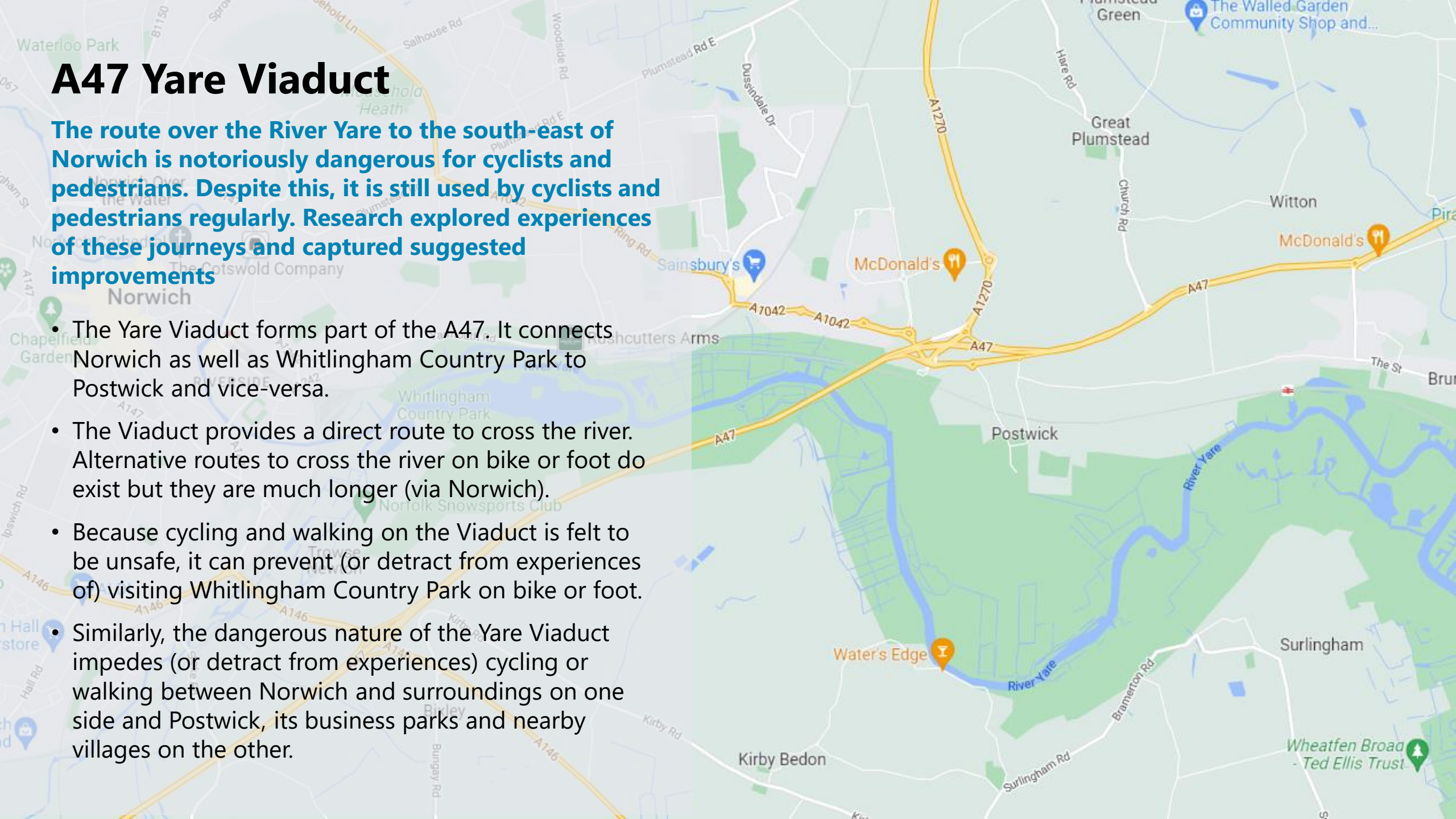
Site Study: A47 Yare Viaduct



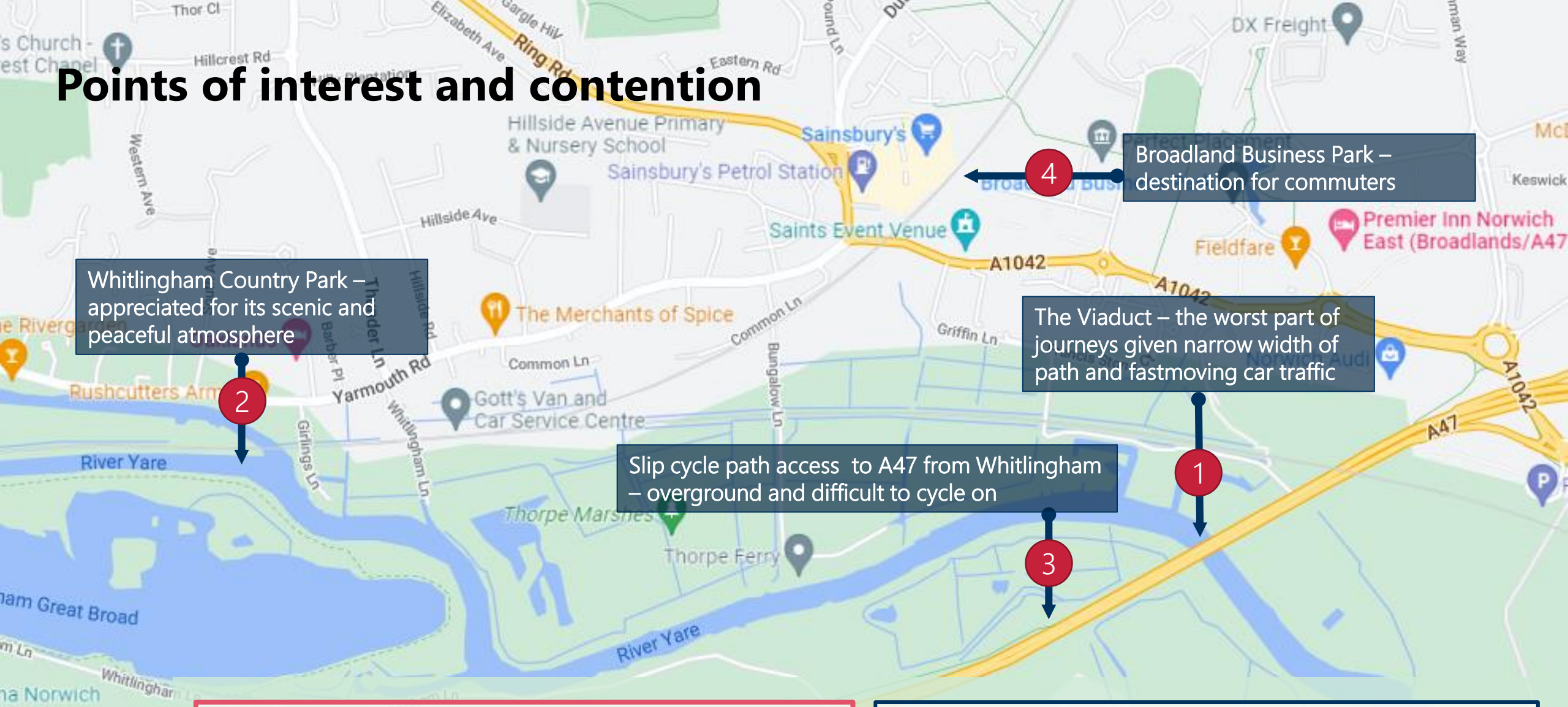
A47 Yare Viaduct

The route over the River Yare to the south-east of Norwich is notoriously dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. Despite this, it is still used by cyclists and pedestrians regularly. Research explored experiences of these journeys and captured suggested improvements

- The Yare Viaduct forms part of the A47. It connects Norwich as well as Whitlingham Country Park to Postwick and vice-versa.
- The Viaduct provides a direct route to cross the river. Alternative routes to cross the river on bike or foot do exist but they are much longer (via Norwich).
- Because cycling and walking on the Viaduct is felt to be unsafe, it can prevent (or detract from experiences of) visiting Whitlingham Country Park on bike or foot.
- Similarly, the dangerous nature of the Yare Viaduct impedes (or detract from experiences) cycling or walking between Norwich and surroundings on one side and Postwick, its business parks and nearby villages on the other.



