

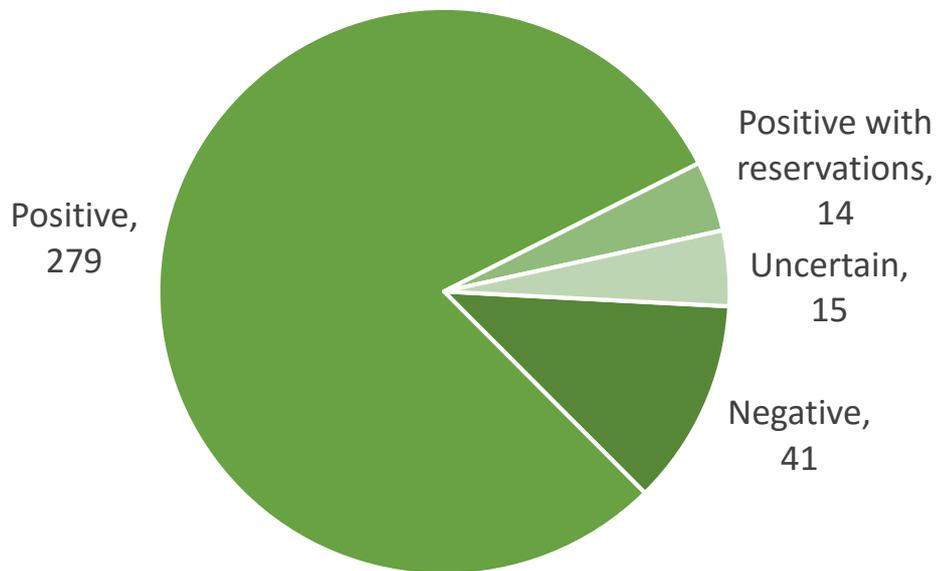
## **Memo on the Open Barrier Surveys**

### **Friends of the Fallowfield Loop**

The following is the initial response of our expanded committee to the findings of the surveys summarised in the rest of this document. We have conducted three separate surveys – physical (144 respondents), online (134) and via email, Facebook and Twitter (71). Together they form an impressive compendium of opinions about the Loop as well as the open barrier experiment.

1. In the light of the findings we are unanimous in our view that the open barrier policy should be continued indefinitely. The overwhelming response of cyclists is that the experiment has proved positive and has in many cases increased their use of the Loop. This includes not only those who use a variety of wide or long bikes, but also many using ordinary cycles who have found negotiating the internal barriers extremely difficult.
2. However, the concerns of the much smaller number of walkers who have expressed disapproval of the experiment need urgent attention. One concern is that it encourages cyclists to speed up and become a greater hazard to walkers. We would recommend that Sustrans allocate funds to install notices at the main entrances with a 'Share with Care' message. We are keen to know how Sustrans has addressed this problem at their other routes. Possibilities include a message printed onto the tarmac and/or attached to a post. The 'Share with Care' message could be accompanied by pictures of the different users – cyclists, walkers with dogs on a lead, joggers, wheelchairs. Would an experiment with modest speed bumps – or other landscaping – constitute too much of a hazard?
3. The other main concern of walkers (and some local residents) is the presence of motorbikes, though there is some disagreement whether the problem has increased since the barriers were open. Are the prohibition signs on the bridges sufficiently clear? Might they be included in the 'Share with Care' messages? Are the police adequate in their response to complaints? We need to show the very few concerned but vocal respondents that we can address their concerns.
4. We would recommend that Sustrans consider an audit of all the entrances to the Loop to identify the few which are impossible for wide bikes to negotiate, so that they all conform to a common pattern.
5. In the event of a continuation of the open barrier policy, we would recommend that the existing structure of the internal barriers be retained, but that the moveable lateral bars be removed as they constitute a possible future hazard.
6. We would welcome an early meeting with the relevant Sustrans personnel to discuss the points raised in this memo. At an appropriate time we think an item on the surveys and our agreed response to them should be sent to local media outlets.

