



Towards a  
*People-Friendly*  
Town Centre for  
Clapham Junction

Comments and suggestions for the improvement of Clapham Junction  
Town Centre from the Wandsworth Cycling Campaign

September 2002

[www.wandsworthcyclists.org.uk](http://www.wandsworthcyclists.org.uk)

### **About Wandsworth Cycling Campaign**

We are the local group of the London Cycling Campaign (LCC) in the London Borough of Wandsworth, UK. We exist for the benefit of everyone who cycles or might cycle in and through the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Our aim is for more people to use bikes for their local needs: commuting, shopping, leisure and social. Why use a bicycle? Well, cycling:

- helps keep you fit, both mentally and physically
- is entirely non-polluting, so it helps to improve air quality
- reduces congestion and the need for consuming valuable green spaces
- is usually much quicker than a car or public transport over short distances; a bicycle is ideally suited for journeys under 5 miles - the majority of local trips

If you would like more information about our activities, please see our website at [www.wandsworthcyclists.org.uk](http://www.wandsworthcyclists.org.uk) or e-mail us at: [wandcyclists@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wandcyclists@yahoo.co.uk)

## **Introduction**

This report represents the views of Wandsworth Cycling Campaign (WCC), gathered via an e-mail consultation and a site visit that took place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2002. It is produced as a contribution to the debate on the development of Clapham Junction town centre in Southwest London and is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of the problems and opportunities in the town centre. However, even a short data collection exercise such as this has enabled WCC to identify a number of issues and themes, which are highlighted in this document.

We recognise that, strictly speaking, the only real users of a town centre are pedestrians and those in wheelchairs. However, the choice of transport we use to reach a town centre has important consequences, and we would argue that, after walking, the bicycle is the transport choice that imposes least pressure on the infrastructure of the town centre and its surrounding area. In this report we therefore include our observations as pedestrians as well as those as cyclists.

## **Transport-related problems of Clapham Junction town centre**

The transport-related problems of Clapham Junction town centre may be summarised as follows:

- congestion
- air pollution
- noise pollution
- community severance e.g. Falcon Road, Northcote Road
- personal safety issues (some areas feel unsafe particularly at night)

We believe that cycling can help provide the solution to all of these transport-related issues.

## **Benefits of cycling**

Cycling is a practical mode of transport for many journeys and offers many benefits - to communities, the environment (for example, in not producing the drawbacks associated with the internal combustion engine such as noise pollution and air pollution), as well as to individuals who cycle. Research shows that regular cycling is a highly effective physical activity for promoting health. A recent review presented an impressive range of health benefits from regular cycling:

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“Cycling provides protection against:

- coronary heart disease
- stroke
- non-insulin dependent diabetes
- falls, fractures and injuries (through improved strength and co-ordination)
- colon cancer
- overweight, and obesity

Cycling also promotes psychological wellbeing, notably self-esteem.

Everyday cycling, where the individual breathes more heavily without feeling out of breath, will benefit health. Research indicates that cyclists and pedestrians absorb lower levels of pollutants from traffic fumes than any other road users. Regular cycling, such as to and from work or school, can be an easy way to achieve the recommended 'half an hour a day' of physical activity for health.“

*Promoting cycling: Improving health, National Cycling Forum, April 1999 (available at: <http://www.nationalcyclingstrategy.org.uk/Health.pdf>)*

In the UK, a significant disincentive to cycling often reported is a 'fear of the traffic'. However, it is interesting to note one commentator's observation that:

“Although cyclists often fear for their lives as they ride through traffic, the major health risks on the roads are in fact carried by sedentary drivers, who are more likely to die as a result of their particular lifestyle choice than any other group”.

*Transport and Health: A policy report on the health benefits of increasing levels of cycling in Oxfordshire. Harry Rutter, October 2000 (available at: [http://www.modalshift.org/reports/tandh/print\\_version.htm](http://www.modalshift.org/reports/tandh/print_version.htm))*

Cycling is an energy-efficient mode of transport and, since the bicycle takes the load, an easy way to carry a surprising amount of shopping. It is also an inexpensive mode of transport and is therefore available to people from a wide range of socio-economic groups.