Points of interest and contention



1. **The Viaduct itself**
2. **Whitlingham Country Park and Broads**
3. **Slip cycle path access from Whitlingham onto the A47**
4. **Broadland Business Park and Industrial Estates**

- Extremely narrow shared-use cycle path on a very busy road
- Proximity to fast-moving car/HGV traffic
- Access routes onto the A47 can be overgrown and poorly surfaced

An overview of the A47 Yare Viaduct

Site visit video illustrates key issues and experiences.



Issues for the area

Lack of protection and safety deters people from cycling on the Viaduct, though there is evidence of cyclists "braving it"

1. **Very dangerous cycle path**
   - Narrow and insufficiently separated from fast-moving car and HGV traffic on the A47.
   - No barrier between the path and the A47 road traffic.
   - Minimum width and measures for safety are not in place, especially considering the path is for both cyclists and pedestrians and for foot and bike traffic coming from both directions.
2. **Viaduct cycle path impedes cycle/foot leisure and functional journeys**
   - Cycle path can act as a barrier for cyclists wishing to access the Broads and Whitlingham Country Park– areas of natural beauty. It is also a barrier to cycling on the National Cycle Network – indeed, the irony is that signage suggests the viaduct is part of this Network.
   - Precarious and off-putting for commuters travelling to Broadlands Business Parks and housing nearby (there are plans underway for further employment/ housing infrastructure which, arguably, could increase cycling demand on viaduct).
   - The Viaduct also severs foot/cycle journey from Norwich into the villages/ towns of Postwick, Brundall, Blofield.
3. **An alternative way to cross the river exists (via Norwich Town) but it is far less direct**
   - Crossing the river via the Green Pedalway from Norwich is hillier and longer – more viable as an alternative for leisure rather than functional/ commuter journeys. Commuters feel this alternative is out of their way but are drawn to take it especially after dark in order to feel safer.
4. **Paths leading up to the viaduct are of mixed quality, with the ones of the Whitlingham side being very overgrown and poorly surfaced**

A47 - Frustrations



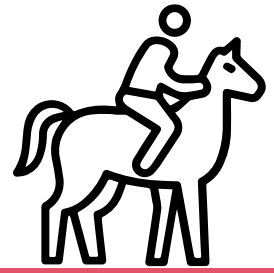
Cyclists

- Fundamental issue is the **lack of safety coming to and traversing the viaduct.**
- Frustration that **nothing substantial** has been done to improve safety since the 1990s despite submissions to authorities.
- **Obstructions** (e.g. fallen signage, road work signs) on the path which are a hazard on an already dangerous path.
- Experiences cycling either side of the A47 are better, but there are still frustrations:
    - Access route from Whitlingham is not lit, as well as muddy, overgrown, unevenly surfaced – **can make for punctures and falls.** Better suited terrain for mountain bikes, less so for road or hybrid bikes.
    - Bollards at the Postwick end offer some protection but they are placed on the path itself, making it even narrower



Pedestrians

- Share the narrow cycle path with pedestrians and there is **no room for segregation by user type.**
- Encountering and navigating oncoming cyclists from two directions with fast moving cars in very close proximity is **difficult** and **dangerous.**
- **Narrow, overgrown and often muddy** tracks leading up to and away from the viaduct can be slippery as well as feel unsafe (e.g. towards Whitlingham and Griffin lane on the other side).
- Steps on Griffin Lane and poorly maintained with banister eroded and fallen.
- Roundabouts near Postwick have continuous traffic and few crossing points.



