# Improving cycle parking in central Tavistock

## Ideas from Transition Tavistock

### Introduction

Transition Tavistock is a volunteer run community group encouraging more sustainable future for the Tavistock area. This includes promoting walking and cycling. This paper, produced by our Travel Action Group, is offered to Tavistock Town Council for consideration, with copies to contacts at West Devon BC and Devon CC for information.

We suggest practical ways to improve on cycle parking in the town centre. While these may require external funding, we **recommend** that the Town Council investigates the technical feasibility and likely cost, so that a proposal can be promptly submitted when suitable funding streams become available to any of the three authorities.

The paper appraises current and potential cycle parking sites, points out the benefits to wellbeing and the economy, and ends with a brief discussion of other ways for local authorities to encourage cycle tourism and cycling by residents.

We have drawn on observation in Tavistock town centre; conversations with cyclists; discussion with stakeholders including Tavistock BID Manager, individual town councillors and a cycle sales and repair business; our history of engagement with supporters and the public; and contact with cycling advocacy groups in other areas.

### What people are looking for

The cycle parking facilities currently in the town centre do not match what people are looking for, as evidenced by the number of cyclists seen keeping hold of their bikes or fixing them to objects other than the official stands. This is illustrated in this photo set.

These photos are typical of choices observed all year round, and show the Duke St stand (#7 on map overleaf), which is easy to find, as the most popular, and an unmet desire to park close to the seats on Bedford Square.

Our conversations with cyclists found wide variation in what they want from parking, related to individual attitude to risk as much as the nature of the trip or type of cycle. Some like to keep their bikes within immediate reach, for example if riding for exercise without the weight of a lock, or visiting from high crime areas. Others were content to lock even e-bikes with panniers to a stand while shopping. A common theme was that the location should be well lit and overlooked. Some identified a need for secure parking (ie in a locked container or staffed facility), recognising that this might involve payment.

The Sheffield stands[1] used in most of the town centre sites were generally thought a suitable design, but difficult to spot. (The need to be unobtrusive in a conservation area was appreciated when explained.) However, they are unevenly spread across the shopping area,

[1] Hooped bars fixed to the ground. Those in the town centre are black.

with none close to West Street, Bedford Square or the Pannier Market. We found many local residents and business owners, as well as first time visitors, who were unaware of most of the locations.

## Current provision and potential additions – main shopping streets

The map below shows current public cycle parking (stars) and potential additional locations (triangles) in the main shopping area.

An appraisal of each site follows.

***[1] Market St (by phone box / WCs) – reposition for visibility and ease of use***

**Merits**

Large capacity, no hindrance to pedestrians, convenient for WCs.

**Problems**

• Too close to fence so stand does not support cycle body and locking awkward

• Cyclists enter town on opposite side of busy main road – most do not see it.

• Not overlooked, so perceived as insecure.

• Main shopping area out of sight.

**Potential solution**

*Quick fix*: (Minimal cost other than labour.) Rearrange the items on this cobbled triangle so that stand is near the fence facing car park rather than Market St, but set back enough for

ease of use.  Would require adjustment of the planter positions, keeping them visible as decoration and accessible for maintenance. Tavistock Community Gardeners suggest spring or autumn would be best time for move, to avoid damaging plants.

*Longer term:* identify better location in this area for substantive Sheffield stands[2], and reuse this rack as movable provision for Town Council events (eg in the Meadows).

### *[2] Bank Square Car Park – insecure design and location*

**Merits**

Currently the only facility close to businesses in the Bank Square / West St area.

**Problems**

- Almost invisible, so little known and infrequently used.
- Forks hold front wheel only, so insecure and risk damage to bike if accidentally knocked. Hence cycles sometimes parked parallel to wall, blocking other stands. Paved area also sometimes blocked by motorcycles.
- Closeness to car park raises risk of theft.
- Some women commented that location close to pub door and industrial waste bin feels unsafe after dark.

[2] "Sheffield stands" is used throughout for simplicity, but related designs, eg with cross bar or M shape, can offer more locking points and may be available in materials to fit the conservation area.

**Solution**

Replace with more secure design of stand, while recognising that additional cycle parking in West St area also needed. Potential site for secure storage if no better location found.

***[3] Duke of Bedford Statue – potential site for Sheffield stands***

**Merits**

- Visible to cyclists approaching town centre from all roads connecting to adjacent roundabout.
- Line of sight routes to Pannier Market and to shops / cafes in several directions.
- Allows cyclists who rest on Bedford Square benches to keep an eye on their bikes.
- While close to car park, there is oversight from benches nearby & from passers-by on pavement.
- Already used for informal cycle parking (2nd photo). A stand would control this better, avoiding parts jutting to pavement and preventing overspill from the adjacent motorcycle parking area.