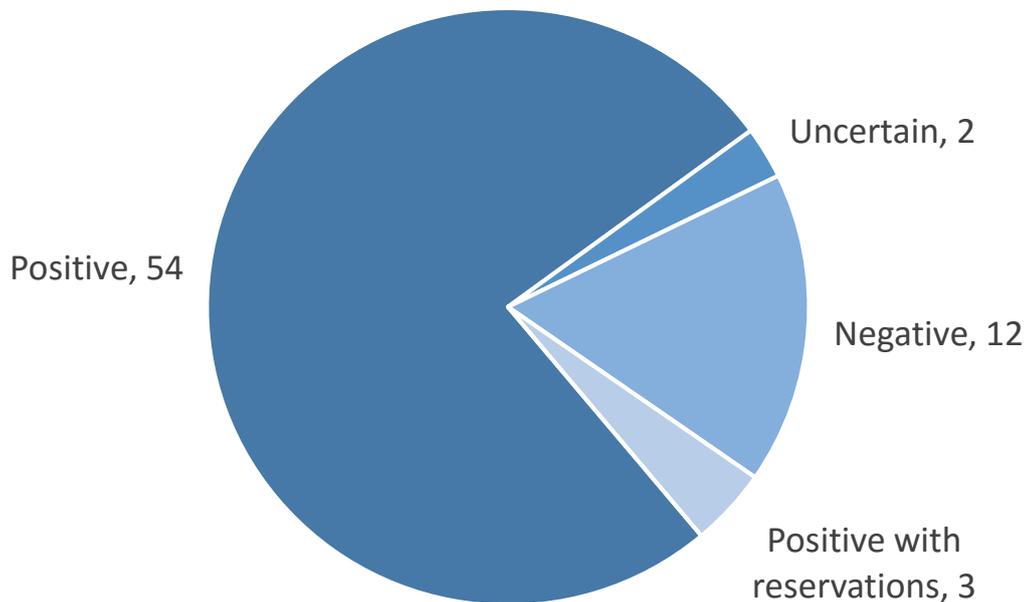
## Overall Summary



### 41 negatives:

- 12 from email / Twitter / Facebook:
  - 11 motorbikes
  - 1 burglary
- 10 from physical survey:
  - Motorbikes / speeding cyclists / bunching cyclists
- 19 from online survey:
  - 2 had not noticed barriers had been opened
  - 3 gave no further comment
  - 6 were concerned about motorbikes
  - 5 were concerned about speeding cyclists
  - 2 were concerned about speeding cyclists & motorbikes
  - 1 was concerned about a speeding maintenance van

## Feedback via email, Twitter & Facebook



Several **positive** responses specifically mentioned that the barriers being open meant **easier use** with trailers / panniers / baby seats / tandems / recumbents / tricycles or wheelchairs, or indeed for those learning to ride a bike.

- *“It has bothered me that these barriers obstruct normal use by families. I've witnessed a man with child on towbar having problems lifting bike through, which seems so unfair. Not to mention that they are not safe for learner riders to negotiate”.*

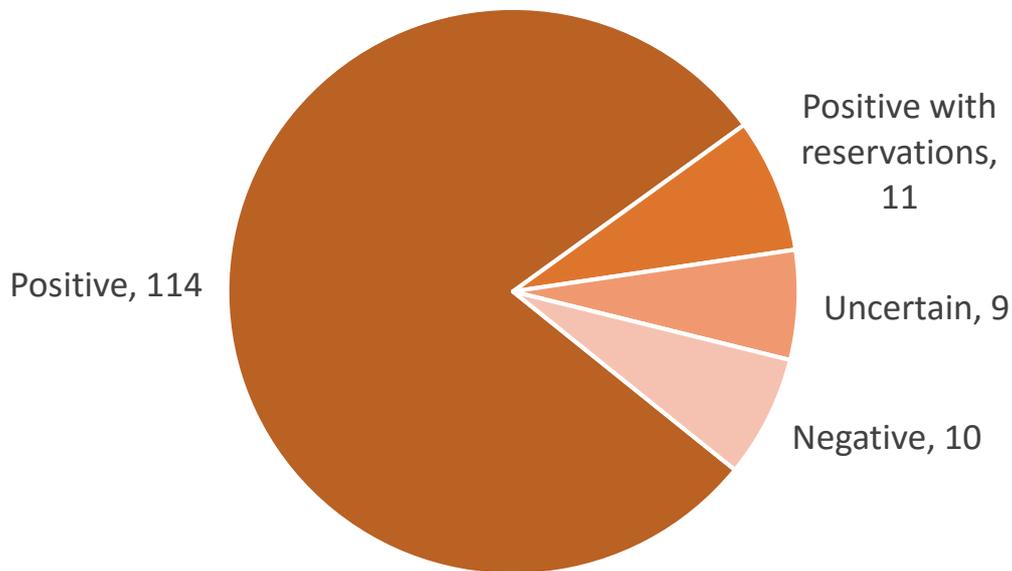
1 **positive** response mentioned that opening the barriers made for **safer** use of the Loop at night, due to not having to stop to dismount.

