

# A Cyclist's View of Hart, by Fleet Cycling

## Background

This document is produced in response to a request from AECOM, on behalf of Hart District Council. We understand that it is to be used as one of a number of information sources in producing an update to the 1997 Hart Landscape Character Assessment 1997 - [Hart District Landscape Assessment](https://www.hart.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/landscape_assessment_merged.pdf) at [https://www.hart.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/landscape\\_assessment\\_merged.pdf](https://www.hart.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/landscape_assessment_merged.pdf), and thence a new Local Plan, for development and infrastructure in the Hart District Council area – although likely for use after the creation in 2028 of the new North Hampshire Unitary Authority.

There are many wider planning matters Fleet Cycling will wish to comment on. However, for the purposes of this study, we are providing a focused response on the landscape and recreational aspects.

## Fleet Cycling

Fleet Cycling is a member group of Cycling UK, and follows the rules and guidelines for safe routing and cycling. We lead rides of between 8 and 24 people, five times a week, from the Hart Leisure Centre in Fleet. Most of our riders are of the older generation, aged from 45 to 75, and fairly fit. About a third are ladies. In the 12 months to April 2026 we led 217 rides, with an average of 10 riders each and an average distance of 40 miles. So we know and use these local roads a lot!

## Important Routes for Fleet Cycling Rides

We ride a number of different routes, some of which are similar but with slight variations on others. We attach a file “Fleet Cycling 2025 routes” which contains clickable links to view each route for free in the browser, using RideWithGPS. Because there are 178 of them, it is easier to view the “heat maps” shown below, and also provided as JPG files.

All of these routes are important to our feeling of understanding and enjoying our own landscape, whether directly as countryside we can appreciate, or indirectly as access to the countryside.

The most northerly part of Hart consists of farmland and woodland, with some villages and the edge of Yateley town. It is not very hilly and is good for walking and cycling, albeit there are a few fast stretches of road to be avoided.

The central part of Hart is the most built-up area and includes the Fleet/Church Crookham conurbation, the largest in Hart. It has few significant hills and is therefore ideal for those looking for relatively short and easy rides from the main towns.

The southern section of Hart is mostly open farmland, even including some vineyards. The North Downs stretch from West to East here, including Well, Barley Pound, and Dippenhall. There are a number of great views across the countryside to beyond Farnham, and we feel the open feel of this area is one of Hart's best assets for wellbeing of local residents, whether walking or cycling.

## Maps

***NB: To avoid possible copyright issues with RideWithGPS, the maps below should not be publicly distributed. We also provide them separately as JPG files, for best resolution.***

The first map is a “heat map” generated by the RideWithGPS app, which we use to plan, publicise and navigate our routes (usually with Garmin or Wahoo devices on the bikes).

In this map, green lines mark roads we use for rides organised by Fleet Cycling. The intensity of the green shows how much we use the road/path in question. You can see that we use most of the roads outside towns – most of the exceptions are roads with fast traffic, often combined with narrow carriageways. Our emphasis as a club is on well-surfaced rather than off-road riding, so we tend to use only very good cycle paths, with occasional less-good surfaces when they create good links between quiet roads.

