

Cycling After Dark in Stevenage

Does the cycleway network feel safe to use after dark?

Methodology and Detailed Results

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1. Scope

48km of cycleways and shared use paths were surveyed. This included most of the segregated cycleway system marked blue on the [Stevenage Cycle Map](#) along with some traffic free routes through parks and open spaces. The new cycleways on North Road and Gresley Way and the whole Stevenage section of NCN route 12 were included.

2. Process

Women who cycle in Stevenage volunteered to assist Cycling UK Stevenage Campaigns at audit sessions taking place after dark from mid-September to mid-October 2026.

The planned routes to assess had been identified and split into sections between points where someone cycling could join or leave the route – such as at a cycleway junction or road link. Recording sheets were set up accordingly but some flexibility was used to split sections further if appropriate.

Lead assessors trialled the process at a session in August; at least one lead assessor was present at every subsequent session and conducted a briefing at the start.

Every session included at least 2 assessors who rode a section of the cycleway route separately to enable them to focus on the experience of riding alone. They would then regroup to pause for discussion and decide together on the Red, Amber or Green rating to give for each of the 3 social safety criteria. Consideration was given to whether the experience of riding in the other direction would affect judgements – in many cases, assessors rode routes in both directions anyway.

Once the results had been collated, other volunteers who had not been involved in the audit sessions reviewed sections which they use regularly.

3. Social Safety Criteria (Appendices A and B)

For social safety, metrics developed by the London Cycling Campaign Women's Network were used:

- Surveillance and Activity - Natural surveillance from the surrounding environment throughout the day and night
- Forward Visibility and Escape Routes - Effect of topography, vegetation and built environment on perceived and actual risk of crime
- Visibility of Others - Effect of lighting and street furniture on perceived and actual risk of crime.

For each of these 3 criteria, statements corresponding to a Red, Amber and Green rating were slightly adapted for use in Stevenage, with surveillance by drivers using adjacent roads added. (see appendix A)

The Physical Environment was considered for evidence of crime including anti-social behaviour.

Additional notes were made where appropriate, especially where lack of light and/or poor surface or a particular gradient or camber made a section physically unsafe to use after dark. (see appendix B)

4. Detailed results (Appendices C and D)

The Red / Amber / Green ratings for each of the 3 criteria for each section of a route were collated into a spreadsheet for further analysis. (appendix D)

In total 108 route sections were audited; for each, the overall section rating was deemed to be the worst of those given for the 3 criteria. Individual sections of each route were plotted on the Footpath App and coloured according to their overall rating. (Appendix C)

Cycling After Dark in Stevenage Report

This is available on the [Cycling UK Stevenage](#) website.

Acknowledgements

Cycling UK Stevenage Campaigns thank the London Cycling Campaign Women's Network for both inspiration and practical help.

This project was initially inspired by the LCC [Women's Freedom After Dark](#) report published in February 2025.

Thank you to the women in Stevenage who gave up their time on dark evenings to help with this audit.

Cycling UK Stevenage Campaigns - October 2026

Appendix A

Social Safety – Perceived and actual risk of crime			
	Red	Amber	Green
Surveillance and Activity <i>Natural Surveillance from the surrounding environment throughout the day and night</i>	- Few buildings overlook the path. - Path is not visible for drivers using adjacent road. - There is little activity from other people using the space.	- Surrounding buildings do not completely overlook the path. - Path partly visible from road. - Some users in the space	- Surrounding buildings overlook the path. - Path and users are visible to drivers using the adjacent road - Other users in the space.
Forward Visibility and Escape Routes <i>Effect of topography, vegetation and built environment on perceived and actual risk of crime</i>	- Poor sight lines or potential ambush points due to walls, vegetation, corners or topography. - Enclosed spaces, few escape routes	- Some forward visibility. - Some escape routes	- Good visibility and clear sight lines. - Frequent escape routes
Visibility of Others <i>Effect of lighting and street furniture on perceived and actual risk of crime</i>	- No lighting effective on cycleway - Street furniture that creates potential ambush points	- Inadequate lighting or bright lighting that creates high contrast areas - Some potential ambush points	- Lighting does not create high contrast areas with shadows. - Street furniture does not create hiding or loitering places.
Physical Environment <i>Evidence of Crime including ASB</i>	Much	Some	None

Appendix B

Route	Date	Weather	Audit Team			
Section						Overall
Surveillance and Activity						
Forward Visibility and Escape Routes						
Visibility of Others						
Physical Environment						

Sufficient Lighting						
Surface safe in dark						
Gradient safe in dark						
Other notes						

Appendix C

See the [Cycling UK Stevenage](#) website for an interactive version of this map.



Appendix D - Detailed results table

Available as a separate document and on the [Cycling UK Stevenage](#) website.