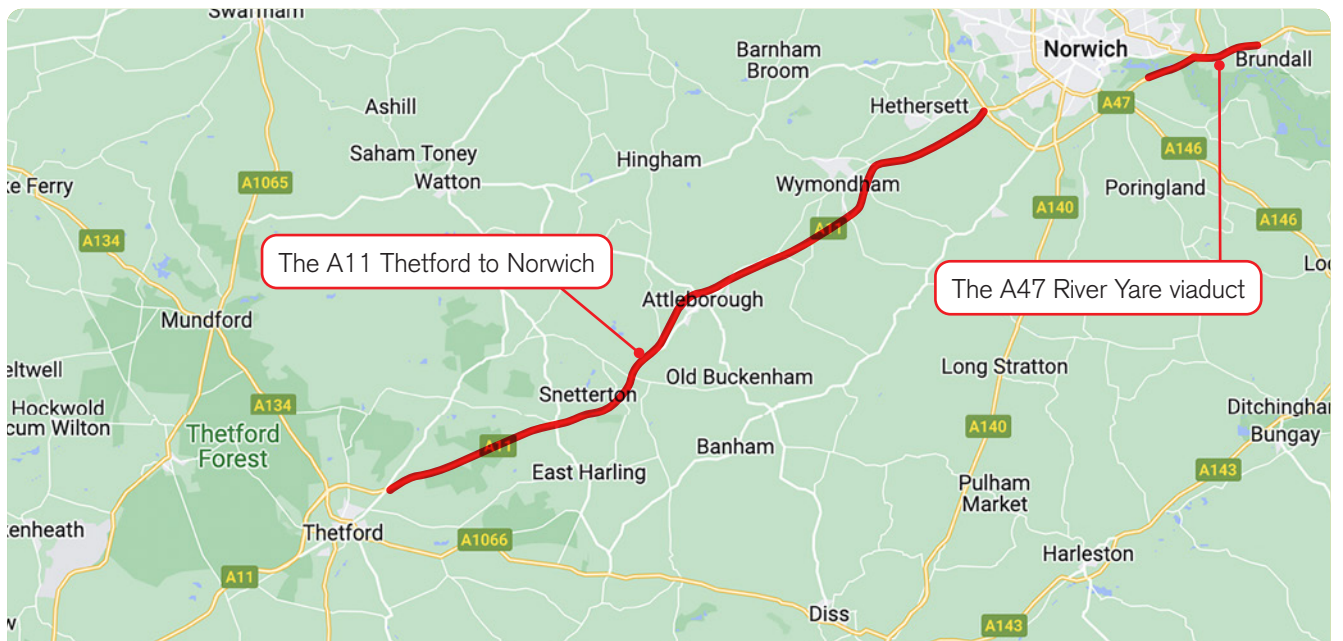




# Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians in the East of England

What do they want from National Highways?

March 2023



## Introduction

Transport Focus is the independent consumer watchdog representing the interests of those using the roads which are managed by National Highways. That includes cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians travelling on, alongside or across England's motorways and major 'A' roads where permitted to do so. Our latest research looks at what cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians want from National Highways in several locations of the East of England.

As with our previous work on cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians, we concentrated on experiences on a small number of specific locations. In this case:

- 1 the A11 Thetford to Norwich
- 2 the A120 Braintree to Marks Tey
- 3 the A47 River Yare viaduct.



# Summary of findings

The research produced many specific findings related to experiences at each of the locations. These are covered at a high level in this report and more detail is available in the accompanying research agency report which is available on our website. There are also some overarching issues which are consistent with the findings from Transport Focus's previous research.

The areas directly surrounding the A11, A120, and the A47 are all well regarded for their tranquillity and natural beauty. However cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians noted that accessing these locations required interaction with noisy and traffic-heavy 'A' roads. Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians feel that using these roads puts them in close proximity to fast moving traffic and that this is dangerous. They therefore often have to resort to taking longer and less direct routes or to using a car to get to the places they want to go.

The cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians involved in the research on the A11 and A120 noted that there had been an increase in traffic at the locations owing to the construction of new areas of residential housing. These road users worried that car usage at the locations would only increase as planning permission for new development has been granted, and therefore that accessing areas of interest close to the roads would only become more challenging.

