.

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| 2. Investigate the possibilities of creating cycle access to the commercial development by converting the existing Pelican crossing to the west of the hospital roundabout to shared use and the creation of links to both the Treliske and Wren industrial Estates        | Such a link could also create a more convenient connection to the hospital from Threemilestone as well as creating links to the other employment opportunities (see also 3 below) |
| 3. Encourage the hospital to provide secure covered cycle parking at a number of suitable locations within the site  | The other employment sites north of the A390 may also benefit from the provision of cycle parking (see 9 below)   |
| 4. Commission a wider study of the area to establish what other potential cycle links may be established, including to the city centre   | Such a report could inform and support the provision of the southern relief road  |
| 5. Establish what funding might be available for the delivery of the links identified in 4 above as the result of the recent announcement of the increased budget for Cycling England which includes more funding for links between schools and the national Cycle Network | Information on the nature of the increased budget was not available at the time of writing this report (13 July 2006)   |
| 6. Training for forward planning and development control staff plus highways design teams (to include district council staff if at all possible)   | To enable planners and designers to maximise cycling opportunities within future development schemes and road improvements  |
| 7. Ensure the building of the new school makes as many links to adjacent residential areas as possible and does not itself create a barrier to links between these areas   | Through links or peripheral links may aid movements between residential areas   |
| 8. Establishment of wider networks for urban areas   | The existence of comprehensive networks helps demonstrate 'reasonableness' when seeking development contributions   |
| 9. Introduce a 'Take a Stand' scheme to provide free cycle parking stands to local businesses and organisations, such as doctors' surgeries, with the aid of local cycle groups  | For more information see:<br><a href="http://www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/cycle_parking.php">http://www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/cycle_parking.php</a>  |