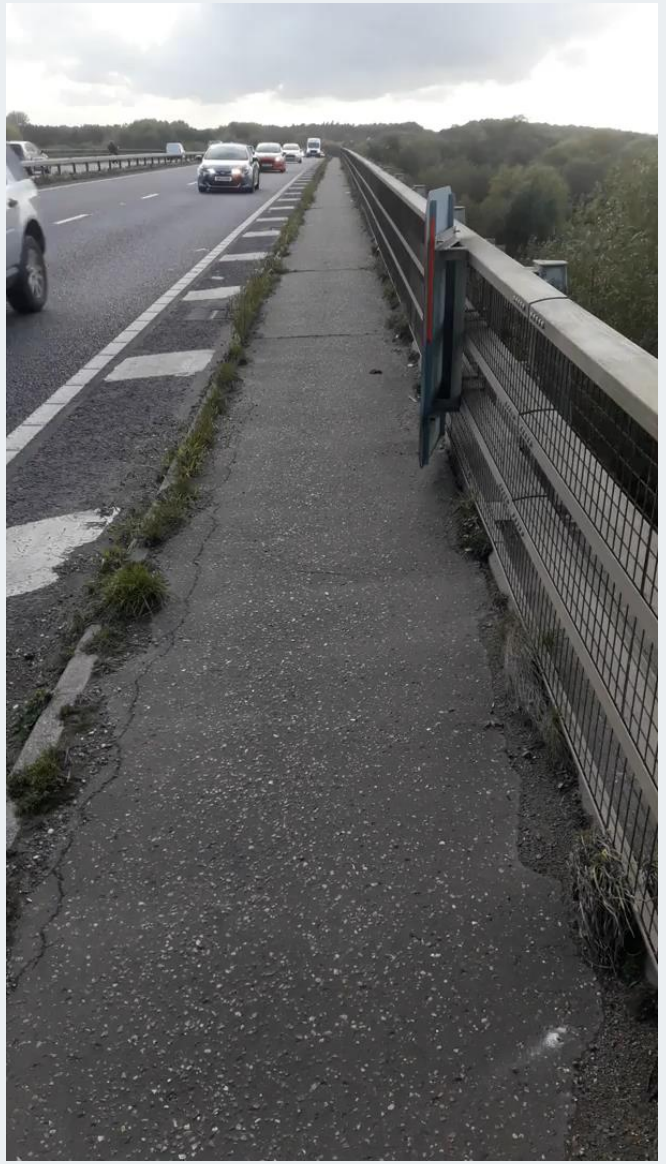
Equestrians

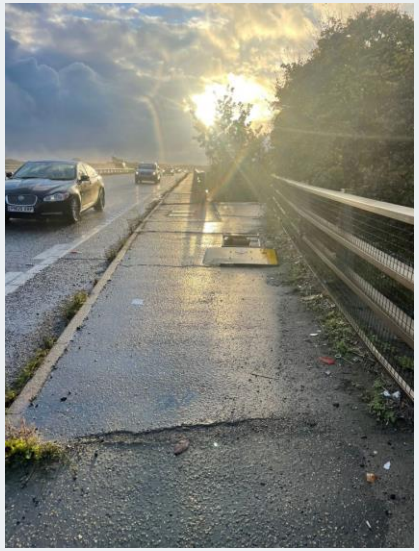
- No equestrians on or near to the A47 – **site unsuitable for this audience.**

A47 – Frustrations (Cyclists)

