The third session of the Get Britain Cycling inquiry, held today, focused on road planning and design and heard from cycling organisations as well as transportation and planning experts. MPs were also told that a key way of ensuring that provision for cycling is designed into all new roads and junctions is to ensure that highway engineers are properly trained to think about how pedestrians and cyclists will use roads to make journeys, rather than simply designing roads for motorised vehicles.

Summing up the third session, co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, Julian Huppert MP, said:

"It came as no surprise that experts at today's inquiry recognised that we need to make huge improvements to our country's infrastructure if we are to make cycling safer and encourage more people to cycle. For years, we have seen little investment on our roads. We need real improvements to junctions, signage, traffic calming and speed limits among other areas along with proper infrastructure for cyclists such as dedicated cycle lanes if we are to make a real difference. We have to show we are serious about making it safer for cyclists and that means looking at our infrastructure from their perspective and making the changes that benefit them. We need to change the mind-set about towns and cities so that motor vehicles no longer dominate design."

Speaking at the inquiry, ibikelondon blogger Mark Ames said: "Cycling must be objectively safe rather than just statistically. We need designs that will bring about maximum feelings of comfort." Sustrans' Tony Russell said: "cycling infrastructure must be build to suit the least confident cyclist. A 12 year old should be able to safely navigate it." CTC's Roger Geffen agreed: "There are examples of where the Highways Agency has effectively out-designed cycling. According to some of their audits, they assume there is no demand for cycling. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy." Mark Wilson from the Highways Agency admitted that engineers need more cycle-specific training.

The subject of how roads should be redesigned for cyclists sparked much debate. Charity Living Streets said: "simply painting white lines on the road is not generally helpful. It can sometimes put cyclists and pedestrian in conflict." Urban Movement's John Dales said: "communities must start designing roads for people who aren't already cycling. We must be very ambitious." Transport Planning Consultant Phil Jones said: "The approach must be dependent on local circumstances. Segregated lanes are not always necessary. If we're going to segregate, we should only do it when we can do it properly."

The reduction of speed limits was also raised. Rod King of the charity 20s Plenty said: "Lower speeds aren't the panacea for getting more people walking and cycling. Good infrastructure and legal protection are equally important."

Secretary of the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group, Lord Berkeley, said:

"Any cyclist using many of today's roads will know that cycling is often seen as an afterthought, rather than being considered when roads are planned. In order to get Britain on bikes, we need to first change the environment to make it more appealing. This demands
a concerted effort from government, local authorities and planners to ensure our roads are fit for purpose for all road users."

Representatives from the CTC, Sustrans, the London Cycling Campaign and cycling blog ibikelondon gave evidence at today’s inquiry alongside the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in the UK, the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, and South Bank University. Evidence about urban design was covered by Urban Movement, Phil Jones Associates as well as charities 20s Plenty and Living Streets.

The next session of the Get Britain Cycling inquiry, focusing on translating cycling’s sporting success into legacy and participation, will take place on 13 February. Chris Boardman MBE is due to give evidence.

Click here for more information about the inquiry.