

Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet

Meeting on 7th September 2004

Agenda Item 6: Cambridge Historic Centre Pedestrian Zone Cycling Restriction

Statement by James Woodburn (on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign)

I speak on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign. We are a local voluntary organisation with more than 700 subscription-paying members. Our aim is to work with local authorities and other bodies to obtain better provision for cycling in Cambridge and nearby where, unlike anywhere else in the UK, more than 25% of people cycle to work. Our members, who are ordinary cyclists of all ages and of every political persuasion, overwhelmingly support the proposed experiment to permit two-way cycling in Trinity Street and St John's Street between 10am and 4pm and we call on you to approve this experiment.

The reports in front of you show the considerable scale of support for the experiment:

	For	Against	Uncertain	Total
On-street questionnaire	150 (66%)	70 (31%)	6 (3%)	226
Letters and email responses to the consultation	107 (75%)	28 (20%)	8 (6%)	143
Stakeholder responses	8 (89%)	1 (11%)	-	9

In asking our members for support for our petition in favour of the experiment to enable us to speak at the present meeting, no less than 170 have taken the trouble to sign up to the petition accompanied in many cases by very strong supportive messages. This is without doubt an important issue for very many people.

The reports give only part of the background. We would like now to add a few highly relevant points:

1. The term "Historic Centre Pedestrian Zone" is misleading. It is in part a zone for cyclists as well as for pedestrians. Plan No.1 in your papers shows the area of the zone. During the 10am to 4pm period – the period of restriction - cycling is, and always has been, permitted on more than half of the length of the roadways within the zone – one-way cycling in Trinity Street, St John's Street and Green Street, two-way cycling in Trinity Lane. The present proposal is a modification of this to deal with the fact that there is no satisfactory South to North cycle route through Cambridge between 10am and 4pm. It is not a major change of use of the so-called pedestrian zone.
2. Officials at Shire Hall recommend that you overrule the AJC's approval of the proposal because to permit two-way cycling would not be safe and could give rise to claims against the County Council. We, on the contrary, believe that it would be safe – much safer for all road users than most roads. In spite of the very large numbers of cyclists who use Trinity Street and St John's Street, no injury

accidents at all involving motor vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians have been recorded during the last three years – no pedestrians have been injured by cyclists and no cyclists have been injured by motor vehicles either during the restricted hours or at any other time.

Two-way cycling should be safe because:

a) Relatively few motor vehicles are permitted to use the zone during the hours in question and those who hold permits make limited use of them. Permit holders are subject to a 10mph speed limit and have to give priority to pedestrians (see copy of permit I have circulated). The Pedestrian Zone Management Team tell me that they enforce the 10mph limit with a speed camera. If the present proposal is approved we suggest that the wording of the permit be altered from “You must give priority to pedestrians” to “You must give priority to pedestrians and cyclists” (or, if preferred, “You must give priority to pedestrians and to cyclists in the streets where cycling is permitted” in which case the names of the streets should be given).

b) Two-way cycling is permitted in a number of other Cambridge streets (inside and outside the pedestrian zone) which are in places very narrow and in which a large vehicle cannot pass a cyclist coming in the opposite direction. One or other has to give way. These streets include Trinity Lane, Bridge Street and Hobson Street. The evidence indicates that two-way cycling in these streets has not given rise to significant difficulties. In the narrow streets of central Cambridge the need to give way is self-evident to cyclists and to drivers.

c) Although some pedestrians understandably fear injury in collisions with cyclists, the statistics are clear, both in Cambridge and elsewhere. The number of injuries and deaths resulting from cyclist/pedestrian collisions is very low indeed and is most unlikely to be significantly increased by giving approval to this proposal.

Given these circumstances, we do not believe that the courts would accept that the Council is acting unreasonably in promoting such a scheme. If the view of the Council’s legal officers remains that there is a danger of litigation, we ask for consultations with ourselves and others about possible changes to the permits and other measures to further reduce any risk of litigation.

I am very willing to answer questions if you have any.