In a congested urban valley such as that which forms the 'backbone' of Clapham Junction town centre, the value of cycling as a means of reducing congestion and using space efficiently becomes apparent. Bicycles are hardly affected by traffic congestion, with the result that journey times by bicycle are highly predictable.

## **Access to Clapham Junction Town Centre by Bicycle**

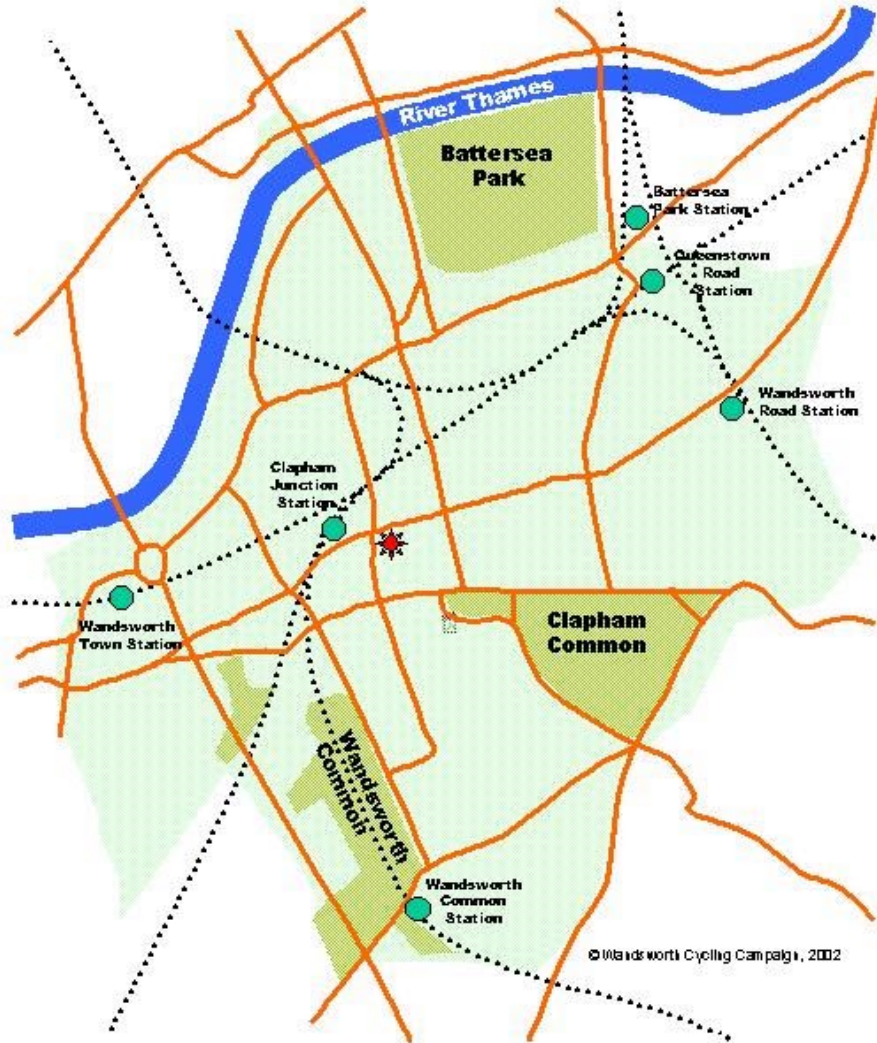
Clapham Junction town centre is fortunate in that it escaped the post-Buchanan transport rationalisation of the 1960s and 1970s and largely retains its early twentieth-century road layout. Whilst it might be argued that the rather narrow carriageway results in slow-moving and stationary motor traffic to the detriment of town centre users (particularly on Battersea Rise and, to a lesser extent, on St. John's Hill), it also provides an opportunity for a relatively easy improvement, through the implementation of appropriate traffic management measures.

