



Abergavenny Placemaking Plan: a brief response on behalf of Abergavenny Cycle Group

4 May 2025

Abergavenny Cycle Group brings together local people who are doing active travel on a daily basis. We represent a diverse cross-section of people with different needs and capabilities: from cargo bike mums to older cyclists with reduced mobility to daily commuters to leisure riders and parents of children who want the freedom to get around by bike. We stand ready to help the town council and the county council further develop the placemaking plan as it relates to Active Travel and to advise on the most cost-effective 'quick wins'.

The placemaking plan contains many excellent ideas for improving the town with a particular focus on the public realm in the town centre and creating a positive impression on visitors to the town.

In the consultation document there are a number of references to improving the pedestrian experience in certain locations and certain routes. There is little or no mention of how the experience of people using bicycles can be improved, other than an acknowledgement that the A40 is a problem. As one example, there is a reference made to "Bailey Park to Town Centre" as in need of improvement as a pedestrian thoroughfare. This is also a potential cycling thoroughfare, as indicated on the council's Integrated Network Map (Route A22A).

There is a mention of a proposal to "Undertake a walking, cycling and horse-riding assessment and review" and this is welcomed but more detail is needed on how this review would be different from the existing Integrated Network survey work undertaken through the Active Travel (Wales) Act. There is plenty of survey work that has identified the problems and the barriers to active travel, what is now needed is action to tackle them.

At present the two main problems for cycling in the town are road danger - both the reality and the perception - and the challenges of one-way streets, shared spaces and pedestrianised areas that unwittingly create barriers to making safe and convenient journeys by bike.

Road Danger

Cars are larger and more numerous than at any time in the town's history. Traffic congestion is becoming a serious problem in several locations at certain times of day. Paradoxically, chronic congestion makes cycling a faster and more convenient way to get around town, however the sheer weight of traffic on the roads puts off many people from using a bicycle. This is particularly the case for routes that require riding on the A40, as the consultation document points out, but also applies to other busy roads such as Hereford Road and the A4143.

Providing safe, and pleasant routes for cycling in the town requires alternatives to using the town's arterial roads. The Lion Street cycle contraflow cycle lane is an example of infrastructure designed to provide an alternative to using the A40. There are other examples where more could be done (e.g. more prominent cycle contraflow signage at the Frogmore Street end of Baker Street)

Shared Spaces

One way that the placemaking process could enhance the experience for cycling, at very little cost, would be better signage on the increasing number of streets where motor traffic has been replaced by 'shared space' for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists, and users of wheelchair and mobility scooters.

Cross Street, Market Street, Frogmore Street have all recently received this treatment, either all day or between 10am and 4pm. However, there is insufficient signage to indicate that these are shared spaces. The result is that some pedestrians believe people should not be cycling, and there have been regrettable cases of verbal abuse of cyclists. Installing some simple signage at the time that these traffic orders were made would have helped to avoid this conflict. It's not too late to make up for this omission, and would be a very inexpensive quick win.

For many years High Street and Nevill Street have been closed to cycles despite the fact that both streets are relatively wide and open to cars for residential access and to lorries making deliveries. Adding to the confusion, National Cycle Route 42 runs down Nevill Street and there is signage indicating this. As things stand people do go ahead cycle on these streets as there are no suitable alternatives for certain routes. The situation would be improved if access were legitimised. As ever, the byword should be 'share with care'.

Requiring people on bikes to dismount and walk for a significant portions of short journeys around town is not an acceptable solution.

Other issues

There are many small physical tweaks that would measurably improve the experience of people getting around town by bike (whether local residents or visitors). The gate at the foot of Cross Street (by the Angel Hotel) requires cyclists coming up the street to mount the kerb and ride (or walk) on the pavement. Removable bollards would be a better solution.

The consultation document mentions cycle parking. There has been an increase in provision of cycle stands in the town centre in the past few years and this is welcome. There are some key destinations where stands are yet to be provided (e.g. in the grounds of the Castle) but the provision of cycle parking is less of a concern than the problems described above relating to road danger and cycling in shared spaces.

The Welsh Government has just committed £6m to a new Active Travel crossing of the Usk between Abergavenny and Llanfoist. For this investment to fulfil its potential, the routes into the town centre for both cycling and walking need to be safe, direct, pleasant, and easy to follow. This will require some detailed planning but the potential benefits are significant in terms of increasing mobility, reducing congestion and driving sustainable economic activity.

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