

May 19th 2003

Our ref: NA03007
Your ref:

Mr John Isherwood
Cambridge Projects Team
Highway Services
Cambridge City Council
The Guildhall
Cambridge CB2 3QJ



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Mr Isherwood,

Accident Reduction Scheme: King's Hedges Road, Cambridge

We are writing in response to the consultation on this scheme. Your help in explaining the details of the scheme to us is much appreciated.

While welcoming many aspects of the proposed designs, we would request that our suggestions for changes to these designs should be treated as formal objections. If our suggestions are accepted, we would, of course, withdraw our formal objections.

We are concerned about the widespread recent tendency in Cambridge to construct on-road cycle lanes which are less than the nationally recognized standard width of 1.5 metres. In your designs for King's Hedges Road, we recognize the desirability of concentrating car parking on one side of the road to enable the construction of a red mandatory on-road cycle lane on the other side. What troubles us is that this lane is, according to the plans, to be a sub-standard one only 1.2 metres wide. We realise, of course, that the existing carriageway is only nine metres wide and cannot accommodate a wider cycle lane if two traffic lanes each of three metres wide and parking bays of 1.8 metres wide are to be created. In this situation what we would like to see is a relatively minor increase in the width of the carriageway to enable the creation of a standard 1.5 metre wide cycle lane. In our view, a 1.2 metre lane forces cyclists to ride closer to the kerb than they would otherwise do, and so makes conditions worse for cyclists rather than better. We cannot therefore support the installation of a cycle lane only 1.2 metres wide.

In your treatment of cycling in the other direction, we greatly welcome your innovative thinking. We value the choice offered to cyclists of either cycling in the traffic lane outside the parked cars or of taking an off-road route along a shared-use path with the opportunity of rejoining the road along lengths of mandatory red cycle lane (which we trust will be at least 1.5 metres wide) across the mouths of each side road. However, we would criticise the fact that the sections of on-road cycle lane are insufficiently long at Campkin Road and at Ramsden Square and are, for this reason, potentially unsafe. They need to be longer to enable vehicles leaving or entering these side roads to see approaching cyclists.

More importantly, a site visit since our discussion with you has given us serious cause for concern about the shared-use pavement itself. We are worried about the unacceptable and dangerous lack of visibility for cyclists using the pavement. It has long been a concern of the Campaign that, whereas visibility splays are required for motor traffic, there are currently no equivalents for cyclists. On parts of the proposed path there are locations with directly adjacent walls and hedges meaning that a cyclist may get no warning of a vehicle or person emerging from an adjacent property. We consider that the shared-use pavement would only be safe if it were to be moved out onto the grass verge and we suggest that it should be moved as a component part of the present scheme.

We are also rather concerned that cyclists on the cycleway will be expected to weave in and out crossing dropped kerbs at an oblique angle. If the cycleway is closer to the roadway than the present footway this problem will be reduced. We do, however, wonder whether more direct crossings of side roads giving full priority to cyclists might not be a much better solution.

We welcome your assurance that contraflow cyclists using the shared-use pavement will be provided with normal direct side-road crossings and that effective signage will be used to indicate that the on-road lanes across the mouths of the side roads are not available to contraflow cyclists.

Finally, we wish to stress the importance of ensuring that the red on-road cycle lanes are as smooth as the remainder of the road surface. The techniques currently being employed in Cambridge for applying the red bituminous macadam (skim coat) surfacing of cycle lanes are unsatisfactory and produce an uneven surface with constant junctions which is unpleasant and harder work to cycle along. We ask that this problem be resolved before these new cycle lanes are installed.

Thank you again for your helpful explanations.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Jim Chisholm