Of the 3 **positive with reservations**, one did not state the reservations, just commented that he had some. The other 2, one was concerned about **motorbikes** (as he had encountered them previously when the barriers were closed), the other wondered if the open barriers were connected to the spate of bike **muggings**.

Of the 12 **negative** responses, 11 related solely to **motorbikes**. The final response (5<sup>th</sup> Aug 2016) linked increased **burglaries** from houses backing on to the Loop in the last three months to the open barrier trial.

2 of the **negative** responses also did not seem to realise that there were any potential benefits to opening the barriers – one agreed that “no doubt for cyclists clipped in on cleats they'll think it's great to avoid slowing down” and another (from someone who uses the Loop on a bike) “Please note that I never have any problems negotiating the permanent obstacles”.

## Physical Survey

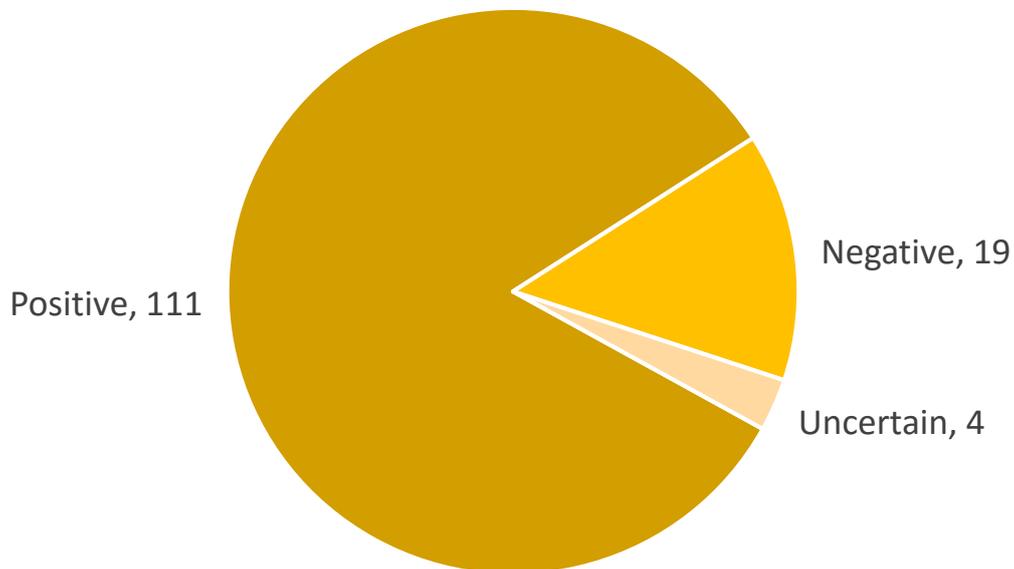


The **negatives/uncertain** were evenly split between faster riders ('lycra fanatics', 'please get them to slow down') and incidence of motorbikes.

The **positive** comments were limited to one-liners, as to be expected from a physical survey when people were keen to get on with their ride/walk. Here is a selection:

- It is much easier with a trailer bike
- Seen many more riders commuting
- Use much more as hate stopping and starting on a bike
- Feel safer as am more vulnerable to harassment when stopping at a barrier
- I'm unbalanced when going through the twists at the barriers
- Easier for young children to learn cycling
- The existing structures with open barriers separate walkers from cyclists
- Barriers are all different, not of a common type, which is confusing
- Quicker to get to my job interview
- Traffic-free commuting is marvellous
- We are able to use the tandem with children
- It is possible now for buggies to use the Loop
- Makes for a much easier ride

