"Working for a cycle-friendly Reading"
www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

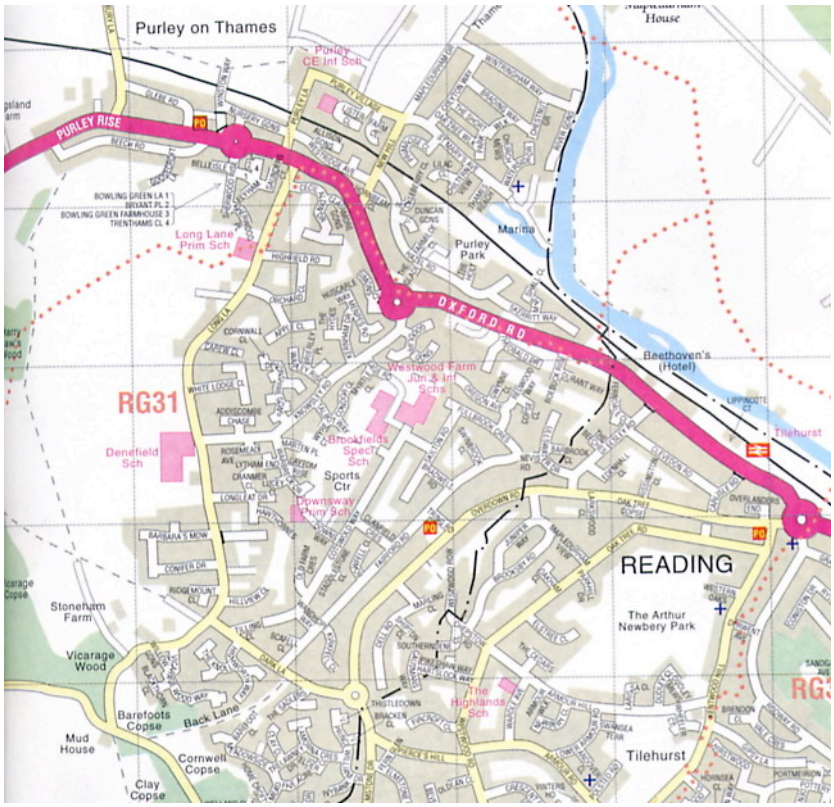
Purley Cycle Route Audit

Purpose

The Reading Cycle Campaign (RCC) has undertaken this cycle audit of Purley on Thames at the request of West Berkshire District Council (WBDC). The Purley area to be considered is as agreed with WBDC. RCC members have studied the area for routes that are likely to be of particular benefit to cyclists. They then cycled the various sections noting the existing infrastructure, any specific problems, and then listing a range of improvement measures, both short and long term.

Leisure routes have not been considered as much as utility routes, but some comments are included where they are likely to be well used.

This report includes the specific recommendations as well as general ones.



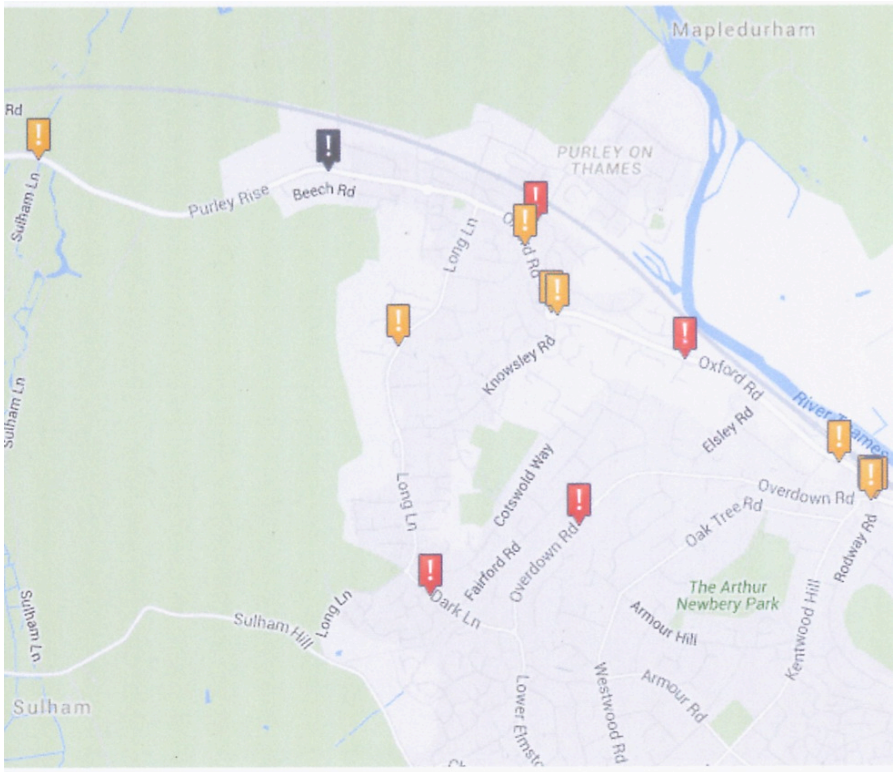
Areas considered and key cycling attractions

Purley is mainly a suburban housing area, merging with the north-west side of Tilehurst. It has few attractors to cycling other than the schools, in particular Denefield comprehensive school, and to a lesser extent the lower schools at Long Lane and Westwood Farm.
Other areas to consider are the local shopping centre of Tilehurst village in School Road, and the local shops in Overdown Road. Improved cycling links to these areas from Purley which is mainly to the north-west would be useful.

