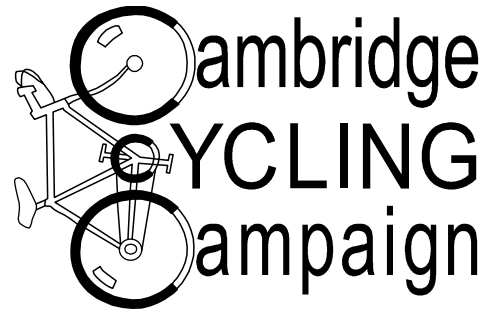


Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2003

Our ref: C 03 021

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Dear Patrick,

### **River Bridges**

Many thanks for your helpful letter. We enjoyed the tour of the river bridges and found our discussions very constructive. Before receiving your letter we had drafted our suggestions regarding the first steps which we believe could be taken to resolve some of the problems the group identified. We thought it would be helpful to send this to you now.

The main problem appears to be conflicts caused by inappropriate speed of some cyclists on descending ramps from bridges rather than problems on the 'span'. A combination of increasing space, improving visibility, and regulating excessive speed whilst descending the ramps would provide a solution at several locations.

### **Principles**

1. There is manifestly a demand for cyclists to be able to cycle over the river bridges without dismounting. This should be catered for. In other words, we wish to see solutions to *how*, not whether, problems can be solved.
2. On bridges where problems could occur due to misuse by an inconsiderate minority, these should be mitigated using sensible, pragmatic (and often simple) design measures, rather than by banning cycling across the bridges. Whilst recognising the problems, whether perceived or actual, this minority causes, we believe that these should not form an obstacle to provision for the sensible majority. Suitable engineering measures, for instance to slow speeds, would be appropriate to help to regulate irresponsible behaviour.
3. Obstructions in the form of bollards and gates are almost always counter-productive, in that they simply reduce the overall usable space by funnelling everyone through a small gap, increasing conflict, not reducing it.
4. The very fact that these bridges are used as locations for the Council's own screenline counts indicates their importance to cyclists. These bridges have been used for very many decades by very large numbers of cyclists without significant problems, and this should continue.

5. Many of the engineering measures required could be done relatively cheaply and easily and should be put into effect as soon as possible. Others require larger-scale expenditure, which we realise may not be realistic in the short or medium term.
6. The pedestrian environment on the bridges should be improved. In many cases obstructions cause problems for pedestrians, including those with disabilities or using prams.
7. The fact that increasingly these bridges are being designated as parts of cycle routes is to be welcomed, but the poor quality of cycling provision across the bridges conveys an unfortunate mixed message to cyclists using these routes.
8. Bridges should be easily passable by cyclists with trailers or large baskets and by tricycle users.
9. The design issues should be resolved in the County Council's forthcoming design guide, so that guidance is locally more appropriate than the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (which does not formally cover off-road bridges but which is currently used for them).
10. Following appropriate modifications, cyclists should be given a legal right to cycle across the bridges, removing any civil offence which cycling across some of the bridges may presently incur.
11. The bridges should provide high-quality cycling alternatives to major road junctions to encourage cycling and to reduce both collisions and congestion.

### **Green Dragon bridge**

Several areas for improvement were identified here. These could be tried on an experimental basis to confirm their suitability.

- Principally, removal of the northern-side obstructions and their replacement by a less intrusive single bollard half way up the slope. This would have the effect of regulating excessive speeds just at the location where such speeds can occur.
- A (thin) extra rail, if the parapet is judged to be too low (although we believe that the present height is perfectly acceptable).
- Ensuring 'pram arms' do not feature on any bollards which remain.
- Removal of the excess signage which was agreed by all to be obsolete.
- Improvements to the approaches to the bridge, including keeping vegetation cut back, to give better visibility and reduce conflict. The construction of a separate exit for cyclists on the south side was suggested for the longer term.
- Removal of signage prohibiting cycling over the bridge and replacement with "Cyclists give way to pedestrian" signs, following successful conclusion of experimental measures tried as noted above.