**Considerations**

Placement near the road / car park corner probably best to maximize visibility on arrival and avoid pedestrian desire lines.

We have not suggested permanent structures on the Bedford Square, to retain flexibility for major events. However it is clearly a popular stopping point for touring cyclists.

***[4] Market St / West St corner – potential site for Sheffield stands***

**Merits**

- Spacious corner, already seen as an information / service point.
- Would give cyclists access to shops at west end of town centre, thus helping nearby businesses. Useful to local people cycling in from north or west.
- Good oversight from passers-by.
- Improves safety for pedestrians with sight impairments compared to current situation where obstacles change daily.

**Considerations**

Might require a slight repositioning of the litter bin.

While publicity for local business is important, this already provided by the orange board above the planter. The A boards shown are non-compliant so already liable to removal. (All over 1m from the business concerned, and most over 45cm wide.) The number and

placement vary randomly. Some have been seen to fall over on windy days, unnoticed by the relevant business, damaging its reputation by forming a trip hazard. Having potential customers able to park cycles and visit the nearby businesses is of greater benefit.

***[5] Drake Road / Duke Street corner – potential site for additional cycle parking***

**Merits**

- Central to town centre shops and facilities.
- Visible from Bedford Square benches.
- There is sufficient space to have stands suitable for non-standard cycles[3], thus ensuring disabled people and families who cycle are shown the same welcome as those arriving by car.
- Little current use of the extra pavement width, which serves mainly to narrow the Duke St entrance to assist pedestrian crossing. The space is not used by (or suitable for) stalls, gatherings etc.

**Considerations**

Consultation with Highways on placement important to ensure sightlines for turning traffic are clear. (Though A boards placed as shown are more of a distraction to drivers than a parked cycle would be.)

[3] (see table in LTN 1/20 chapter 11 for size and spacing guide)

***[6] Pannier Market perimeter – potential site for additional cycle parking***

Photo shows a section of the northern wall not adjacent to any cafes, but there may be other potential locations including under the perimeter roof, which would have advantage of protecting cycles from rain.

**Merits**

- Would encourage cyclists to shop at the Market and also on Duke St close by.
- Is within view of café tables.
- No more obstructive to pedestrians than the tables etc already in perimeter area.
- Sufficient room for stands sized for adapted cycles, tandems, trailers etc. Perhaps also secure storage, eg cycle hangar or lockers supervised by a nearby business.

**Considerations**

Limitation is that area is locked overnight, so would need clear signage about times of access. (Currently there is none – just times the Market itself is open.)
To discourage cycling within the market perimeter, signage at all entrances could include a "cyclists dismount" notice as well as an arrow to the cycle parking area.

***[7] Duke St near Platinum Centre – visible and popular***

The popularity of this stand is probably due to it being visible along the length of Duke St, meaning that visitors are more likely to see it. It is also close to shops and well laid out. The wide pavement here means there is no obstruction to pedestrians. It is unfortunate that the nearby seats and planters have been removed.

***[8, 9, 10] Sheffield stands near Tavistock Inn, Co-op and Eastgate[4].***

While no change is needed to these, their location needs more publicity (see below), as many of those asked were unaware of them. Although on the periphery of the shopping area, they are usefully positioned for people arriving from or visiting the north-east of the town centre. However, there is no indication that they for public use, (rather than just not customers of the nearest business).

## Public cycle parking elsewhere in Tavistock

*Bus Station*

This is a key location, as a transport hub and close to several community facilities. Both Sheffield stands and a secure locker could fit, as there are parts of the paved area that are rarely used by passengers or people walking through. Cycle lockers would assist people living

[4] Third photo (corner of Market Rd – outside café named Eastgate at time taken) includes temporary fencing for riverside works.

outside the town centre to commute by bus. West Devon BC is the site owner and manager, but other stakeholders can encourage them to make this provision.

*Parks & playgrounds*

Cycle parking in these is informal, using railings or leaning cycles against trees. While a lower priority than the locations above, there is scope for offering a more secure and tidy option, which also signals that cycling is normal and welcome. The Meadows, through which those using the National Cycle Network (NCN) from Plymouth arrive, is a particular opportunity, and a potential location for secure storage, perhaps overseen by Meadowlands staff.