A further issue mentioned by cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians making journeys through the locations of interest is the presence of a large number of lorries using the roads. This adds to traffic noise and increases safety concerns. Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians also mention that they often find debris left behind by construction work or old signage on the routes that they use alongside or across the A11, A120, and A47. It is reported that this material can obstruct people on foot or riding a bike and contribute to poor sightlines for those crossing the roads.

Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians feel strongly that there is room for improvement when it comes to the maintenance of the paths that they use on, alongside, or across the 'A' roads. This includes the control of overgrown vegetation, the maintenance of infrastructure such as steps and railings, as well as the clearance of debris and old signage.

A lack of connectivity between the routes that they use near to or alongside the 'A' roads is a major frustration for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians. This limits these road users' ability to make journeys from place to place and can make them feel deprioritised when their needs are not being catered for. Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians are particularly frustrated when footpaths or dedicated paths end suddenly leaving them to continue their journeys in ways which feel less safe. Examples include leaving them to walk on grass verges by the side of the road or having to cross busy roads without the use of a dedicated crossing point.

*"Often you can be walking quite easily on a route or on one side of the road, and then out of nowhere for some reason this path would just stop. It is not often guaranteed that it continues on the other side of the road either. As well as it stopping, when there is a continuation on the other side there may not even be a designated crossing for it! So, you have to cross without any protection."*

Pedestrian

Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians are often left to feel that the routes that they use have not been thought through in their entirety. This issue is often attributed at least in part to the sense that there is little joined up thinking or collaboration between agencies responsible for these routes. As with our previous research we found that cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians often feel that different organisations are responsible for different parts of the routes they use and these bodies do not work together to meet their needs.

While the needs of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians largely align, those riding horses have some distinct needs because the risks to their safety is greater. Accordingly equestrians mention specific infrastructure which helps them to make journeys, such as raised parapets on bridges and the installation of pegasus crossings.



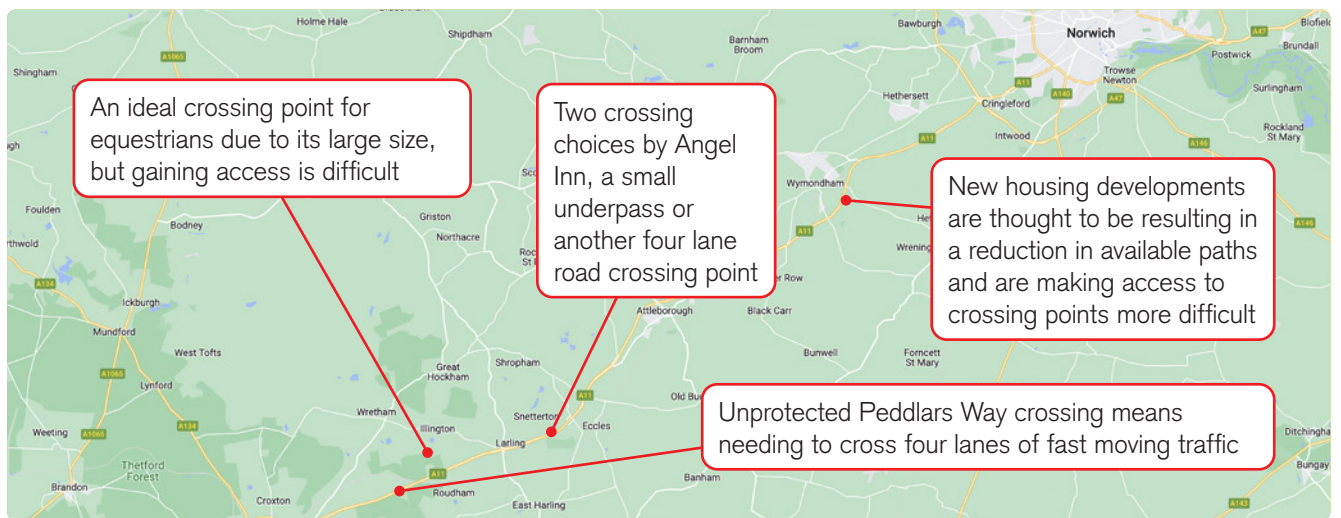
# Area specific findings

## A11 Thetford to Norwich

### Overview of the location

The A11 is the main route from Norwich down to the M11 south of Cambridge and on to London. It is a fast flowing dual carriageway road with many routes joining

on to it, as well travelling across it on bridges and through underpasses. There are towns and villages along the route as well as new housing developments which are being built.



