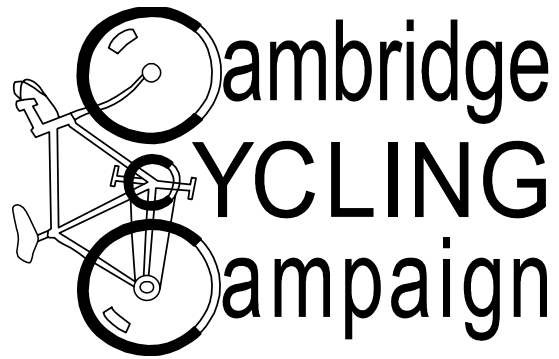


February 15, 2004

Our ref: NA04003
Your ref:

Rod Dowle
Ashwell Property Group
Botanic House
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CAMBRIDGE



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Mr Dowle,

Draft proposals for the development of the Cambridge station area

We are grateful for having the opportunity to see these draft proposals and comment on them at this early stage, and are sorry that it has so long to complete our response.

We welcome many of the proposals, including the new ramp from the cycle bridge, the proposal to provide 2000 cycle parking spaces close to the station entrance and the probable cycle route under Hills Road.

The comments in this letter supplement those that we made in our submission of 13th May 2002 which sets out in detail the principles which, we believe, should underlie provision for cyclists in the station area. A copy is enclosed.

Cycle Parking Provision

We warmly welcome the proposal to provide 2000 cycle parking spaces in an underground location close to the station entrance. We are also pleased to read the entrances being 'celebrated'. This suggests that the developers are thinking of a high-quality, prestige scheme of which Cambridge can be proud.

These spaces are badly needed. The plans mention "up to" 2000 spaces. We believe that the 2000 spaces should be an absolute minimum. This might seem a lot but we believe that the high degree of suppressed demand for cycle parking together with the expected increase in station usage mean this is the absolute minimum that should be provided. The cycle park at Münster Station in Germany, for example, offers 3300 underground spaces.

Placing the cycle parking underground, whilst not itself unwelcome, does raise issues of management and security which must be considered at this early stage. Unless appropriate steps are taken, users will feel less safe using it than if it were in the open, and they need to be reassured that it won't be a scary place to be, especially in the late evening. Rough sleepers, street drinkers, beggars and drug addicts (all of whom can be found in this part of

Cambridge) also need to be kept out. Obviously CCTV will be needed but we wonder whether this will be sufficient to provide a perception of safety and to ensure that bike theft and vandalism is no higher than at the existing cycle parking.

We think the underground cycle park is an ideal location for a cycle repair and hire business. We expect that many cyclists will find the provision of supervised or 'valet' cycle parking a useful facility. We would like to be involved in detailed discussions on what facilities should be provided.

However the presence of a cycle business in the cycle park is not likely to be enough in itself to satisfy the security and management needs of the cycle park. We feel that dedicated security and management staff may be required as well. We therefore believe that the issue of how such security and management will be paid for needs to be considered. Whilst some cyclists will welcome and be prepared to pay for supervised cycle parking we feel it important to state that many cyclists will not be prepared to and will expect the existing free provision to continue.

It therefore appears to us that long-term operational funding needs to be provided to cover the security and management of free spaces within the cycle park and a source for this funding should be considered at this stage. We wish to point out that the County Council currently funds some 15+ staff at the Park and Ride sites, to ensure adequate security at these locations. We feel a parallel can be drawn between these sites and the proposed station cycle parking.

If operational funding is not available then it will be necessary to provide cycle parking at surface level, as at present, in addition to any underground provision.

Therefore, although we welcome the current proposals, we have to temper this welcome with some reservations.

The ramp down into the underground cycle park must be cycleable, so that cyclists can ride down to the cycle parking without the need to dismount. Experience in Münster shows how this can work well. This is particularly important for elderly cyclists and those carrying children or luggage on their cycles

Managing motor traffic through the site

It is important that the site be permeable to cyclists and pedestrians, but that access by private motor vehicles is restricted (in accordance with PPG13). We believe that the roads through the site should have the speeds and volumes of motor traffic restricted to achieve satisfactory conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

We are particularly keen to see conditions for all road users improved in Station Road. One possibility which should be explored is to provide car access to the multi-storey car park from Hills Road/Brooklands Avenue rather than from Station Road. This would reduce traffic in Station Road.