The cycle parking outside the door of Meadowlands Leisure Centre is just front wheel forks. Covered cycle parking at or close to this point would be more suitable for year-round use, and could include sufficient space for non-standard cycles.

*Car parks*

There is spare capacity in some West Devon BC car parks, and a standard space can accommodate 6 cycles. The cyclists most concerned about theft saw danger from leaving bikes out of their sight near a point where a van could stop. However, a secure hangar could be placed in a suitably located part of a car park.

*Group parking – a gap*

While Tavistock is a popular destination or stopping point for organised cycling groups, there is no suitable site for 10 or more cycles to park together.

## General points on additional public parking

The town centre has a number of welcome boards with maps, including some on the NCN. However they vary in age and design, and none mentions cycle parking. To complement any work on cycle parking facilities, these boards should be updated (eg with stickers) to show all town centre cycle parking. An overall redesign aimed to welcome and encourage walking and cycling around town would be even better. (As shown on the map on p2, the NCN routing through the town centre divides and can be confusing to find, particularly after a diversion to shop or eat.)

In taking forward any of the suggested locations for additional parking, engagement with Devon County Council (as Highways Authority) would be needed and in some cases other landowners, nearby businesses and the local police.

Quality and correct placement matters, referencing guidance such as LTN1/20 Ch 11 – eg

- “Cycle parking, and routes to and from it, should be clearly marked, overlooked, well-maintained, well-lit and integrated into the built environment.”
- [Short stay] “Cycle parking located close to shop fronts will generally provide good passive surveillance. Small clusters of stands close to main attractors are preferable to one central ‘hub’….. Proximity is also essential for disabled cyclists who may be unable to walk very far.”

- “Cycle stands require at least 0.6m clearance to walls, and a clear space of 1.0m in front to enable the bicycle to be wheeled into position. A distance of at least 1.0m between stands enables bicycles fitted with panniers or child seats to gain access.”

## Business and community benefits from making cyclists welcome

With the growth of the town, establishing the habit of cycling from new estates as soon as they are occupied will help address concerns of current residents about increased congestion. Making them welcome in the town centre will encourage use of independent shops. (Note that all the supermarkets provide cycle parking of a reasonable standard.)

Supporting the choice to cycle rather than drive improves public and individual health in multiple ways, as well as reducing carbon emissions from transport. Households can cut their cost of living if they are able to avoid owning a second car by cycling for short trips.

The case made by the Town Council for easy on-street car parking in the town centre applies equally to people cycling to shop: ability to leave the vehicle close by, for the desired length of stay, affects the choice of destination, particularly for disabled people. (With some disabilities, cycling an e-bike is significantly easier than walking.) Tourists and day trippers who can conveniently park their cycle in a place they see as safe are likely to appreciate the town more fully, stay longer and spend more.

Visit Tavistock marketing rightly identifies the proximity of scenic cycling routes. Backing that up with better facilities is key to growth as a cycle tourism destination. Cyclists are more likely than car-dependent visitors to buy rather than bring their food, and turn to small businesses for repairs.

## Other opportunities to support cycling in the Tavistock area

The ideas below are for more wider ways to encourage cycling in Tavistock which could be considered by local government as opportunity allows. For our wider perspective on what helps and hinders cycling in West Devon, see the brief we provided in July 2023 in the early stages of consultation on West Devon BC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

*Rebuilding cycle hire provision*

At present (April 2025) the nearest places to hire a cycle are more than 12 miles away, by the A386 / A30 junction to the north, and Coypool to the south. This is a major deterrent to adults trying out a return to cycling, and to tourists having a car-free day trip. In suitable locations, cycle hire could be combined with staffed secure storage for both luggage and cycles. If there are ways in which councils can facilitate existing businesses (eg hospitality sector), or new start-ups, providing this, that would fill a notable market gap in Tavistock.

*Business cycle parking.*

A grant scheme to help businesses, including non-profit organisations, to add good quality cycle parking to their premises for staff and customers would increase overall capacity and encourage cycling to work. Suitable premises could also offer battery charging for e-bikes, and even a public pump and tool-station for simple repairs (as in Peter Tavy village car park).

*Communal cycle parking for flats and terraces*

Tavistock has a significant amount of terraced housing (as do some villages). While back gardens may have room to store bikes, carrying them through the house deters use, particularly if there are steps down to the street. An initiative to invite groups of neighbours to put forward proposals for more convenient shared secure cycle storage would be worth exploring. (See this crowdsourced map from Exeter Cycling Campaign.)

*For further information contact Transition Tavistock Travel Action Group*

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