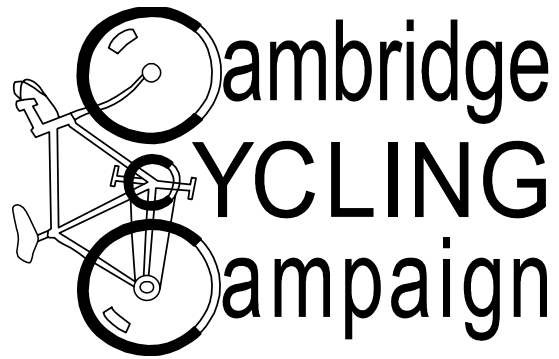


March 31, 2004

Our ref: NB04003
Your ref:

The Secretary of State for Transport
TWA Orders Unit
Department for Transport
Zone 3/11 Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Secretary of State,

Cambridgeshire Guided Busway

I am writing on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign to object to a number of aspects of the proposed Transport Works Act Order for the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.

By way of introduction, Cambridge Cycling Campaign is a local voluntary organisation with over 700 members. We work closely with local government and others to improve conditions for cyclists in Cambridge and the surrounding area. Government statistics show that in Cambridge more than 25% of local people cycle to work and that this is much the highest figure for the UK. We therefore believe that the maintenance track/cycleway along the guided bus route needs to be designed for the needs of commuter as well as leisure cyclists.

Following a vote of members at a recent open meeting, the position of Cambridge Cycling Campaign is that we support the principle of improved public transport and will not object to the principle of the County Council's proposals for guided buses on the Huntingdon-Cambridge-Trumpington corridor.

We applaud the proposal to provide a maintenance track alongside the guided busway for most of its route. This will open up useful new opportunities for cyclists. However there are several aspects of the scheme which do not take into sufficient account the needs of cyclists and to which we therefore object. This letter is a formal statement of those objections.

1 Main Objections

We have two main objections, both of which relate to the failure of the proposal to make adequate provision for cycling alongside the guided busway.

1. We strongly object to the discontinuity in the cycleway caused by the failure to provide a maintenance track/cycleway under Hills Road bridge. The alternative route is much less safe, slower and less convenient. The failure to provide a cycleway would completely destroy any prospect of a cycle route being provided in the longer term along the railway from Trumpington to Chesterton.

2. We strongly object to the fact that the proposed maintenance track/cycleway will not have a hard surface suitable for cycling. The proposed compacted surface will be less suitable for cycling, require more effort to use and will be likely to be damaged by the maintenance vehicles using it.

1.1 Hills Road Bridge

The application proposes a two-way guideway under the bridge with no maintenance track. We object to this discontinuity in the cycle route.

The route from Trumpington to the station is likely to be an important route for commuting by bicycle – from the Park & Ride site on Hauxton Road, from Shelford and Trumpington and from all the new developments which are taking or will take place in the area.

Cyclists would be expected to use the existing road route via Shaftsbury Road and Brooklands Avenue etc. This alternative route would be much longer, unpleasant and hazardous, forcing cyclists to negotiate two difficult junctions. At least until the railway station area has been completely redeveloped this would provide no direct route to the station but would force cyclists to make a long detour involving crossing a busy main road. We believe that this tortuous route might tempt both cyclists and pedestrians to use the bus guideway as a short cut, despite the obvious hazards this would entail.

During its recent consultation on the southern fringe developments the County Council stressed the importance of providing high-quality pedestrian and cycle links within and outside each new development to minimise the need to use a car. All the 2000+ new dwellings proposed for the southern fringe will be within 3km of the station area, so for transport, sustainability and health reasons cycling should be the preferred mode of transport between these two places. However the lack of a direct route under Hills Road will increase travel times for cyclists from the southern fringe to the station area and beyond by some five minutes and make cycling much less attractive as a transport mode.

