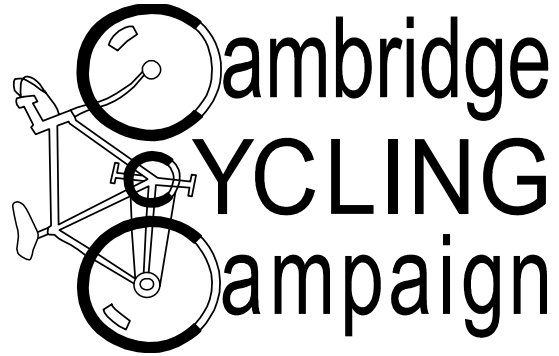


November 10, 2004

Our ref: NB04009
Your ref:

Director of Environment and Planning
Cambridge City Council
The Guildhall
Cambridge
CB2 3QJ



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Cambridge East Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report

I am writing to present the response of Cambridge Cycling Campaign to the options offered in the above report.

Cambridge Cycling Campaign does not have a formal view on the merits or otherwise of the development of Cambridge East. We do, however, note that this area is within easy cycling distance of the whole of Cambridge and so its development does raise the opportunity to encourage cycling as a major means of transport for people living and working in the area.

CE42 External Public Transport

Whilst we support in principle measures to improve public transport we believe that it is important that any new bus priority measures do not improve conditions for bus passengers at the expense of cyclists. The bus lanes on Milton Road and Trumpington Road have made these roads more difficult and intimidating for cyclists and we do not want to see a similar degradation of cycling conditions on Newmarket Road and other roads in East Cambridge.

In particular we will object to the removal or narrowing of any existing cycle lanes from Newmarket Road or Maid's Causeway, especially the mandatory lanes between Barnwell Road and the railway bridge. Our experience of other roads in Cambridge such as Milton Road is that the provision of cycleways on the pavement is not an acceptable alternative.

Any new bus lanes must be at least 4m wide and ideally 4.5m wide to allow buses to overtake cyclists safely.

We do not believe there is room for a guided busway along Newmarket Road without seriously compromising the safety and convenience of cyclists.

We would, however, welcome in principle the removal of the Newmarket Road/Elizabeth Way roundabout and its replacement with a traffic signalled cross-roads so long as adequate provision was made for on-road cyclists.

CE44 External Cycle Links

We support the preferred option for CE44. We strongly support the target that 25% of external trips to and from Cambridge East are made by bicycle but feel the target should be higher. We also support the proposal for "a series of dedicated, high quality and lit cycle only routes connecting Cambridge East with key destinations in other parts of the City" and reject the alternative suggestion that these routes be unlit.

We are, however, concerned that the provision of these dedicated routes might lead highway planners to give insufficient attention to the need to ensure that the ordinary road network leading to Cambridge East is also suitable and attractive for cycling.

The 25% target for cycle journeys is too low

Policy CE44 proposes that 25% of external trips to and from be made by bicycle. We believe this is too low a target. The 2001 census shows that 25% of work journeys within Cambridge are already by bicycle and so a 25% target does not represent any sort of modal shift. Cambridge East will be the first city district designed expressly to promote cycle usage and it would appear to us to be entirely realistic to strive for a higher level of cycle usage than elsewhere in the city. We would suggest a figure of say 30% be adopted as a target.

The ordinary road network is important for cyclists too

Whilst it is likely that the proposed network of dedicated cycle routes across open spaces will be popular with cyclists, it is important to recognise that such routes can only form part of the provision for cyclists making trips to and from Cambridge East. For many journeys the shortest and most convenient route will be along the ordinary road network. In addition, for trips that end on the ordinary road network (and that's almost 100% of trips) cyclists will have to use the road for at least some of their journey. It is therefore absolutely essential that all the roads in the area (Newmarket Road, Barnwell Road, Airport Way and any new main roads) are both suitable and attractive for cycling (as they are mostly already). This does not necessarily mean that off-carriageway cycle tracks are required – it could be achieved by the use of on-road cycle lanes or simply by ensuring that the road is wide enough and traffic speeds low enough for cyclists and motorised traffic to coexist comfortably, as they do on most roads in Cambridge. Exactly how to provide for cyclists on these roads is beyond the scope of the Area Action Plan. However it is important that the plan recognises that the ordinary road network is and will always be important for cyclists too.

We believe that particular attention should be paid to making junctions safe and convenient for cyclists. People travelling to and from Cambridge East will not be encouraged to cycle if measures are not taken to accommodate cyclists safely and conveniently at such junctions as Barnwell Road/Newmarket Road or Newmarket Road/East Road.

We strongly prefer lit over unlit routes

Whilst we are in favour of the proposal to develop cycle routes away from main roads between Cambridge East and the rest of the city we strongly believe that they should be lit (as proposed in the council's preferred option) rather than unlit (as proposed in the council's alternative option).

We believe that the absence of suitable lighting from the proposed routes would considerably reduce their suitability for the type of everyday cycle use envisaged by the Action Plan, especially for commuter cyclists who will need to use the routes during the hours of winter darkness.

The absence of lighting would make it more difficult for cyclists to navigate their way along them. Cyclists need lighting in order to avoid accidentally running off the edge of the path, and into potholes, pedestrians, unlit cyclists and other obstacles. Most perfectly legal cycle lights, although sufficient to make the cycle visible to other road users, simply do not provide enough illumination to be used in the pitch-black environment of an unlit cycleway.

The absence of lighting will also raise fears about personal security, especially as these routes run through what is essentially an urban area. We suspect that many cyclists will find unlit cycleways simply too scary to use at night and in winter evenings.

We are not asking for the routes to be ablaze with lights. We accept that there is a need for a compromise between the need for safety and usability and the need to avoid the unnecessary urbanisation of open spaces. However we believe that a moderate level of carefully-designed lighting is both necessary and acceptable along all the proposed routes.

We would therefore like to propose that CE44 be amended so that it reads:

"There would be a series of dedicated, high quality and lit cycle only routes connecting Cambridge East with key destinations in other parts of the City. In addition, steps will be taken to ensure that the main road network in the area will be safe and attractive for cyclists making trips outside Cambridge East. Together these two policies will support a target of 30% of all external trips being made by bicycle.

Yours faithfully,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Nigel Deakin