Map data ©2023 Google

Key issues mentioned by cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians:

- The popular 'Peddars Way' crosses the A11 in the Thetford area. There is a crossing at this location which the road users feel is unprotected and therefore unsafe.
- Where the A11 bypasses Wymondham there are new residential housing developments which are raising concerns regarding the potential for traffic levels to increase at this location. Cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians using routes close to the A11 at Wymondham mention that pathways are limited here and that the few paths that currently exist may be altered to suit the needs of the new housing.



- There are crossing points by the Angel Inn near Snetterton and also near Roundham which are appreciated. However, there are concerns regarding the upkeep and maintenance of these crossing points.

*"...the Peddars Way crossing - shocking really for a national off road route. I wouldn't take a horse across there, nor a child on a bike or on foot, you'd have to have pretty steely nerves to cross there as an adult on foot in rush hour!"*

Equestrian

Improvements suggested by road users:

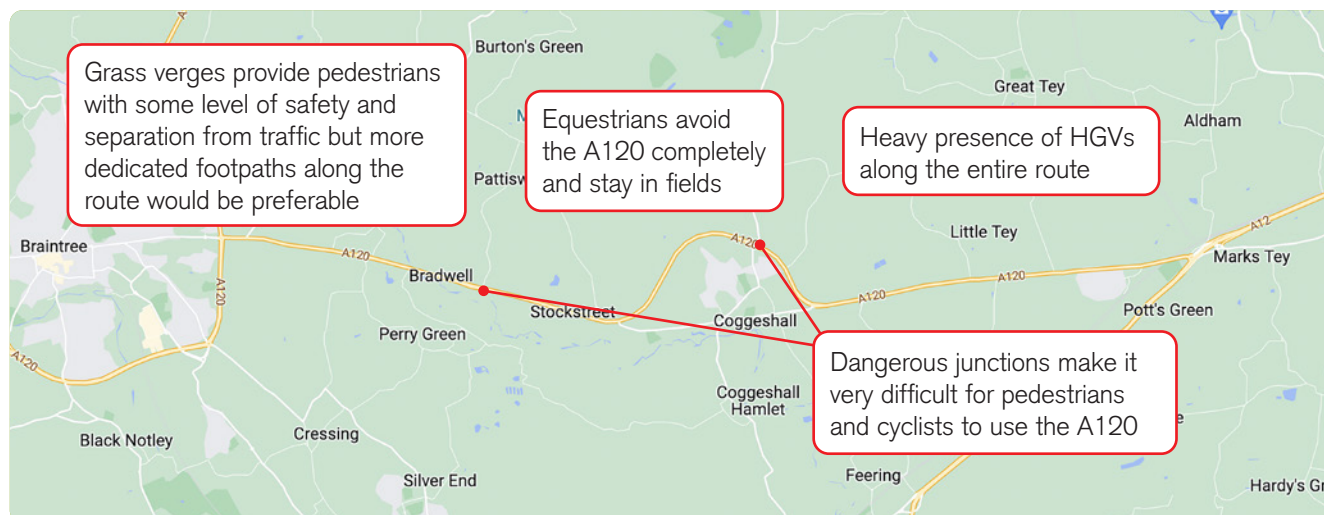
- improved maintenance of paths and management of vegetation to ensure the consistency of the routes which are used by cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians
- improved lighting along pathways and over bridges to make pedestrians feel safe making journeys after dark
- making changes at the crossing that serves the Peddars Way to enable users to safely use this section of the route
- raise parapets on bridges for equestrian road users

## A120 Braintree to Marks Tey

### Overview of the location

The A120 is a road with a single carriageway in a rural area. The road passes through several villages and through the open countryside. There are many paths which meet

the A120 on either side of the road. Of particular interest to the cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians in the area is the bypass around the town of Coggeshall.



Map data ©2023 Google

Key issues mentioned by cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians:

- A general lack of dedicated bridleways, cycle paths and footpaths which hamper the connectivity between villages on the route. Cyclists and pedestrians are keen to mention their proximity to fast moving vehicles when using this route and note that while there are large grass verges in places along the route and no dedicated pathway has been provided.
- Some of the crossing points are felt to be dangerous. This includes the junction with Colne Road, the pedestrianised part of Tey Road which joins the A120, the Doghouse Road junction and the access point from Robinsbridge Road.
- Obstructions along the A120 caused by debris left behind by lorries and old signage left after construction work.
- The number of lorries using the route is a particular concern and this is exacerbated by the construction of a new incinerator in Rivenhall which will increase this type of traffic.