## Online Survey



The **negatives/uncertain** was primarily made up of

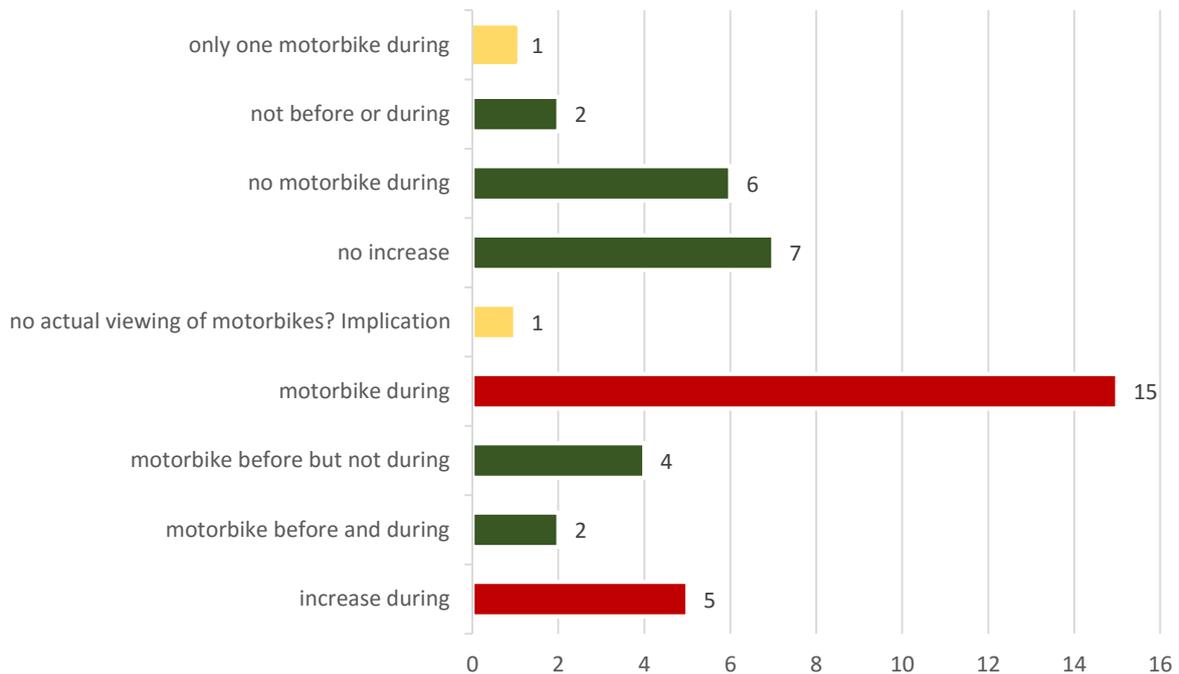
- **Motorbike / quad bike concern (9)**  
*“Have definitely seen and heard more motorbikes on the loop. Have nearly been knocked over by one once, hear them at night as my garden backs onto the loop. It's nice being able to cycle straight through the barriers, but I'm not sure it's worth the additional noise and risk of having motorbikes on sections of the loop that are not intended for them.”*
- **Speeding bicycle concern (9)**  
*“Unfortunately it encourages many cyclists (and I am one!) to speed along the loop putting other users at risk as they don't slow down for pedestrians and expect everybody to get out of their way.”*

The **positive** comments were varied, including

- 56 respondents stated their journey was **quicker, easier or more pleasant**. The majority of these were people cycling, but a few people stated that running was now more pleasant or that they could now use the Loop with buggies / prams.
  - *“Much easier to use especially when pushing the pram.”*
  - *“As a runner the awful design of the barriers makes running on the loop a real challenge when it should be something to be enjoyed.”*
- 18 respondents mentioned now being able to use a **special bike** (recumbent, trailer, tricycle, cargobike, bakfiets) or **wheelchair**.
  - *“I cycle with a friend who uses a recumbent bike as he has disabilities. He can't use the loop when the barriers are closed so it has made a huge difference to him, me and friends and family he rides with.”*
  - *“I can use the loop more often get places easier and safer. Before the barriers made it near impossible to use a safe route as my trailer for kids is too big.”*