A large section of the local area (from Wandsworth Town Centre to Nine Elms and from Battersea Bridge to Balham) is within a ten minute bicycle journey from the Town Centre. The map below shows the area within an 8 minute journey from the junction of Northcote Road and Lavender Hill (Arding & Hobbs), which, with a little time for cycle parking, could be considered a ten-minute isochron.

A similar map showing the 10-minute isochron for car travel to Clapham Junction would have very 'fuzzy' boundaries, reflecting the impact of traffic congestion. The reliability of journey times by bicycle is especially advantageous in the context of Clapham Junction station (a major railway hub) for multimodal journeys involving train travel, when it may be necessary to catch a particular train.

Given the relatively easy access to Clapham Junction by bicycle we did not feel it appropriate to look in detail at particular access routes. An individual's chosen route, after all, depends on a number of factors e.g. starting point, destination, need for stops en route etc. In fact, one of the great advantages of cycling is the ability it provides for flexible journeys. Nevertheless, it would certainly be possible to improve access to the town centre, and a number of 'hot spots' and more general cycling-related issues are identified in this document.

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*Area bounded by 10 minute isochron for journey times by bicycle to Arding & Hobbs, Clapham Junction*

### **Cycle parking**

One of the simplest and most cost-effective ways in which to improve facilities for cyclists is by providing well designed, carefully located cycle stands. The provision of such cycle stands, as well as being a practical facility, also sends out a clear message that cycling to Clapham Junction is a mode of transport to be encouraged. Sheffield style stands are the commonest type in use today and there are already a number of these in the Clapham Junction area at present. Given a well-overlooked location (in which natural surveillance provides a degree of security) such a stand provides a fixed object to which up to two bicycles can be attached using

a 'D' lock or a chain and padlock. They are extremely space-efficient – by comparison, a single car parking space occupies the same area as five or six cycle stands (and hence up to 10 or 12 bicycles). In congested urban areas, where space is a limited resource, they therefore represent a highly effective way of using space.

Wandsworth Cycling Campaign's general philosophy on bicycle parking is that cycle stands should be provided at all traffic-generating locations. Ideally cycle parking should be as close to the destination as is possible without causing problems for other road users, particularly pedestrians. In a dispersed shopping centre, the requirement is therefore for 'distributed' cycle parking, with small numbers of cycle stands at frequent intervals. This ensures convenience of parking facilities for people travelling by bicycle to shops, restaurants and market stalls, who may often wish to call in to a number of different locations during a single trip. The reconfiguration of pavements to provide 'capes' along Northcote Road in recent years (for example) provides a number of obvious locations for cycle stands.

Cycle parking facilities exist at a number of locations around Clapham Junction town centre. The existing facilities are well used. There are also many bicycles parked in other locations, indicating the need for even more provision.



We did not have time to look in detail at cycle provision at Clapham Junction station; however, it is clear that the issue of signage and the overall quality and quantity of provision of cycle parking at this location needs to be addressed.

*WOULD YOU PARK YOUR VEHICLE HERE?*

There is an acute shortage of cycle parking outside the main entrance to Clapham Junction station. There is great pressure on space here, and it is difficult to see how the current provision could be increased without significant re-design of the station.

*SPACE OUTSIDE THE STATION IS SUBJECT TO MANY DEMANDS*



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However, it appears that abandoned bicycles occupy many of the existing racks – we counted 13 apparently abandoned bikes on the 18 racks during our visit. There is therefore a pressing need for abandoned cycles to be regularly cleared from these. The same would, of course, apply to other racks in the town centre.

We would welcome a more detailed look at cycle facilities in general at Clapham Junction station. We would be happy to participate in a visit in conjunction with an officer from Railtrack/NetworkRail, if that organisation was interested in input from WCC.