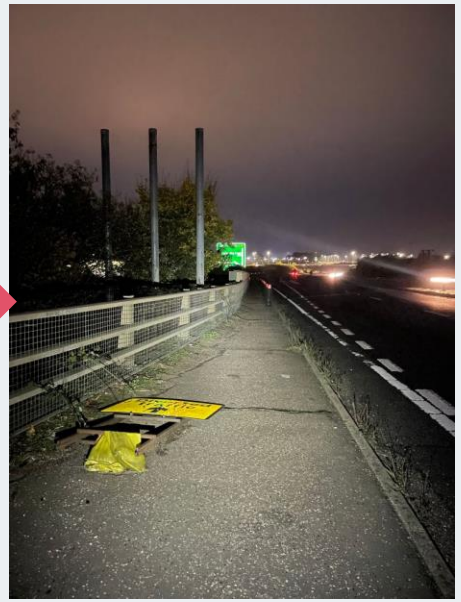
"Another day, another ride. This time avoiding the A47 viaduct by cycling through our fine city. I'm not sure what's worse, the lack of cycle paths in Norwich or a cycle path with 80 MPH traffic whizzing past." –Cyclist

Video. Click to play





"Often when roadworks are carried out nearby, the signage is actually placed in the path blocking or narrowing it. On occasion I have had to get round signage by stepping off the path into the carriageway. This particular sign has been left here for weeks." – Cyclist



A47 – Frustrations (Cyclists)



"Luckily we chose to take our mountain bikes as the path between the end of Whitlingham lane and the A47 path **is not suitable for road bikes**. I imagine in the winter the surface would be much worse. **It would be good if this stretch was improved."** –Cyclist

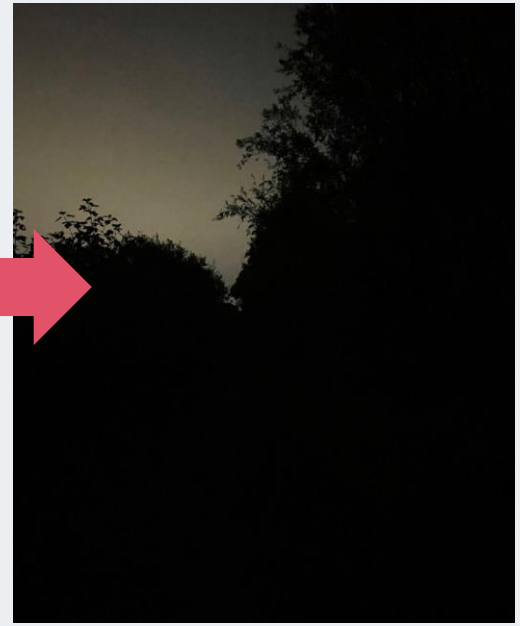


"We are now at the edge of the end of the cycle route where to **add insult to injury there are these pointless barriers**, and as you can tell everyone just cycles around them. **I don't really know what good they do."** – Cyclist

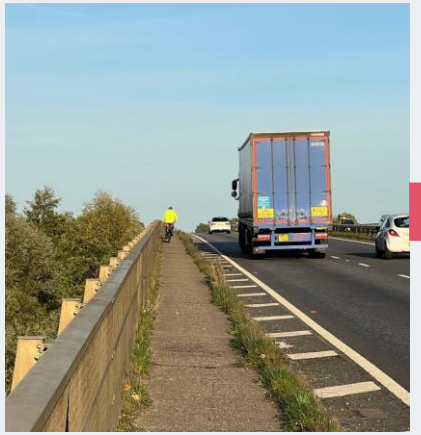


"On this day I also got a **puncture on the gravel section near Whitlingham Lane!"** - Cyclist

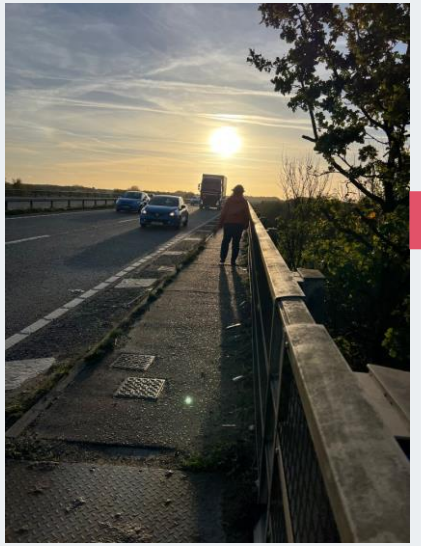
"This shows just **how dark it is down here at night** if camera night mode and bike light turned off! This is on the gravel track between Whitlingham lane and the ramp up to the bridge." - Cyclist