*"The Colne Road junction. No provision for cyclists or pedestrians and heavily used by large lorries turning across onto the A120."*

Cyclist



*"A120/Doghouse Road junction – this is the direction I'd like to walk to get to Coggeshall (nearest village) and the nearest social venue (Stock Street barn) but there is no footpath either side of the A120 at this point. The verge is very narrow, uneven and frequently carved up by tractors/vans. It's much worse further along."*

Pedestrian



Improvements suggested by road users:

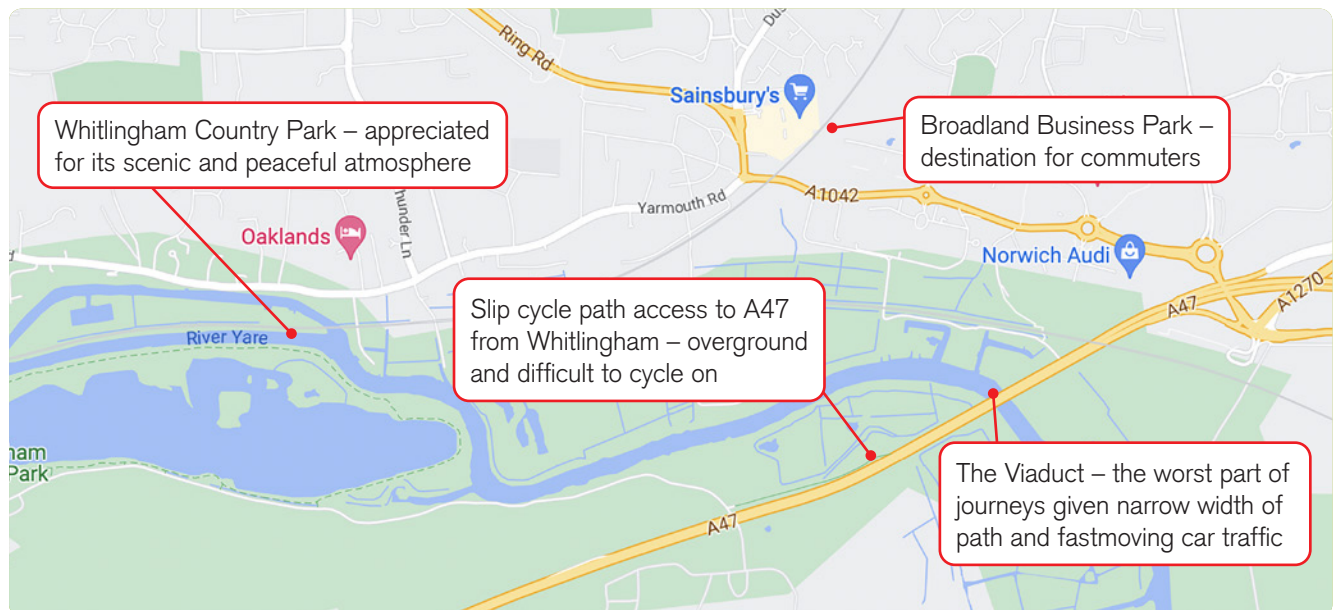
- increase the provision of dedicated cycleways and paths which join up and enable cyclists and pedestrians to travel safely to and from their destinations
- reduce the speed of the traffic by extending the 50 miles per hour section beyond Tey Road or consider reducing speed to 40 miles per hour
- consider encouraging lorry drivers to use the A12 rather than the A120 or make the A120 available for local traffic only.

## A47 Yare Viaduct

### Overview of the location

The A47 Yare Viaduct is a road bridge over the River Yare to the south east of Norwich. It connects Norwich and Whitlingham Country Park to Postwick in the east and vice versa. There are also amenities at Broadlands Business Park to the north of the river which are served by people travelling over the viaduct. The viaduct provides a direct

route across the river. While alternative routes exist, they involve much longer journeys travelling through Norwich itself. On one side of the bridge there is a path which we found is routinely used by a significant number of people travelling on foot and by bicycle.