Our site visit was not exhaustive, but recorded Sheffield stands at the following locations in the town centre:

- 18 (groups of 5, 3 and 10) on the pavement outside the main entrance to Clapham Junction
- 6 on the corner of Beauchamp Road & Lavender Hill
- 3 at the bottom of Eckstein Road
- 6 at the bottom of Aliwal Road
- 4 outside Luciano Cycles on Battersea Rise
- 4 at the top of the travelator at Asda

The provision of sufficient high quality, well located bicycle parking in Clapham Junction would:

- have immediate practical value
- be cost-efficient
- be space-efficient
- have symbolic value
- help discourage obstruction caused by badly-parked bicycles



We recommend the following locations for additional parking facilities:

- Outside the Job Centre / Fitness First on Falcon Road
- Replacing railings outside the PCSU building on Falcon Road (these would also prevent vehicles from mounting the pavement).
- Outside the Grand on Severus Road (Note: This area needs to be cleaned up, and kept clean, to encourage use)
- Adjacent to the No. 95 bus stop on St. John's Hill, close to Severus Road
- More at the bottom of Eckstein Road
- On the build-out at the junction of Beauchamp Road & St. John's Road (to serve Marks & Spencer)
- Outside Somerfield supermarket on Northcote Road
- On the built-out corners on Northcote Road



*POTENTIAL SITE FOR CYCLE PARKING ON  
NORTHCOTE ROAD*

## **Signage**

During the WCC site visit on 14 September, route/facility signage was not looked at systematically. However, during the course of the visit it was noted that the 6 cycle racks located in Aliwal Road appear relatively under-used. Despite being regular visitors to Clapham Junction town centre, participants in the WCC site visit were unaware of these cycle racks, which are very discreetly located behind wooden seats. This suggests that a 'cycle park' sign to indicate the existence of cycle racks in this 'community space' is needed.

## **Speed**

Speed of traffic in a town centre is an important determinant of its attractiveness to users, and particularly to vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians. As a general rule, a 1 mph reduction in

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average speed in urban areas results in a 6% reduction in crashes. In the event of a collision, speed becomes even more important, since at 20 mph a pedestrian (or cyclist, who is similarly unprotected by a metal 'cage') who is hit by a motor vehicle has a 95% chance of survival whilst at 40 mph their chance of survival falls to only 5% (that is, 19 out of 20 people will die as a result of a collision at this speed). However, at a collision speed of 30 mph (the existing speed limit in Clapham Junction town centre) 90% of pedestrians hit by a motor vehicle will be seriously injured. Hence, even marginal reductions in average speeds can result in significant road safety gains (*'Speeding: The Continuing Challenge'*, Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety, 2002).

There are some localities in Clapham Junction town centre where WCC believes that the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit would be a positive step to encourage people to walk and cycle to (and around) the town centre, namely:

- Falcon Road
- St. John's Road
- Northcote Road

We do not think that a 20 mph zone in these roads would have much impact on overall motor vehicle journey times. This is in line with research elsewhere conducted to date, that has indicated little change in journey time using vehicles equipped with External Vehicle Speed Control (*Carsten, O M J & Comte S L, User trials with intelligent speed limiters. Behavioural Research in Road Safety: Tenth Seminar. DETR, 2001*). However, the introduction of 20 mph zones (as with bicycle parking facilities) also has symbolic value in sending a message that Clapham Junction is a town centre in which the safety of its users and residents is seen as a high priority. From an economic point of view, low vehicle speeds would also enhance pedestrian ease of movement within the town centre and hence access to shops and other businesses.

The introduction of a 20 mph speed limit is also appropriate, as at Clapham Junction, where space is a limited resource, since more space between motor vehicles is needed (for obvious reasons of safety) at higher vehicle speeds.

### **Hot spots**

A number of 'hot spots' – localities where specific actions could be taken to improve matters – were identified by WCC and these are outlined below.

*Winstanley Road Station Exit, Clapham Junction station*

The lighting in this area is very poor. A particularly dark spot is as the pedestrian zone crosses Bramlands Close. The absence of pavement on Grant Road in this area means that on foot there is no good alternative to this route. Traffic speeds on Grant Road can be very high and WCC have previously requested traffic calming along this road. We believe that, at the very least, provision of pedestrian crossings for people accessing Clapham Junction station and beyond would help pedestrians and generally improve this environment for vulnerable road users.