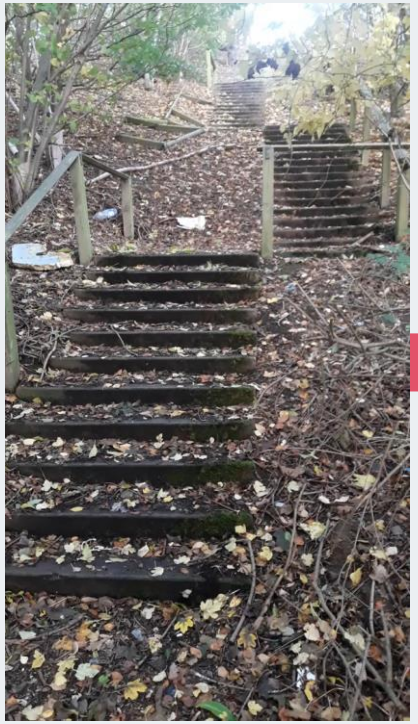
A47 – Frustrations (Pedestrians)



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

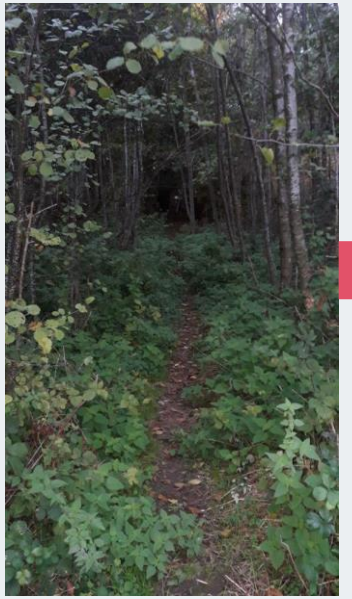


"Very busy road with **no protection.** Usually windy which is fine unless it is a **crosswind and then it can be scary."** – Pedestrian



"Steps from Griffin Lane up to the east end of the a47 viaduct. **Broken rails and an odd zigzag, alternate side step arrangement. Just feels neglected and an area that attracts antisocial behaviour."** – Pedestrian

Video.
Click to play



"This is the pedestrian access towards the east end of the a47 viaduct from Griffin Lane. **It is thick with nettles, is dark and dingy and a bit unwelcoming and dark."** –Pedestrian

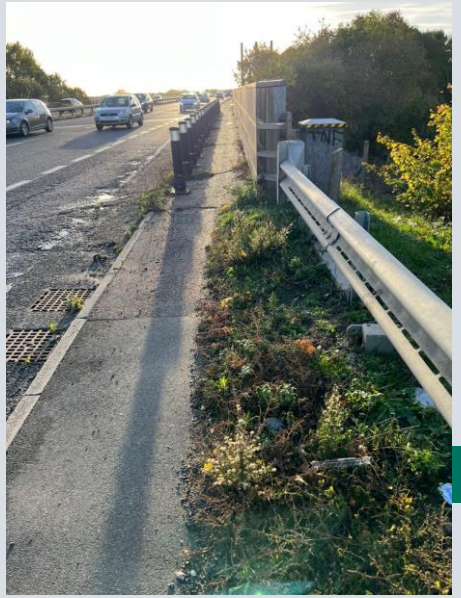
A47- Delighters

Cyclists

- **Direct access to Whitlingham Park** coming from Postwick end of Yare Viaduct– viaduct is a "painful" stretch to arrive to an area of natural beauty.
- **View** from the viaduct is impressive (but too dangerous to stop and admire it).
- Relative quiet and separation from cars in paths leading up to A47 is appreciated.
- **Whitlingham Lane underpass** below A47 feels spacious and safe with few cars (safer in daytime as not lit).