As with the other bridges, we are unconvinced that formal 'segregation' of pedestrians and cyclists by a continuous line would be necessary or helpful. Such a measure might simply have the effect of unintentionally creating new areas of conflict. In practice people generally find ways to pass each other without significant difficulty.

### **Fort St George bridge**

This is the second of the two bridges for which it was agreed that action is most urgent. Specific measures which could go a long way to alleviating the problems here are:

- Replacement of the line of bollards at the 90° blind corner by a short fence, around half to one metre long (and possibly a replacement, central bollard) in the direction of the

diagonal. Such a 'fin' would have the effect of eliminating the valid concerns of pedestrians that a collision might occur at the blind corner, and it would give assurance through the creation of visibility, which is currently lacking. Such an arrangement would have the further benefit of increasing the total amount of space through which those using it can pass, representing an improvement for all.

- Removal of the 'pram arms' on the south side, ideally in conjunction with the removal of the large concrete pillar which obscures the view of the approach paths and the installation of a cattle grid and pedestrian gate. We would contend that the pram arms are unnecessary because of the short distance from the bend which has the effect of naturally eliminating excessive speed.
- On the north side, replacement of the existing bollards at the entrance (and possibly the concrete pillar) with, say, two (or at most three) bollards spread along the length of the slope. This would help regulate cycle speeds. Again, we are unconvinced that formal segregation of cyclists to one side and pedestrians the other would improve things; instead, such over-engineering might simply increase conflict where it does not exist at present for the vast majority of cases.
- Possible signage encouraging/advising cyclists to keep to one side. (This would seem preferable to formal segregation marked out on the ground.)
- Removal of "Cyclist dismount" signs and the creation of a legal right of way, as above. "Cyclists give way to pedestrians" signs would be appropriate.

### **The Sheep's Green bridge**

As discussed, we believe that this bridge should be replaced by a properly segregated cycle and pedestrian bridge, which would much improve an extremely pleasant and useful route, connecting many locations. This bridge could be funded from Section 106 agreements or from part of the proposals for a Cambridge Wheel. We would like to see the council investigate possible sources of funding.

A cattle grid is needed to replace the swing gate at the eastern end of the bridge.

### **Garret Hostel bridge**

We agreed that this bridge represents good provision for cyclists.

### **Mill Weir bridge**

The river crossing here is satisfactory but the narrow entrance needs to be replaced by a cattle grid suitable for two-way cycling. A cattle grid with an adjacent pedestrian gate would remove the obstruction for cyclists and reduce conflict with pedestrians.

### **Bridges to be left for the longer term**

We agreed that both the Cutter Ferry bridge (which will probably carry less cycle traffic after construction of the new Riverside bridge), and that at Jesus Lock could probably not be made suitable for unhindered cycling without significant expenditure to upgrade the width of the bridges and suitably to modify the approaches to them. However, we believe that it would be desirable to upgrade these bridges in the long term.

### **Obstructions**

During the tour the group came across several obstructions for which removal was generally agreed to be sensible; principally these were swing gates (which could in many cases be replaced by cattle grids) and various types of bollards and posts.

We observed how these obstructions often had the counter-productive effect of pushing both pedestrians and cyclists into the same space, causing more, not less, conflict. Reducing the number of obstructions at the entrance to Parker's Piece by Regent Street has demonstrated the reduction of conflict which can be achieved through such simple measures.

In addition to the obstructions noted above, many others exist on Jesus Green and on Coe Fen/Sheep's Green. We hope to discuss these further with you.

In cases where pram arms do not get removed, adjustment to make the arm portion slightly higher would reduce problems for the types of cyclists noted above.

**Next steps**

We would very much like to join the working group as you suggest and look forward to our first meeting. Within the limited resources available to the Campaign, we will endeavour to obtain examples of best practice from both within the UK and abroad, and we understand that the Council will do likewise.

Yours sincerely,  
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Martin Lucas-Smith  
Co-ordinator