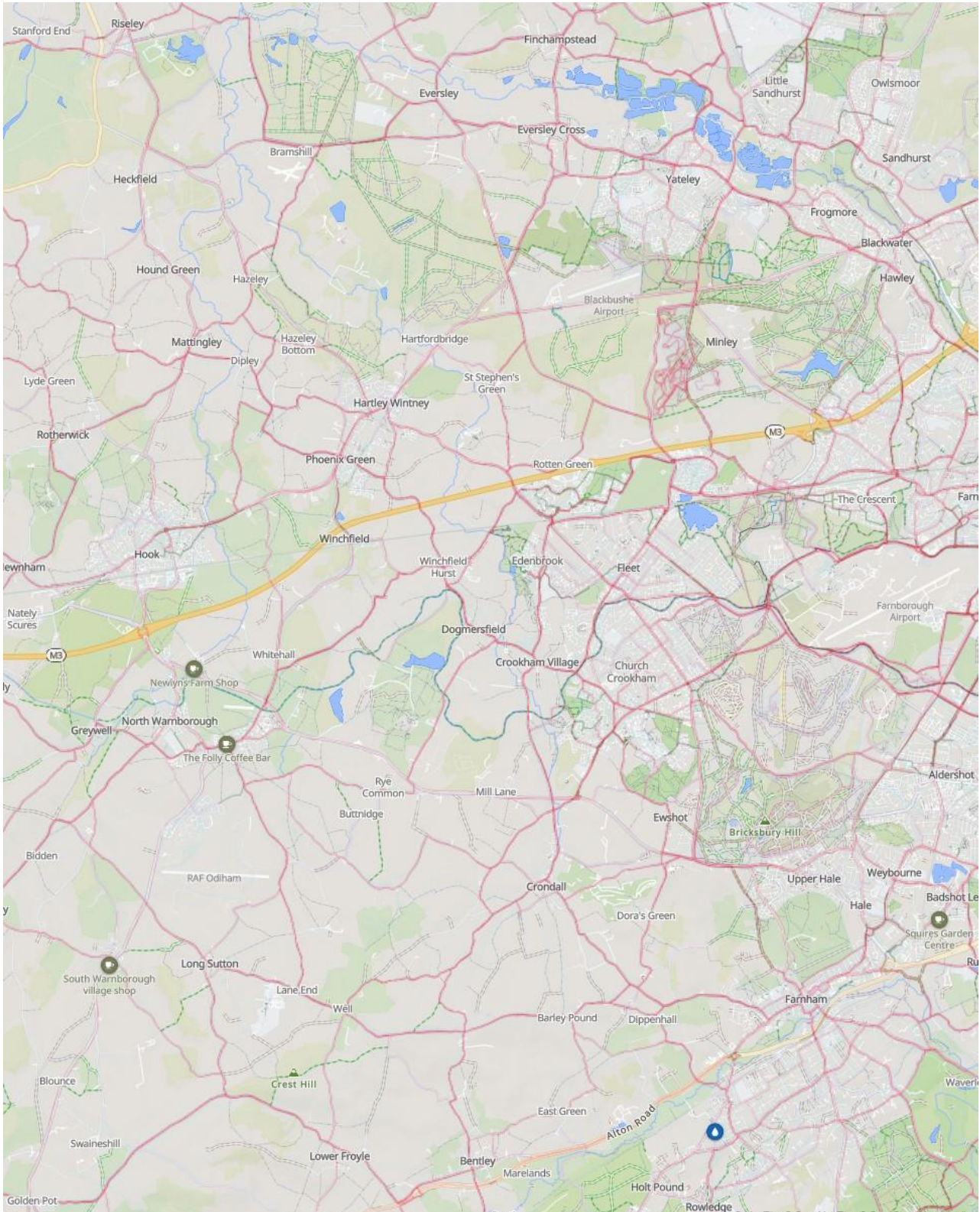
We also provide with this document a list of all the routes we rode in 2025, for completeness, in case the reader wishes to drill down further. The files is named “Fleet Cycling 2025 routes”, and includes both Excel and CSV versions.



## Public Routes Heat Map

The second map is also a “heat map” generated by RideWithGPS, but this time with routes logged by other RideWithGPS users as well. Hence this includes some off-road routes – note in particular the land at Minley, the Basingstoke Canal shared-use towpath, and Bricksbury Hill. The latter two have many flattish and easy routes suitable for families.

In this map, red lines mark roads included in RideWithGPS routes which have been made public by users. The intensity of the red shows how often the road/path in question appears in the routes.



## Caveat re Heat Maps

The heat maps are created selectively, from rides made by riders navigating or recording their rides with Garmin or Strava. This misses out many people: for instance the Court Moor school pupils forced by the traffic to cycle home along the pavement on Reading Road South will not be on there. The car wash workers who take the canal from Aldershot to Fleet every day to work won't be on there either. These groups don't navigate with Garmin or Strava so will not be represented on any heat map.

## Open Cycle Map

This is crowd-sourced by members of the public, and can be found at <https://www.opencyclemap.org/>. This is actually used by our Garmin cycle computers, and most of our planning tools (Komoot, RideWithGPS, Cycle.Travel etc) as their basic free mapping layer. Almost all local cycling routes are on there, including off road routes across the ranges. We think it is particularly valuable for off-road routes.

## Improvement Opportunities

Note that these maps merely show currently used routes. There are many further routes which we would like to use but are too dangerous due to fast motorised traffic, especially when in conjunction with narrow roads. There is a lot more that could be done to improve cycling in this area – see the latest LCWIP (Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan) for a start, and we can provide maps of many other roads where facilities for leisure cycling could be improved, some simply by keeping them swept of gravel, and others by repairs to potholes and generally poor road surfaces which are liable to catch narrow bicycle wheels and throw the rider off a bike.