Cycle routes through the area

It is not clear whether there are any proposals to construct cycle tracks alongside any of the roads in this area. We would therefore like to make clear our view that on all the various roads through the site the most appropriate and convenient place for cyclists is on the road rather than on a separate cycle track.

The site as a whole should, however, be permeable to both pedestrians and cyclists and the road network through the site should therefore be supplemented by a network of

cycle/pedestrian paths. Essentially we are asking that all the pedestrian paths through the site be constructed as cycle paths as well. In Cambridge the principle that cyclists and pedestrians use the same paths (e.g. across parks and commons) is well established and accepted.

Rail passengers who wish to take their bike with them on the train must be able to cycle right up to the station entrance. The current plans make no provision for this. Suitable cycle routes should be provided in the station square area that allow cyclists to ride up to the station entrance.

It is important that cyclists are able to cycle to all cycle parking areas including those at the residential and office buildings on the site.

When considering cycle routes through the area we ask you to bear in mind that many cyclists will be making north-south cycle journeys across the station site without actually visiting the station. The provision of cycle routes through the area should reflect this in allowing such journeys to be as direct and convenient as possible.

Off Site Routes

There is much potential to improve the access to the station for both cyclists and pedestrians. There are three routes from the south and three routes from the north, all of which should be considered in the development plans.

South Side

We note the proposal for a road to connect the station area with Brooklands Avenue. This will offer a valuable route to cyclists.

The County Council has proposed an option for the guided bus scheme to provide a maintenance track under Hills Road bridge, adjacent to the guideway, which would double as a cycleway. However, they have recently cast some doubt about whether this will be provided. In our opinion this is not an option: it is a necessity. This cycleway would offer a cycle route from the Cambridge southern fringe, where thousands of new homes are to be built. The suggested alternative cycle route via Brooklands Avenue is unsatisfactory. We hope that Ashwell will press hard for the cycleway under Hills Road bridge to be constructed as originally proposed.

Cambridgeshire County Council has well-advanced plans for a pedestrian and cycle route along the north side of Hills Road bridge to link the new leisure park on the old cattle market site to the station. These need to be well integrated into the cycle and pedestrian network through the development.

North Side

We welcome the proposals to provide a ramp directly onto the cycle bridge.

We also welcome the recognition of the very important cycle-pedestrian link to Devonshire Road.

We have longer-term proposals for a similar route along the railway which utilises the spare arch under Mill Road Bridge. This would form part of a long-distance route joining areas to the south of Cambridge to areas to the north. We therefore ask that the development plans safeguard the provision of such a route in the future.

Potential Expansions

The Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan mentions the need for an extra platform at the station, to serve southbound trains. Planning briefs for the area also contain proposals for access to the station from the Rustat Road area. The development scheme makes no provision for these developments; we believe it should.

We would also point out that the whole region has been designated as a growth area by the government and this will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of people using Cambridge station over the next few years. The plans should make some provision for this, in particular for increasing the amount of cycle parking beyond 2000 spaces at some later date.

Managing Construction Work

It is essential that construction works do not cause danger or unnecessary disruption and inconvenience to cyclists using the station or cycling through the area. For example, during the construction phase it is vital that the number of cycle parking places provided be maintained at its present level. We hope you will discuss any temporary arrangements (e.g. diversion of cycle routes or relocation of cycle parking) with us.

Future discussions

We look forward to seeing the more detailed plans in due course, and hope that you will continue to consult us as your plans develop. We also hope that you will be able to make use of the attached leaflet 'Safe Routes to Stations'

We are also keen to see some interim improvements for cyclists and pedestrians in this area. We would also like to work with the Ashwell Group, Network Rail, the local train operating company, and the two local councils to see if some 'quick wins' can be made which offer improvements for cyclists in this area, even before final plans are fixed.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Jim Chisholm