*Junction Approach*

From around 10 pm the Winstanley Road station exit is closed and so this road is important for pedestrians returning to the area north of the railway. The lighting is generally poor, but especially so on the pavements. There is a large, raised brick planted bed which adjoins the road. The area behind this is completely hidden from view, is totally unlit and is therefore very unsafe. It is also frequently used as a urinal. Most



pedestrians therefore walk down the road since there is no other pavement at the exit from the station car park. The planted bed needs to be removed or moved away from the road so that there is pavement adjacent to the road. As a temporary measure, even cutting the vegetation in this bed right down would be an improvement.

*Southern end of Falcon Road, from the railway bridge to the junction with St. John's Hill*

This is a poor quality, dirty, unwelcoming environment for all users. It is at best unpleasant and at worst hazardous for cyclists because the road design in this locality encourages speeding by motorists. For pedestrians it is a decidedly threatening environment and the issue is more one of personal security. The lighting used under Falcon Road rail bridge is more appropriate for an underground road tunnel. It is not very bright, so that even in the daytime the area is dim. Much brighter full-spectrum lighting is recommended to illuminate the pavements for pedestrians. From time to time, lighting failures occur which result in all the lights on one side of the bridge not working. This makes the whole area dark for all road users. Is there something in the circuitry that causes this and could it be redesigned?

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Wider pavements would also be desirable. The pavement on the east side widens and narrows at different points, making it more difficult for pedestrians.

The whole area badly needs cleaning. Anything else which could be done to make it look more attractive, e.g. billboards, paintings, plants, would be good. Anti-pigeon spikes are also required. We would support appropriate initiatives such as these to enhance the underbridge environment's attractiveness and safety to cyclists and pedestrians.

### *Landscaping on Falcon Road*

There is an area of unattractive waste ground on the west side of Falcon Road, south of the railway bridge. There are similar areas on the south side of Falcon Lane. Could these be tidied up and some landscaping added? Also, on either side of Falcon Road, there are existing flower beds with some plants. These are in need of attention. Could flowers be used to make the whole area brighter?

### *Mini Roundabout on Falcon Road*

For cyclists, this roundabout is difficult to negotiate when travelling southbound on Falcon Road. The road widens as it approaches the roundabout, with a curve to the left. This design encourages motorists to turn left, often cutting up cyclists as they do so. The lanes in this area, including the junction with Falcon Lane, are very wide, encouraging traffic to move fast. This is a problem for both cyclists and pedestrians.



The effects of the poor design of the mini-roundabout were exacerbated at the time of the site visit by a pothole resulting from a poor quality road resurfacing (see picture).

It has also been noted by a WCC member that:

“... motorists going north (coming from the traffic lights) will often turn right at the roundabout into Falcon Lane, without indicating. Again the layout of the roads means that you cannot tell whether cars are going to turn or go straight on, and this makes the junction hazardous. Just changing the alignment of the roads will make this junction much safer for bikes and pedestrians.”

This mini roundabout and its environs is markedly unfriendly to pedestrians. There are no facilities for stopping traffic to make it safe to

cross the road. There is no provision at all to cross Falcon Road on the north side of the roundabout.

The railings situated in the middle of the paved area on the west side of the roundabout could be replaced by cycle racks. These would still protect pedestrians without forming a completely impassable barrier.

#### *Southern End of Falcon Road (Junction with Lavender Hill)*

This is a difficult junction for cyclists travelling straight on or turning right. The pedestrian island has a curved side so that the lanes end at a curious angle. Combined with the fact that the two lanes here are both narrow, this makes road positioning (a critical safety issue for cyclists as urban road users) very difficult. Buses and other large vehicles increase the problem because the road design means they are unable to keep within a single lane. Could this junction be redesigned to facilitate its use by all road users? Further contributing factors are the upward slope of the road and the fact that the junction with St. Johns Road is slightly 'staggered', to the right.