## Views and perceptions of the landscape

### Caesar's Camp

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesars\\_Camp,\\_Rushmoor\\_and\\_Waverley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesars_Camp,_Rushmoor_and_Waverley)

This is a classic off-road cycle destination locally. It is accessed via MoD land (where access can be controlled at time) but provides stunning views of the locality, including the North Downs. Benches are provided for cyclists and walkers at the top and it is a natural place to stop and admire the landscape. There are varied routes to the top which can be seen on the crowd-sourced Open Cycle Map ([opencyclemap.org](https://www.opencyclemap.org/))

### Basingstoke Canal

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basingstoke\\_Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basingstoke_Canal)

Shared with walkers and runners, the Basingstoke Canal is often used for recreational rides and provides a wealth of wildlife and a quiet traffic free environment to cycle in. It is shady in summer and sheltered in winter and many local cyclists take advantage of it. Some cyclists link waterways together and cycle eastwards into central London through very varied landscapes with cafe stops along the way. Westward the bikeable route along the canal stops at Greywell where there is a

bat sanctuary in the blocked tunnel. In our experience there have been very few conflicts between the different users (walkers, cyclists, runners, fishers) of this facility.

We would like to make a particular note about the Basingstoke canal towpath. While this can generally be used by bikes, it is shared with other users and in places gets rough or muddy especially during winter. It has also been closed during the week of the Farnborough Air Show, so that users riding between Aldershot and Fleet would have to divert onto the fast and busy main road instead. For these reasons it cannot be considered as an adequate bike route for regular use in its current form.

### [Fleet Pond \(and other local nature reserves\)](#)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleet\\_Pond](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fleet_Pond)

Fleet Pond is a great local resource and many family groups cycle round it, and of course it is also heavily used by walkers. The cycling aspect has been improved recently with a wider path parallel to the railway eliminating pedestrian/cycle contention for the route. Again the multiplicity of cycle routes can be seen best on Open Cycle Map. There are other local nature reserves like Elvetham Heath which allow cycling and are ideal for family groups with children cycling.

### [Hampshire Rural Landscape](#)

Many Fleet Cycling rides take place through historic Hampshire villages and the north Hampshire chalk downs which are in many places virtually unchanged from the era of Jane Austin. Selbourne Hanger for example is famous for its inspiration of Gilbert White, perhaps the first English naturalist and our rides typically stop at the café at Gilbert White's house (although this is outside Hart, large sections of the routes to it go through Hart). Traditional bakeries and village shops and post offices (now cafes) provide natural destinations for bike rides with a Hampshire landscape backdrop of rolling chalk downland.

Links:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hampshire\\_Downs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hampshire_Downs)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selborne\\_Hill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selborne_Hill)

### [King Alfred's Way](#)

[cyclinguk.org/routes/long-distance/king-alfreds-way](https://cyclinguk.org/routes/long-distance/king-alfreds-way)

[ridewithgps.com/routes/55702909](https://ridewithgps.com/routes/55702909)

This is a long distance, recreational cycle route that passes straight through our local area (mile 130 near Riseley to mile 148 near Ewshot) and is enjoyed by many cyclists. King Alfred's Way also forms a key link with other long-distance routes, as it connects four National Trails: the South Downs Way, Cycling UK's North Downs Way riders' route, the rideable half of the Ridgeway, and the Thames Path. We provide the Cycle UK link above, but in summary King Alfred's Way showcases some of the most iconic landscapes in Hampshire including the South Downs, The Devils Punchbowl, Frensham Common SSI and many more. Many local cyclists (ourselves

included) use King Alfred's Way to link to some of the landscapes below. There are convenient cafes as stopover points.

Links:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frensham\\_Common](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frensham_Common)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South\\_Downs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Downs)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil%27s\\_Punch\\_Bowl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil%27s_Punch_Bowl)

### Shipwright's Way

The Shipwright's Way is a 50-mile cycling route which starts from Bentley, just south of Hart District. We, and we presume many others, have ridden to Bentley from Fleet and other parts of Hart to ride onwards via the Shipwright's Way to Hayling Island and Portsmouth.

[hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryside/walking/shipwrightsway](https://hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryside/walking/shipwrightsway)

## Further Input from Fleet Cycling

We understand that this consultation item is about leisure cycling, and would like to stress we have much more to say about cycling routes and usage for work, commuting, shopping etc. We are a member group of Cycle UK, supporting the government's Active Travel initiative which includes cycling to work, shops and school as well as traditional day rides, off road fun and long cycle tours.

We understand there will be further opportunities to engage later in the year, with details set out in the Local Plan timetable: [Local Plan timetable | Hart District Council](#)

As Secretary of Fleet Cycling, I have registered on the consultation database via the Council's website: [New Local Plan | Hart District Council](#)

If there are further opportunities to engage, we would appreciate being involved – you can contact us on [secretary@fleetcycling.org.uk](mailto:secretary@fleetcycling.org.uk)

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*Andrew Perkins, Secretary, Fleet Cycling – a member group of Cycling UK*

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