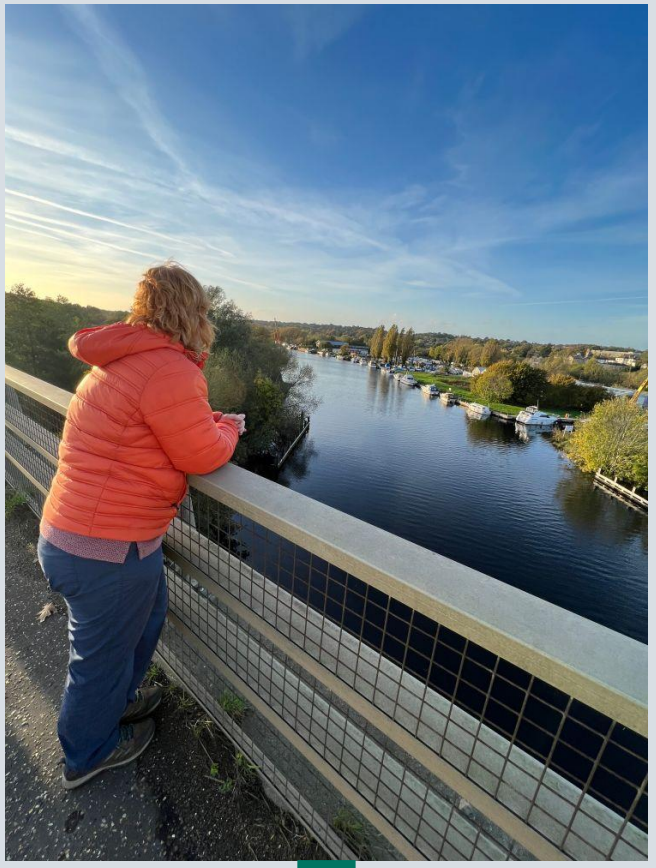
Pedestrians

- Impressive **view** from viaduct over river.
- Wide and well-surface route leading away from the viaduct toward Postwick Interchanges.



"This is the only bit of this pathway that protects pedestrians from the traffic. This also has a **higher bit of wall along the bridge** to protect you from falling onto the railway." - Pedestrian





"You cant beat that **view** - great for headspace and wellbeing." – Pedestrian

Suggested improvements

There are two types of solution. Some are considered "ideal" but recognised by users as major and costly. For this reason, cyclists and pedestrians also offer smaller-scale improvements that would make a difference



Cyclists

- The ideal solution is a **cantilevered bridge for non-motorised users that is separate from the A47 Viaduct for cars** – a suggestion is for this to come out of Bungalow Lane to cross the river.
- Smaller scale improvements include creating a **barrier** between the existing A47 cycle path and the road – important that this barrier does not eat into the already narrow cycle path.
- **Reducing the car speed limit** on this portion of the A47 would also increase sense of cyclist/ pedestrian safety, or making this section of the A47 **one car lane instead of two** so as to be able to widen the cycle path.
- **Regularly removing obstructions** from A47 cycle path (e.g. fallen signs, road work signage, parts of HGVs that detach from vehicles).
- **Maintenance of overgrown and poorly surfaced paths** leading up to/ away from A47 (e.g., slip road on Whitlingham side could be replaced by a shared use facility for cyclists and pedestrians).
- On nearby roads close to Country Park and Roads - Interestingly, while these paths are not lit there is a level of acceptance of this - these areas are close to wilder, natural spots and light could obstruct the natural habitat. Automatic motion-based light that turns only when users and in the area is an option put on the table.



Pedestrians

- Pedestrians' suggestions mirror those from cyclists. Improvements to **demarcate space for cyclists and pedestrians on shared use paths.**
- Revisit prior proposal of a **bridge linking Thorpe to Norwich.**



Stakeholders

- Further quantitative research to obtain more granular data on potential demand by studying users' origin and destination data.