Preventing direct cycle access to the station along this section of route runs contrary to the national DfT-funded “safe routes to stations project”. It would be bizarre if one part of the DfT was funding remedial work to improve routes to stations whilst another part in effect closes off a proposed safe route and forces cyclists and pedestrians on a longer and more hazardous route.

We have been campaigning for many years for the development of a commuter cycle route parallel to the railway line through Cambridge from Trumpington to Chesterton. This route is locally known as “The Chisholm Trail” and further details are on our website at www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/cycleroutes/chisholmtrail/. This campaign has received much support from local councils and to some extent the proposal for a cycleway along the guideway from Trumpington to Hills Road is a response to this campaign and we welcome it. However the current proposals will destroy forever any prospect of extending this cycle route to the station and beyond to Chesterton.

For all these reasons we ask that the guideway under Hills Road bridge be constructed as a one-way single alternating route with a maintenance track alongside it which cyclists can use. If a single alternating route is acceptable through Trumpington Cutting it would work here as well. The section under Hills Road is a much shorter length and would be used by many more cyclists.

1.2 The proposed maintenance track/cycleway will not have a hard surface suitable for cycling.

We object to the fact that the proposed maintenance track/cycleway will not have a hard surface suitable for cycling.

We are utterly dismayed at the proposal to provide only a “compacted surface”, possibly one which will be expressly designed to encourage “colonisation of vegetation”.

This will be much less suitable for cycling, force cyclists to ride more slowly and require more effort to use. Whilst such a poor standard of construction might be acceptable for occasional use by leisure cyclists it is wholly unsuitable for daily all-weather commuter cyclists.

We believe that the location of this cycle route makes it potentially a very attractive commuter route, especially the section between Longstanton and Chesterton Sidings and the section between Trumpington, Addenbrooke’s and the Station. If this route is to achieve this potential it is essential that cyclists can ride along it quickly, conveniently and easily. To provide a cycle route which is suitable only for leisure cyclists is in contravention of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan.

The surface of the maintenance track/cycleway should be smooth, sealed and bound.

The surface must also be hardwearing so that it will not be damaged by horses or maintenance vehicles. We suspect that if the surface is uneven and potholed some cyclists and pedestrians may ride or walk along the smooth concrete surface of the guideway instead.

2 Other objections

In addition to our main objections above, we object to the following aspects of the scheme:

1. We object to the absence of traffic signals to help cyclists using the maintenance track/cycleway to cross the various roads along the route. The provision of signals for buses but not for cyclists is wholly inequitable, will cause delays to cyclists and will force cyclists to cross over these roads at a time when drivers will not expect traffic to be crossing.
2. We object to the way that the maintenance track/cycleway changes sides at several points along the route on the grounds that the need to change sides at a number of locations will lead to delays to cyclists and increased danger as they will need to cross the path of buses as well as cars.
3. We object to the arrangements where bridleways cross the guideway. Cyclists are legally entitled to use bridleways but the need to lift cycles up and down several 180mm steps will make them impassable for cyclists with disabilities as well as adults carrying children on their bicycles or towing trailers.
4. We object to the lack of access to or across the guideway at several points along the route.
5. We object to the absence of adequate lighting along the maintenance track/cycleway, especially in the sections closer to Cambridge, on the grounds that this will make the new routes much less suitable for use by commuter cyclists.
6. We are concerned that the proposed tunnel which takes the cycleway under Long Road is too low.

2.1 Traffic signals are needed to help cyclists using the maintenance track/cycleway cross the various roads along the route.

It is proposed to introduce traffic signals where the busway crosses the various roads along the route. However these signals will be for buses only: cyclists and others using the maintenance track/cycleway will be expected to give way and wait for a gap in the traffic.

We object to this proposal, which gives priority to bus passengers but not to cyclists. This will cause delays to cyclists particularly at peak times when the commuter cyclists at which the route should be aimed are most likely to use it.

