

Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum

M2 Junction 5 Consultation Response



1 - Executive Summary

The following document is the official response of the Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum (MCCF) to the M2 Junction 5 improvements scheme. The key points of our response are:

- The current junction and surrounding roads are a massive barrier to non-motorised users (NMUs) who wish to travel in the area
- The improvements scheme must consider NMUs in the final design
- Highways England must use its own guidance found in Interim Advice Note 195/16 (Cycle Traffic and the Strategic Road Network) to create suitable facilities for NMUs.
- Further improvements for NMUs, outside of the current scope of this consultation, should be considered in the surrounding area
- MCCF would like assist Highways England in developing suitable facilities for NMUs as part of this scheme

2 – About us

The MCCF is a registered charity that represents the cycling community within the borough of Maidstone. Our aim is to improve the cycling conditions in the borough of Maidstone and encourage people to take up cycling as an alternative to cars for journeys in the borough. We believe that the best way to enable people to take up cycling is to provide the appropriate infrastructure that enables people to cycle in a safe environment away from the dangers presented by motor vehicles.

3 – The existing junction

The A249 between the M20 and M2 is a very hostile environment for NMUs. There is no existing cycling provision, and access for pedestrians is also limited. There is only one safe crossing for NMUs, a footbridge in the village of Detling. Apart from this, NMUs are expected to cross at grade, with no formal crossings, on a road where the speed of motor vehicles is often in excess of the 70mph speed limit. Therefore, while any current traffic counts would show almost no use by NMUs, there is massive potential to create demand by NMUs, should the appropriate infrastructure be provided.

This is why MCCF suggested to Maidstone Borough Council that they should include a cycling route along the A249 as part of the Maidstone Cycling Strategy. MCCF therefore believes that any investment into the Stockbury Roundabout is a fantastic opportunity to realise this ambition by Maidstone Borough Council, because any reasonable route between Maidstone and Sittingbourne would involve this junction.

4 – Our proposals

MCCF proposes that a grade separated route for NMUs is created as part of the junction improvements scheme. This should link Maidstone Road, Oad Street, and Honeycrook Hill and enable NMUs to safely access these three roads for onward travel. Any cycle route from Maidstone to Sittingbourne that follows a logical route will pass through this area, and so this should be considered as part of the improvements scheme.

4.1 - Stockbury Roundabout

Assuming that the roundabout would have a speed limit of ≥ 40 mph, and a vehicle flow of over 10,000 vehicles per day, IAN 195/16 states that Stockbury Roundabout should have a grade separated route for NMUs. The best option for grade separation is an underpass, because it reduces the height difference that is required for a bridge. An underpass should be well lit, provide good sight lines, and have shallow gradients on the approaches. Section 2.5.1 of IAN 195/16 explains this well.



Cycling and Walking underpass in Zwolle, The Netherlands [\(Picture credit\)](#) [\(Location\)](#)

If underpasses cannot be provided, then MCCF would support at-grade signalised crossings. These should consist of separate crossings for pedestrians and cyclists, because Toucans create conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, and are uncomfortable for cyclists to use. At-grade crossings would be less expensive, however they would be less advantageous than grade-separation, causing time delay for NMUs and motor vehicles, and would be less safe.



Separate crossings for pedestrians and cyclists on Cycle Superhighway 5, London [\(Location\)](#)

4.2 - Maidstone Road

One of the benefits of this scheme put forward by Highways England is that less traffic will be tempted to use rural roads in the area if congestion is reduced on the A249. The MCCF believes that this is an opportunity to improve Maidstone Road, which runs parallel with the A249 from the Stockbury Roundabout to Sittingbourne.

Cycling provision on Maidstone Road should match Table 2.2.2 in IAN 195/16. This could be achieved through the construction of cycle tracks, or a reduction in speed limit and volume of traffic to enable cycling on the carriageway itself. Highways England standards dictate that the existing NSL road is not suitable for a cycle route in its current form, and this road is an important link to any cycling provision at the Stockbury Roundabout.



Former main road outside Assen, The Netherlands. Part of a main cycle route with access maintained for motor vehicles ([Location](#))

The proposals from Highways England will also close a section of Maidstone Road, as it would no longer connect with Stockbury Roundabout. This section of road should be maintained for NMUs, and provide clear separated space for people cycling and walking. It should also be lit in order to enhance the feeling of safety when using the route at night.



Cycle track in Cambridge, with clearly defined space for cycling and walking ([Location](#))

4.3 - Honeycrook Hill

As access from Honeycrook Hill to the A249 is being removed, access should be maintained for NMUs to access Stockbury Roundabout and Oad Street. The best way to achieve this would be by a overpass for NMUs, due to the gradient on Honeycrook Hill.

4.4 – Rest of the A249

To the North of the Stockbury Roundabout, the A249 is a fully grade separated road, with suitable crossing points and parallel routes for NMUs. However, south of the Stockbury Roundabout, the A249 is an incredibly hostile road, which forms a physical barrier between villages and rural country lanes, that are otherwise suitable for NMUs. Although MCCF understand that it would be outside the scope of this consultation, and that Highways England is not responsible for A249 south of Stockbury Roundabout, improvements should be considered that could link into the Stockbury Roundabout scheme.

5 – Next steps

As this scheme is progressed, the needs of NMUs should be considered at every stage. MCCF would like to work with Highways England in order to make this scheme work well for people who wish to cycle in the area. While the current demand for walking and cycling at this junction is currently low, with the right infrastructure, demand will be created, especially if the aim of Maidstone Borough Council is achieved and a safe route for NMUs is developed from Maidstone to Sittingbourne.