It has also been noted by a member of Wandsworth Cycling Campaign that:

"At the traffic light junction, again travelling south from Falcon Road into St. John's Road, pedestrians are often walking across the junction in front of bikes. This is mainly because cars cannot go straight on, so pedestrians assume that no-one can. Also, the green phase for pedestrians crossing from Lavender Hill into St. John's Hill is not long enough. Vehicles coming down Lavender Hill should not always be allowed to turn left into St. John's Road, they should have a filter. This would make life much easier for pedestrians, instead of the current 'look and run' technique they currently need to employ to cross here."

#### *Railings*

We note that many of the pavements and traffic islands in the area have railings dividing them from the road. These restrict pedestrians from moving freely in the area, cause inconvenience and, for some people, give a feeling of being 'caged'. They pose a serious danger for cyclists because they remove an escape route in potentially hazardous situations e.g. when a cyclist is being 'squeezed' by a Heavy Goods Vehicle, recognised as a particular hazard for cyclists especially when an HGV is turning left. On the other hand, we recognise that they are useful for cycle parking.

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### *Falcon Lane*

It is extremely difficult for pedestrians to cross Falcon Lane at the entrance to the Asda car park. The entrance road is very wide (approximately two and a half lanes) and entirely lacks facilities for pedestrians. Since the pavement on the other side of the road is very narrow, there is no real alternative. This is, however, a natural 'desire line' route to take to reach the Library or the Post Office on Lavender Hill and as such the existing configuration is a cause of community severance in this locality.

### *Asda*

As a major traffic generator, Asda supermarket on Lavender Hill is an obvious potential contributor to a more 'people-friendly' town centre for Clapham Junction. We note the large amount of valuable land use given over on Asda's site to car parking. By contrast, parking provision for shoppers travelling to Asda by bicycle is extremely limited and is described thus by a WCC member who commented on it:

"They have bike racks outside, near the bottom of the steps which lead out to Dorothy Road, but no bike ramp there. This means that anyone coming from the Lavender Hill/Latchmere/Shafesbury Estate areas has to go all the way down the hill, through the traffic lights at Arding & Hobbs, round the roundabout and back up the hill at Falcon Lane, and in through the car park. Either this or they have to dice with the pedestrian entrance off the pavement at Lavender Hill. Or they have to carry their bikes laden with shopping up the steps when they leave!"

The absence of a ramp, highlighted above, is surprising. A ramp would benefit not only cyclists but also people with pushchairs, wheelchairs and shopping trolleys, especially when carrying heavy shopping.

There is much scope (and plenty of space) for Sheffield stands, located near to the entrance of Asda, to provide a convenient facility for those who already choose to travel to Asda by bicycle, and to encourage other people to use a bicycle to travel to Asda.

### *Pedestrian Crossings on Lavender Hill*

The crossings at the junction with Falcon Road, and near the junction with Falcon Lane both use railings and do not lead straight across the road. Both of these things are inconvenient and frustrating for pedestrians.

### *Community Space*

During our site visit, it was noted that road closures had resulted in the formation of two spaces on the west side of St. John's Road. We feel that these have great potential to be developed into 'community spaces' with differing but complementary characters. We discuss each of these briefly in turn below.

#### *Area at bottom of Eckstein Road*



At the time of our visit this somewhat dirty and seemingly neglected space had a lively atmosphere and was being used by a number of people, including a stall set up by a local group and a busker. The three existing cycle stands held four bicycles and five more were chained to the nearby railings. This area could be improved for even greater

community use by landscaping (including more cycle stands and some benches). There is a need for better litter and fly-tipping control in the surrounding area. The fire access gate is redundant and should also be removed to open up the area, since the railings on the far side in any case prevent fire tender access.

#### *Area at bottom of Aliwal Road*

The recent planting of birch trees and provision of high quality benches makes this a pleasant, relatively quiet, space. A focal point, such as a water feature on an appropriate scale, could add interest to this space. This area has good cycle parking facilities, but they are hard to spot. We therefore recommend a bike park sign to inform people of the existence of this facility and hence encourage greater use.

#### *Junction of Battersea Rise, St. John's Road & Northcote Road*

"The Junction stops here for me".