We are particularly concerned that cyclists will be expected to fend for themselves at a junction which drivers will think is completely signal controlled. Drivers will naturally assume that if the signals on the road are not showing red then there will be no crossing traffic. They will therefore not expect cyclists to be crossing and if they see them will assume that they are crossing illegally against a red light, which will not be the case.

It is unreasonable for the council to point out the relatively low traffic flows on the roads at present and to say that the delays to cyclists will not be significant. Although these roads do not in overall terms carry very large number of vehicles, the presence of the bus signals will cause queues of traffic at peak times which cyclists will have to wait to clear before they are able to cross.

We would like to see traffic signals introduced to help cyclists cross the various roads along the route.

We would particularly like to draw attention to the need for traffic signals to help cyclists at the crossing of New Road/Park Lane, Histon (Girton Crossing). Crossing the road at this junction without the benefit of traffic signals will be particularly hazardous for cyclists because the speed limit on this length of road is 60mph (i.e. the national speed limit) and motor vehicles are frequently travelling at this speed as they approach Histon, while those leaving Histon are accelerating after leaving the 30mph limit. In the rush hour the traffic on this road is quite significant (especially when there are blockages on the A14) so that cyclists may have difficulty crossing this road safely without a phase in the signals dedicated to them which is triggered either by a push button or detectors.

2.2 The maintenance track/cycleway should not change sides at several points along the route

The maintenance track changes from one side to the other at several road crossings along the route. At these points cyclists will have not only to cross the road but also the bus way, without the benefit of traffic signals to help them make this manoeuvre.

We believe that this will lead to delays to cyclists and increased danger as they will need to cross the path of buses as well as cars.

2.3 Better provision needed where bridleways cross the guideway.

There are several places where a bridleway crosses the guideway. However cyclists legitimately using the bridleway will be expected to dismount and lift their cycles up and down four 180mm steps to cross the guideway.

We believe that this will make these bridleways impassable for elderly cyclists and cyclists with disabilities who whilst capable of riding a bicycle are unable to lift it up and down. It will

also make these bridleways impassable to cyclists towing trailers or carrying young children on their bicycles.

The result will be to reduce the attractiveness of both these bridleways and the maintenance track/cycleway to leisure cyclists, especially families and groups with children.

We believe that these crossings should be redesigned in a way which allows all cyclists – not just fit adults – to cross the guideway.

We are particularly concerned about the following bridleway crossings which we think should be made more suitable for cyclists to use:

2.3.1 Nature reserve request stop and bridleway crossing

The bridleway at Fen Drayton lakes is likely to become even more popular when the guideway is opened. The bridleway is only about 300m from the request bus stop and Holywell Ferry Road where buses will have to slow down.

2.3.2 Crossing of Rampton Road/Reynolds' Drove bridleway

We expect this route to become more popular with cyclists when the guideway is constructed as cyclists use it as a route to reach the maintenance track/cycleway from both north and south. Such cycle use is likely to increase further when Northstowe is developed.

2.4 Lack of access to and across the guideway at several points along the route

In general, the proposals do not provide enough good access points to the maintenance track for cyclists and pedestrians.

2.4.1 New Safe routes needed to Impington Village College and other schools

We ask that there be a new safe route to allow access to Impington Village College from the maintenance track just east of the B1049 to reduce the need for pupils arriving from the north of Cambridge to cross this busy road at grade, and to provide a significantly shorter and more convenient route.

More generally, we believe that well-designed new routes to and from the maintenance track should be provided to all nearby schools and that particular attention should be given to the locations at which these routes join the maintenance track.

2.4.2 Pedestrian/cycle crossing needed across the "Chesterton spur"

There is already a need for cyclists and pedestrians to be able to cross the old railway to get from Nuffield Road to Cambridge Business Park. At present they have to make a long diversion via Milton Road.

As the Chesterton sidings site is developed the need for a direct cycle and pedestrian route between East Chesterton and the Chesterton Sidings area will increase even further.

The plans for the "Chesterton spur" section of guideway make no proposals for any crossings of the guideway. The guideway will therefore form a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists in this area.