Map data ©2023 Google

Key issues mentioned by cyclists and pedestrians:

- The cycle/footpath on the viaduct itself is felt to be very dangerous; narrow and offering insufficient separation from fast moving traffic.
- Cyclists and pedestrians note that the path on the viaduct acts as a significant barrier to those wishing to make journeys into the Broads or into Whitlingham Country Park. It is also noted that the path is off-putting to those who might want to commute to Broadlands Business Park.
- The road users involved in the research mention that there are no viable alternative cycling or pedestrian routes from this part of Norwich over the river Yare. Some suggest that there may be suppressed demand for a viable walking or cycling route across the river in this location and that providing this might reduce traffic on the existing bridge.
- Cyclists and pedestrians say that the paths leading up to the viaduct are of mixed quality with the ones on the Whitlingham side being particularly overgrown and poorly surfaced.

*"Another day, another ride. This time avoiding the A47 viaduct by cycling through our fine city. I'm not sure what's worse, the lack of cycle paths in Norwich or a cycle path with 80 mph traffic whizzing past."*

Cyclist

*"Often when roadworks are carried out nearby, the signage is actually placed in the path [on the Yare viaduct] blocking or narrowing it. On occasion I have had to get round signage by stepping off the path into the carriageway."*

Cyclist

*"Not much room for pedestrians when you encounter cyclists the other way."*

Pedestrian



Improvements suggested by road users:

- While recognising that the suggestion would come with significant financial and logistic challenges, those involved in the research note that the ideal solution would be the construction of a new, motorised traffic-free, bridge at this location. Ideally this would be constructed from Bungalow Lane to cross the river.
- Other suggestions for the location include creating more of a barrier between the path across the viaduct and the traffic (without reducing the width of the, already narrow, existing path), reducing the speed limit across the bridge or making the carriageway one lane instead of two so that the path can be widened.
- Those who currently walk or cycle across the viaduct mention the presence of obstructions on the path such as fallen or old construction work signs and suggest that these could be removed more frequently.
- Better maintenance of overgrown and poorly surfaced routes which lead up to/away from the path on the Yare viaduct.

## Summary of improvements suggested across all locations

Across all three locations there is some consistency regarding the types of improvements that cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians would like to see to make their journeys more viable and more enjoyable.

These include:

- improvements which provide better separation from fast moving traffic and which therefore make these road users feel safer when making journeys
- the provision of dedicated routes for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians which includes delineation for these users and allows them to share the route effectively
- better and more regular maintenance of paths for these road users generally
- better connectivity between routes so that they join up and don't end suddenly, and consistency in the quality of these paths and crossing points
- more multi-agency working so that the different organisations and stakeholders who manage and care about the routes that cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians use can employ joined up thinking to improve the experience of these road users.



## How we plan to use this research

In this research we aimed to explore in detail the experience of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians making journeys which involved interaction with roads on National Highways' network. In doing so we sought to provide specific insight to National Highways which will help it

improve the experience of these road users. Our plan is to continue this work looking at other areas of England and to remain in dialogue with National Highways so that it can consider the design of its roads with cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians in mind.



# How we did this research

In August 2022 Transport Focus commissioned the independent research agency 2CV to help us to explore the views of cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians making journeys which interacted with National Highways' roads in three locations in the east of England. The research adopted a staged approach, consisting of four interlinked elements:

- 1** To kick-off the research the agency made initial visits to the locations to understand the 'lay of the land' and to get a sense of the places where cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians were interacting with the 'A' roads. This helped the agency understand where these road users might be found and recruited to be involved in the research.
- 2** The research agency then conducted three online 'roundtable' sessions with stakeholders in the locations to get their perspectives on the local issues. The stakeholders included those from National Highways, Sustrans, the British Horse Society and members of local cycling and rambling groups.
- 3** After the 'roundtable' discussions the research agency met with seven cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians across the locations of interest to discuss the areas in depth with them and to see first-hand how these road users made journeys through the locations. These site visits were conducted in October 2022.
- 4** Finally, 25 cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians who make journeys through the locations of interest were recruited to complete a series of online tasks whereby photos and videos of the journeys that they made in the local areas were uploaded to an online tool and experiences were discussed in detail. This stage of the research was completed in November and December 2022.

## Contact Transport Focus

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should be addressed to:

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