

## Guildford Town Centre Initial Stakeholder Interviews

**Introduction:** Guildford Borough Council recently resolved to start work on a new [Town Centre Master Plan](#) and is also looking to revisit and refresh the [Town Centre Regeneration Strategy](#). This interview is part of a first opportunity for local stakeholder organisations to share local knowledge, experience and ideas at a formative time in this policy development. People & Places have been commissioned to undertake this initial engagement and consultation in an objective way on behalf of the Council.

**Name of organisation** Guildford Cycle Campaign/Bike Users Group

**Representative** Doug Clare & Nigel Burke **Roles** Coordinator & Communications Officer

**Scope of organisation's interest & membership** (provide web link if appropriate)

The Guildford Bike Users' Group (G-BUG) is a group of members from Guildford and the surrounding communities and villages who share a passion for making the Borough more liveable through increased cycling.

G-BUG's vision is to make cycling in Guildford more safe, convenient and enjoyable. G-BUG's objectives are can be summarised as:

- *Infrastructure;* to establish and promote a comprehensive, safe and convenient cycle route network for Guildford Borough.
- *Campaigning;* to become the leading voice for cyclist in Guildford, working closely with the Borough and County Councils.
- *Better Streets for Guildford;* to introduce policies and measures which improve quality of life for cyclists and all 'active travellers'.

<http://www.g-bug.org>

NB G-BUG as an organisation is largely 'agnostic' about the proposed developments in Guildford town centre: we generally neither support nor oppose them, rather we attempt to influence plans so that any developments benefit cycling.

**Understanding of town centre issues:** Relative to the scope of your organisation's interests, what do you consider to be the key issues affecting the Guildford town centre that need to be addressed in future?

This summary is based on conversations in person as well as reference to G-BUG comments on the [Guildford Cycling Plan](#) and the recent (2019) [Cycle Network Study](#).

*Create a 'Hub and spokes' cycle network to facilitate cycling to and through the town centre:* The hub should be the gyratory, which must be converted to include cycle lanes segregated from motor traffic; the spokes should be cycle routes along the main arteries leading into centre. There must be a focus on removing or crossing barriers to cycling and avoiding adding new ones. There must be convenient cycle routes *through* the town centre: currently, the one way system means cycling through-routes are very circuitous.

**Delivery and funding:** All the proposals related to cycling must be prioritised to be implemented as funds becomes available. This should include developer funding being sought as part of planning agreements.

**Cycle lane design standards:** Current best practice design principles for cycling should be adopted to inform planning applications. For example, these should include requirements that all cycle lanes should be at least 1.5m wide and better signed on the road surface. Acceptable approaches need to be agreed for mixed use of cyclists/pedestrians. In particular, 'pedestrianisation' should not mean 'no cycling'.

**Cycle parking and storage:** More cycle parking needs be provided throughout the town centre. More cycle storage needs to be provided at Guildford and London Road Stations. These facilities must be secure (eg CCTV): lack of secure parking for expensive bikes is a big deterrent to cycling into town.

**Key sites:** Are there specific sites/locations that your organisation believed it is critical to address in the revised Masterplan and Regeneration Strategy?

The Regeneration Strategy needs to incorporate the Sustainable Movement Corridor (SMC) (The SMC on either side of the town centre is already being built, but its route through the centre has yet to be specified. It includes buses as well as cyclists, disabled etc.)

Any pedestrianisation of North Street should integrate use by all active travellers including cyclists rather than adding a barrier to town centre access.

Safe cycling connections to and from the Station are vital. In particular, the cycling route via the replacement Walnut Bridge must be specified (one that does not involve simply pushing your bike!). This must include cycling-friendly design of the station forecourt, Bedford Wharf Plaza and a safe and convenient crossing of Onslow Street.

Connections to the riverside route should be improved, since this provides a 'green corridor' for access between suburbs and the town centre (eg it has been improved out to Ladymead and beyond, and may in future be improved out to the Artington Park and Ride). Plans to provide a path along the 'nearside' bank of the river from the Walnut Replacement Bridge to Dapdune Wharf should also be progressed.

Routes connecting the University to the town centre must be improved. (including a joined up approach between the SMC, Walnut Tree Close one way trial, Yorkies Bridge replacement and the Riverside route.

**Existing strategies:** How familiar with and involved with the existing Town Centre Master Plan and Regeneration Strategy has your organisation been?

- Master Plan
- Regeneration Strategy

In its response to Regeneration Strategy G-BUG proposed three broad approaches as well as detailed proposals for specific sites.

**Managed change:** Proposed managed change specifically relating to development of North St, Bedford Wharf, the Station, the Walnut Tree Close area and the river corridor should contribute funding required for the public realm, active travel and cycle-friendly improvements to the Gyratory. There must be an agreed infrastructure strategy that is based around alternatives to the car, i.e. buses, cycling and walking, and developments must be mandated to conform to this (eg not building on space that is intended for a cycle route)

**Public Realm and traffic management:** G-Bug urges that the promotion of Active Travel modes especially walking and cycling, and a modal shift away from the dominance of the car must move from lip-service to a reprioritisation of policy and funding.

They suggest this should include the full pedestrianisation of North St and the Upper High St with no through traffic and introduction of shared use. It should also include an integrated cycle network through the town centre.

**Town centre congestion and the Gyratory:** G-BUG agrees that doing nothing is not an option for the Gyratory and that is important to have an agreed solution that developments can contribute to (including cycle lanes segregated from motor traffic; G-BUG's long standing proposals for a cycling route to the station around the inner gyratory; and closing Bridge St to motor traffic.)

**Existing & future policy focus:** Are there aspects of the existing Town Centre Master Plan and Regeneration Strategy that you would like to see retained/enhanced or altered/removed?

n/a

**Other comments:** Are there any other points that you would like to raise as part of this initial consultation and scoping exercise?

Feasibility work by Guildford Borough Council on bike share and associated cycle network proposals are welcomed: the bike share scheme will only be successful if the measures proposed here are implemented.

Greater priority needs to be given to the importance of improving air quality in terms of impact on existing users and benefits that can be achieved by a modal shift.

#### **Consultation**

A summary of the recorded responses from this interview are provided to you for approval and further comment as necessary. The responses from yours and other key stakeholder organisations will be used to guide a scoping paper that will be presented to the Borough Council to help guide the next stages in developing the Town Centre Master Plan and Regeneration Strategy. This scoping paper will also be shared with your organisation as a draft.