Purley could be a good generator of cycle traffic into a number of locations including: Tilehurst Station 0.5 to 1.5 miles, Reading town centre 3-4 miles, or the Royal Berks Hospital and University about 5 miles. With mainly flat terrain and existing cycle tracks or shared paths along much of the Oxford Road and Portman Road into Reading, there is potential for linking to these and other Reading Borough Council cycle routes. Other cycling movements that need to be considered are linking the Purley area to Pangbourne and through Tilehurst to Calcot and Theale.

Taking an average overall cycling speed of 10mph gives a time to cycle into central Reading of about 30 minutes, which is comparable with car and bus journeys at peak times.

Cycle collisions in the last five years are mainly confined to the Oxford Road, mainly in the central Purley section, but also towards the boundaries at both east and west. Other cyclists' collisions have been on Long Lane, Dark Lane and Overdown Road. These highlight that there are a number of roads that are creating dangers for the existing cyclists, and which are a deterrent to others cycling.



Reference www.crashmap.co.uk.
Yellow - slight, red - serious, black – fatal

Suggested routes

The following routes are suggested:

A. A route linking central Purley to Tilehurst Station and onwards into Reading.
B. Improved routes to Denefield School
C. A route from the Denefield school area towards the Tilehurst Village centre

All of these three routes do have some existing measures to assist cycling, including formal cycle routes and 20mph or traffic calmed areas.

In addition to the routes further traffic calming and 20mph zones would help encourage cycling. On some routes this may be a major part of the cycle route infrastructure.

With the position of the District Boundary it would be necessary to liaise with Reading BC to try to obtain cycling improvements that would link to those in Purley. Some of these are likely to be longer term commitments.

Route problems and possible solutions

For simplicity the various routes are grouped as:

1. A329 Oxford Road and parallel alternative routess,
2. Routes to Denefield and other schools,
3. Routes to Tilehurst Village and Little Heath School.
4. Leisure routes
5. General

Route	location	problem	Suggested measures
1	Oxford Road	A heavily trafficked road that is intimidating to cyclists although the 30mph limit is better than the previous 40mph.	Extend the shared path from Tilehurst station to the Thames Path to Skerritt Way (north of A329). Note: most of this is in the Reading BC area.
	Oxford Road - alternative	ditto	Improve the surfacing and widen the Thames Path link to Skerritt Way, and sign the route via Hazel Road as an alternative quiet route
	Oxford Road - alternative	ditto	A long term proposal for an off-carriageway cycle track should be considered, this may require land acquisition
	Oxford Road west	Fast and heavy traffic	A long term proposal for an off-carriageway cycle track or shared path should be considered, this may require land acquisition.
	Thames Path link into Reading	Bridge with steps, within the Reading BC area	An improved link to the Thames Path by the Roebuck could help open up the Thames-side path into Reading. Wheeling ramps at the side of the steps should be provided.
	Oxford Road at Knowsley Road	The roundabout is difficult for cyclists	The carriageway widths could be reduced at the splitter islands making it easier for off-carriageway cyclists and pedestrians and safer for cyclists on-carriageway.
2	Knowsley Road	Existing segregated path is slow and interrupted	Remove the bus bays and widen the shared or segregated path. Improve side-road crossings with entry-treatments.
	Reading R5 extension to Denefield	from Overdown Rd using side-roads	Improve traffic calming.
3	Long Lane	Traffic dominance despite existing traffic calming	Provide cycle lanes on uphill sections where possible. Change some of the traffic calming measures so that cyclists do not have to give-way on uphill sections. Provide road-narrows sections about 5.0m wide.
	Dark Lane	Traffic dominance	Provide road-narrows sections about 5.0m wide.

	Sulham Hill (east) and Little Heath Road	Traffic dominance	Improve traffic calming
4	Thames	No route over Thames at Purley despite the lock and weir.	A route over the weir should be investigated to open up leisure routes in South Oxfordshire and the alternative route into Caversham north of the Thames.
5	General	Traffic dominance and danger	Further 20mph limits and traffic calming measures to be considered, maybe area-wide.
	General	Traffic dominance and danger	Consider peak-hour (8.00-9.00am) road closures in the vicinity of Denefield School to reduce drop-offs and encourage walking and cycling.
	General	Poor road surfaces	Resurface where necessary

Conclusions and recommendations

The quiet roads of Purley to the north of the A329 make it attractive for cycling, but the busy A329 and the hilly roads to the south up to Tilehurst create significant problems for cyclists. Some measures to improve conditions have already been taken but there is plenty of scope to make improvements, although much of this will have to come with longer term planning.

Oxford Road is one of the heaviest used cycling routes but is extremely unattractive to cyclists. The options listed above need priority action, although the better solutions are likely to be long term. Recent developments and road works in the area show how important it is that long term planning for cyclists and pedestrians is needed.

Improvements to the Thames Path, and formally allowing cyclists' use would help provide some much needed leisure routes and an alternative to the intimidating A329 Oxford Road.

The main distributor roads Knowsley Road, Long Lane and Dark Lane are necessary routes for cyclists, but are also busy traffic routes. Further measures are needed to reduce traffic dominance and improve safety and comfort for cyclists. Pedestrians would also benefit from most such changes.

Traffic calming improvements and wider 20mph limits are the most likely way to improve cycling conditions the most on the majority of roads in the area. The use of sinusoidal profile road humps should be considered instead of speed cushions, as they are more effective at speed reduction, but comfortable for cyclists. Road narrows and marking changes may also help restrain traffic speeds and flows. Again pedestrians would be a major beneficiary of better 20mph areas.

Road surfacing is poor in some locations and this is a particular deterrent and safety issue for cyclists who may be destabilised or have to swerve, which can be a serious problem in heavily trafficked roads.

Some of the suggestions mentioned are long term but it is important that actions start to incorporate them into wider plans. A programme of works, timescales and costs should be produced so that planning and funding can be directed towards the necessary improvements to the cycling conditions and infrastructure.