

Shotley Peninsula Cycling Campaign

Supporting notes: Freston Hill

Freston Hill would be one of the sections to benefit most from an Ipswich-Shotley cycle path. Riders inevitably cycle slower uphill and, especially inexperienced riders, can have a tendency to wobble. This, coupled with the relatively faster speed of the passing vehicles, can make the experience more unpleasant and potentially dangerous. Freston Hill is the main artery for leisure riders, school children and commuters to get to the Shotley peninsula from Ipswich.

A cycle path on Freston Hill would therefore offer great advantages for the community as a whole. A preliminary survey carried out in 2019 identified a potential off-road route from the bottom of the hill to Woolverstone village with the aim of creating a 3m wide path with a small grass 'buffer' between the cycle path and the road. The survey showed this should be possible for the whole distance except for a short distance at the top of the hill. It is thought that the route would be on Highways Authority land, but further work would be required to confirm this. The following notes are provided to help explain the different sections. The cycle path is hereafter referred to as the 'path'.

The path would be on the E side of the B1456 starting at the lay-by at the bottom of the hill, just S of Freston Brook. The lay-by offers plenty of room to form a 'jug-handle' in the downhill direction to ensure riders are positioned correctly to re-join (cross) the road to continue towards Ipswich, while also allowing an easy sweep off the road to start the uphill section.

Between this lay-by and the lay-by at Monkey Gates there is a grass verge of sufficient width to create a 2.5m path with a small (0.5m) verge between this and the highway.

At the Monkey Gates lay-by there is a good deal of room, sufficient to enable more than one option of route to be chosen, but the drawing shows the path using the current grass area along the roadside, providing a straight route onto the grass area by Monkey Lodge.

From Monkey Lodge to the top of Freston Hill there is a lot of scrub to be cleared, but a survey suggests no trees of value. The survey suggests that there is plenty of room for a path and a small separating verge until about 40m before Hill House. Here, the fence line suggests there is insufficient room for a separating verge, but still room for a 3m path. At Hill House the footway is less than 2.5m wide - the desirable minimum according to the Department for Transport Cycle Infrastructure Design Manual (CIDM) - and abuts the road. 'Cyclists Dismount' signs may be needed over this narrow 40m section. A wider path would be preferred here but this is considered an acceptable compromise considering the overall benefits of the whole of this section of the route.

Beyond Hill House the path would cross the bus stop 'pull in'. Cycle lanes cannot be taken through a marked bus stop area – the cycle lane is simply discontinued over the length of the bus stop markings (CIDM).

The path would then continue on the verge outside Holly Cottage. Here the verge is currently quite narrow, but it may be that the holly hedge has grown over the years. Cutting this back should give the required width, but further investigation is needed.

At around 70m south of Holly Cottage the verge widens again sufficiently to allow plenty of space for the path from here to the track to Freston Tower. From this track it may be possible to use the field edge to create a path from here to the edge of Woolverstone village.

The survey shows that it is highly likely that an off-road path could be created from the bottom of Freston Hill to the edge of Woolverstone village, a distance approaching 2km, covering some of the

most off-putting sections of the Ipswich to Shotley road. This would provide an excellent cycle path, all on the same side of the road (no crossing) that appears to be all on Highway Authority land, thus minimising cost and planning difficulty.

Further investigation is needed to check land boundaries and would also need Suffolk County Council to consider the safety implications of the narrow path at Hill House, but at this stage this section of the Ipswich-Shotley path looks very promising and certainly worth progressing for the huge benefits it could give to cyclists, pedestrians and disabled.