- *“I use the Loop numerous times a day now & have witnessed a real increase in cargo bikes with families enjoying the use of the resource. I have also been delighted to see wheelchair users utilising the Loop which of course they wouldn't have been able to before. I haven't seen a single motorbike on the path since the trial began - ironically I saw more last summer when the gates were very much shut.”*
- *“My daughter has severe autism and so is unable to cycle. Therefore I currently tow her on her tricycle having the barriers open make accessing the loop much easier.”*
- 13 respondents stated they were **using the Loop more** because the barriers were open, eg
  - *“When I first used the FLoop prior to the barriers being opened, I didn't return for a good year or so. After my first visit back, on finding the barriers open, I started cycling to and from work (Levenshulme to Openshaw) three times a week.”*
  - *“Since the barriers have been open I have used almost daily for commuting by bike. Previously having to use the gates was a hassle and it was simpler to use the roads. In addition to this I now also use it on my bike with my children as getting through the gates with a trailer / baby seat was near impossible and not worth the trouble of having to stop every few hundred yards to lift over or maneuver the gates.”*
- 7 respondents felt that open barriers made the Loop **safer**, due to both not having to slow down (and potentially dismount) at the barriers, or through increased use of the Loop.
  - *“I feel safer with the barriers open as I do not have to slow down/stop to get through them. As a female cyclist, this makes me feel more comfortable, especially at night, and with the reported attacks on the loop.”*

## Motorbike Summary



Of those respondents who mentioned motorbikes in the electronic responses, those who mentioned only motorbikes during the trial or who noted an increase are marked red in the graph above.

Yellow denotes an uncertain response: one respondent noted 'only' one motorbike and another implied that motorbike gangs were linked to burglaries in the area, but did not mention seeing any such motorbikes (or any motorbikes) on the Loop.

In total 43 comments mentioned motorbikes, of which

- 20 noted an increase (or only noted incidents during the trial) – 47% (marked red),
- 21 noted no increase (or no motorbikes) – 49% (marked green),
- and the balance were unclassifiable (marked yellow).

This clearly shows that the pattern is mixed – some respondents clearly indicate increased use by motorbikes, while others have noticed a decrease or no change. It may be the case that motorbike use has increased only on certain stretches of the Loop, or at certain times, and this should be kept under review. However, it is clear that motorbikes have been accessing the Loop with the barriers in place, so they have not been effective in keeping motorbikes off the Loop.

#### **Selected comments sent via email (x4):**

*Where to start? I am actually really happy and excited to see that the barriers on the Fallowfield Loop have been lifted.*

*We recently moved to Withington and one of the reasons we really liked the house and area is that it is very close to an access point to the F-loop. At weekends we love being able to cycle safely along the F-loop to our favourite park in Chorlton and see friends in Chorlton instead of driving.*

*However, our children are 2 & 4 and after buying a child trailer we soon discovered to our disappointment that it proved very difficult and awkward to negotiate the barriers along the route, and often holding up other cyclists.*

*I really wanted to be able to cycle with the children in the trailer during the week but I haven't been able to do this because I cannot part lift/part manoeuvre the trailer by myself. Last Friday I invited by Dad to join me and the kids for a bike ride for an early Father's Day day together and I was SO pleased (and relieved!) to see all the barriers up!!*

*If the barriers remain up I will be able to use the route at least twice a week, this is saving at least two car journeys.*

*I suffer from anxiety and cycling a long this route is 'my medicine'. It may be in a city but I love it, the freedom, the bird song, cycling.*

*I hope so much that the barriers stay up.*

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I'm just writing to give you some feedback on the open barriers trial. Two words sum it up really: absolutely wonderful.

It's one of those things where you don't realise the effect of a thing until you are released from it. I never found the barriers that difficult to negotiate on a bike. They were more an irritation than anything else. But since they've been removed I have, for the first time, simply enjoyed the Loop and enjoyed the feeling of riding a bike on it. I didn't realise how criminalised the barriers had made me feel until they were gone. The same goes for walking with my daughter in her buggy along the Loop, which we do regularly to get to Chorlton village. The barriers are no longer pinch-points: before, if I was approaching the barrier and someone on a bike or on foot was coming in the opposite direction I would evaluate how fast they're going, compare it to how fast I'm going, gauge the distances of both of us to the barrier, decide whether I can get through first or I should wait and wave them through ahead of me... Now I just keep walking and they keep riding/walking and we exchange 'good mornings'. It's great.

I've also seen some new and welcome sights on the Loop since the open barriers:

- 1 quite elderly and wobbly man on a regular bike
- 1 man riding a recumbent
- 1 woman riding a trike
- 2 people riding electric wheelchairs
- 1 person riding a bike pulling a trailer

These are just some of the people who were excluded by the barriers when they were closed. This trial has made them visible.