We propose that a short break in the guideway should be provided at a suitable location to allow the development of a cycle/pedestrian route between Nuffield Road and Cambridge Business Park.

2.4.3 Inadequate crossings and access points in the southern fringe area

No crossing points are proposed in the Cambridge southern fringe between Long Road and the junction with the Addenbrooke's spur. The guideway here will pass between a major development area to the west and a green space recreational area to the east and the guideway will form a barrier between the two. We believe additional crossing points should be provided in this area for cyclists and pedestrians.

2.4.4 Inadequate access from Shelford Road

The proposals make inadequate provision for cyclists from the Great Shelford area to join the maintenance track at the Trumpington Stop. As far as we can see cyclists will currently have to use a narrow and convoluted route through some allotments to get to the guideway at Trumpington stop. We believe a more direct access is required for cyclists travelling from and to the south.

2.5 Suitable lighting is needed

The county council proposes that "the route would not be lit along its length other than at those locations where street lighting already occurs, and at stops... road junctions and the park and ride sites" (Environmental statement paragraph 11.6.68).

We believe this will considerably reduce the suitability of the maintenance track/cycleway as a cycle route, especially for commuter cyclists who will need to use the route during the hours of winter darkness.

The absence of lighting will affect cyclists in two main ways:

- It will make it more difficult for cyclists to navigate their way along the maintenance track. Cyclists need lighting in order to avoid accidentally running off the edge of the path, and into potholes, pedestrians and other obstacles. Most cycle lights, although legal to use on the roads, simply do not provide enough illumination to be used in the pitch-black environment of an unlit cycleway.
- It will also raise fears about personal security, both in the urban areas close or within Cambridge and in the isolated sections further north. We suspect that many cyclists will find an unlit cycleway simply too scary to use at night.

We are not asking for the route to be ablaze with lights. We accept that there is a need for a compromise between the need of safety and the need to avoid the unnecessary urbanisation of open country. However we believe that a moderate level of carefully-designed lighting is both necessary and acceptable along the route, especially along the sections likely to be used by commuter cyclists.

Low-level lighting would also help alleviate the inevitable problem of cyclists being temporarily blinded by the headlights of oncoming buses. This is a well-known problem on cycle tracks alongside unlit rural roads, especially when the cycle track takes cyclists along the right hand side of the road so that the dipped headlights of oncoming vehicles shine directly towards the eyes of oncoming cyclists. The problem is made even worse by the failure of oncoming drivers to dip their headlights in time when they see an oncoming cyclist using a cycle track.

Where the route is essentially urban, between Impington and Chesterton and between the station and Trumpington/Addenbrooke's, we believe there is absolutely no excuse for not providing street lighting. Most of this area is already urban or sub-urban in character and the area that is not, south of Long Road, is likely to become urbanised as the result of development there.

It is now standard County Council practice for rural cycle tracks alongside main roads to be given white edge lines to help cyclists avoid accidentally running off the edge of the path in the dark. We ask that the maintenance track be given white edge lines to help cyclists use it in the dark.

2.6 The tunnel under Long Road is too low

At Long Road the maintenance track/cycleway would pass under Long Road in a short tunnel. The height of this tunnel is proposed to be 2.2m. We believe this is too low and should be at least 2.4m.

3 Conclusions

In conclusion, we would like to restate our view that, although we do not object to the guided bus scheme in principle, we object to several inadequacies in the design of the cycle route proposed to run alongside it. In particular we feel that the failure to provide a cycle route along the guideway under Hills Road bridge will greatly reduce the benefits of the route, and that the proposed surface of the maintenance track is completely unsuitable for a busy commuter cycle route.

Many of our objections can be supported by reference to national planning guidance (especially PPG13), the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan (2004-11) and the Local Plans of both Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. We wish to make representations to any Public Inquiry and are prepared to present a more detailed "Statement of Case".

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Nigel Deakin