(WCC member who is a resident of Falcon Road area)

Vehicles are usually tailed back down one side or other of Battersea Rise and across the box junction because of the general congestion of the South Circular Road in this area. There is a serious problem with the phasing of the traffic signals at this junction. The pedestrian phase is only active for 5 seconds out of a total cycle of about 80 seconds. This period is not sufficient to allow vehicles blocking the crossing to move

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away, forcing pedestrians to have to fight their way between the vehicles. This makes crossing the road here extremely hazardous and unpleasant. It is also dangerous for cyclists who are caught in this.

The photograph illustrates what 'community severance' means in practice here.

At the time of our visit (a Saturday morning) we noted about 40 people crossing the junction on foot whilst 67 passed it in cars. There is no rational reason for this inequitable distribution



of crossing time, particularly if Transport for London (the responsible authority for this crossing) are seeking through their Street Management division to promote travel by environmentally friendly modes such as walking and cycling.

### Conclusions

In a very short space of time, through an informal e-mail consultation followed by a 100-minute site visit, Wandsworth Cycling Campaign has identified a number of issues relating to the 'people-friendliness' of Clapham Junction town centre from a mainly cycling (but also pedestrian) perspective. We believe that much could be achieved towards the goal of making Clapham Junction a more people-friendly town centre relatively inexpensively. For example, the high-quality cycle stands used by Wandsworth Borough Council in public areas cost £150 to buy and install. The site visit was from a 'visitor' perspective. We recognise that, as a major commercial centre, there is also a great deal of scope for employers in Clapham Junction to encourage staff to cycle to their workplace. This could be promoted by various means such as an award scheme for 'cycle friendly' employers. Considerable information on such schemes is available and Wandsworth Cycling Campaign would be pleased to forward this on request. A number of recommendations are included above and the main themes of our recommendations are summarised below.

WANDSWORTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
CLAPHAM JUNCTION TOWN CENTRE

*Cycle parking:*

We recommend the following locations for additional parking facilities:

- Outside the Job Centre / Fitness First on Falcon Road
- Replacing railings outside the PCSU building on Falcon Road (these would also serve to prevent vehicles mounting the pavement).
- Outside the Grand on Severus Road (Note: This area needs to be cleaned up – and kept clean – to encourage use)
- Adjacent to the bus stop on St. John's Hill, close to Severus Road
- More stands at the bottom of Eckstein Road (and signage for existing stands on Aliwal Road)
- On the build-out at the junction of Beauchamp Road & St. John's Road (to serve Marks & Spencer and nearby shops)
- Outside Somerfield supermarket on Northcote Road
- On the built-out corners on Northcote Road

In addition, we recommend the consideration of cycle stands in the place of railings and bollards.

*Rôle of Clapham Junction street patrollers*

We recommend that consideration be given to having some street patrollers on bicycles.

The remit of the patrollers could also be widened to include the tagging and subsequent reporting for removal of apparently abandoned bicycles in the town centre area.

*The Falcon Road / Grant Road area*

Focus on suggested Falcon Road and Grant Road area improvements using latest UK design guidance. On Grant Road to include the upgrading of exit route from the Winstanley Road exit of Clapham Junction through the provision of a pedestrian crossing and traffic calming measures. On Falcon Road to include improved lighting under the railway bridge, improvements for pedestrians entering and leaving the station via Station Approach, minor landscaping and a re-evaluation of the road design at the mini roundabout and the junction to the South to improve conditions for cyclists and to facilitate pedestrians crossing the road.

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### *The Asda store area*

Examine scope for access improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, in particular to provide a ramp access to the store from Dorothy Road.

### *Battersea Rise / Nortcote Road Junction*

Discuss with Transport for London the traffic light phasing in this area, a major cause of community severance.

### *Clapham Junction Station*

Coordinate meeting with Railtrack/National Rail re Clapham Junction station.

### *St. John's Road*

Develop community spaces as suggested in existing areas off this road.

### *General*

Promote action by employers in Clapham Junction Town Centre to encourage staff to cycle.

Develop mechanism for Wandsworth Cycling Campaign input into future developments at Clapham Junction town centre.

### *Wandsworth Cycling Campaign*

*September 2002*