I can also report that I have not seen a single motorised vehicle on the Loop during the open barriers trial. Our house backs directly onto the Loop and so we would be aware if people were taking advantage of the open barriers to play on their motorbikes or mopeds. This has not been the case.

I do hope that the barriers will be opened permanently. It has clearly already made such a difference to lots of people and to me personally.

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*The barriers of the fallow field loop have recently been opened which has made an instant impact to myself and my family. I am a mother of two toddlers a 3 year old and an 18month old. My husband who is a keen cyclist and encouraged me a lot when we were dating and I found a great joy in cycling with the exercise, the fresh air, knowing it was better than getting in a car for the environment and just the plain fun of it. I was and still am very wary of going on roads with cars, so we used converted train lines and trails like the fallow field loop, which was great.*

*However, once we had children my perspective and use of these tracks have changed. We thought it would be fun to get a tandem which is great but not on the fallow field loop with the barriers, there is only so far we can go in either direction before we are physically stopped in our tracks by barriers. The barriers were not too much of a problem if you are on a single bike on your own (I have seen many times single riders dismounting and carrying their bikes over the horse barrier part because of congestion through the single gap), but on a tandem through the maze barriers it's impossible to stay on the bike and with the children's seats on the bikes it's a nightmare! I would love to buy a tricycle now my children could both sit nicely on one that had seats on the back (we've even dreamed about the possibility of selling our car and being a carless household, but that's all it is a dream)I could cycle them to the parent and toddlers groups, cycle to church, cycle to the shops, cycle to the park even just cycle on the loop and show them some wildlife and teach them how to be part of a community and help maintain the loop. But I can do none of this with the barriers up, I wouldn't get any more than a mile either with, in fact I wouldn't even be able to get access on the loop! So unfortunately for the time being we are another fume adding, money draining, congestion adding car on the road.*

*Another side to this is my job before I had children I used to work with adults who had learning difficulties and autism. We used to go every week to Wythenshawe park to do cycling. They*

*have the most amazing bicycles there, ones that can take wheel chairs, tandems that are side by side, arm operated bicycles, recumbents, tricycles and many others it was amazing to see the people that I worked with enjoying the freedom of riding a bicycle. It's an amazing thing they do allowing people access to these bicycles and without taking anything away from their hard work it's also quite sad as no matter how good/confident people got at cycling all they could do was cycle round and round on the athlete's track. It would be amazing if adults with learning difficulties and autism could make use of these amazing bicycles and use them to get around from A to B, for a fun cycle, for exercise, to build up a wider environment that they could explore and discover away from cars not just for 1 hour once a week going round in a circle. Even a wheel chair for someone just wanting to go for a wander does not have access with the barriers.*

*In a year or so my son will be able to use a tag along on the back of an adult bike but not on the fallow field loop with the barriers. The barriers are preventing so many people from using the loop it could be such a great access for so many people to get around instead its good for just those who are confident and can ride a single bicycle. If we want to encourage the next generation (who are great risk of obesity) to get active, enjoy their environment be part of a community (by being able to say hello to people not going from their houses into a car and into school/shop/work and not interacting with anyone), be responsible for the environment, have that little bit a freedom and responsibility and have fun with it all, we need to set an example by cycling with them and show them that everyone can cycle.*

*The SKY rides through Manchester are great but they have to close roads off and it's once in a blue moon, everyone should be able to cycle safely in their day to day lives to get around and get exercise – not have to pay to go to gym to cycle stationary and not go anywhere! Roads are a bigger problem but we need to start somewhere and this is it! REMOVE THE BARRIERS that's exactly what they are to many cyclists BARRIERS!"*

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On the whole you don't want barriers that interfere with the majority of users. Controlling illegal use of. Motorbikes etc will remain a challenge. On balance a good idea to have them open. The other issue to consider is the occasional excess speed of cycles and the lack of cooperation or inattention of certain pedestrians, particularly gangs of school children who are often oblivious of cycles and not aware of the need to share with care. I think chicanes are worth installing if they help reduce excess speed without making cyclist dismount. The main aim is to slow bicycles at obvious conflict points rather than force a stop. Such features would help deter motorbikes.