

January 10, 2005

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Your ref:

Councillors of the Cambridge Environment
& Transport Area Joint Committee

Cc: Councillor Shona Johnstone, Patrick
Joyce, Clare Rankin



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Councillors,

Cambridge Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee meeting, January 2005

We write to give our views on various matters on the agenda for this meeting.

4B. CORN EXCHANGE STREET/WHEELER STREET

We warmly welcome and support the plans for two-way cycling in Corn Exchange Street and Wheeler Street which have been drawn up over the past year at a series of meetings and on-site visits in which representatives of the Campaign have played a part.

We urge members of the AJC to insist that legal two-way cycling is essential in both of these streets in order to provide effective access to and egress from the new 500-space cycle park to be constructed as part of the Grand Arcade development.

While recognising the concerns about safety expressed in the safety audit, we feel that the present designs have reduced the safety problems to an acceptable level, a level commensurate with conditions in Cambridge in which cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles successfully interact in very narrow, congested streets. The alternative of rejecting two-way cycling in these two streets could produce greater safety problems by introducing long and difficult road diversions for law-abiding cyclists and dangerous conditions for the minority who would flout the law and cycle against the traffic flow.

The designers recognise (paragraph 2.5) that some aspects of the designs for these two streets can be improved as the design work proceeds and in this context we have a number of additional suggestions to make which, we believe, could further enhance the safety of all users of the streets. These suggestions are attached as a separate document.

Lastly, we believe this scheme provides another opportunity to consider the creation of a core-wide 20mph zone. As well as the obvious safety benefits, the resulting simplification of regulations would enable reduction of signage. At present 20mph limits exist in Silver Street, Emmanuel Road and Bridge Street but not in the city centre itself. We believe the current situation is at variance with the aims of discouraging through-traffic, improving the pedestrian environment and keeping signage to a minimum.

4C. HISTORIC CENTRE PEDESTRIAN ZONE CYCLING RESTRICTION

We broadly support the Report's assessments. We particularly agree with the Officer view that Option A is totally impractical.

We are pleased that it is again recognised that there is no viable South to North cycle route in this area, an area through which many journeys pass. We agree with the Cabinet view that a solution must be found to this.

We feel that current levels of enforcement against illegal cycling are poor. The Campaign's own paper on Responsible, Legal Cycling¹ makes clear our full support for responsible and considerate cycling and argues for increased levels of enforcement. We recognise that the current actions of an inconsiderate minority are a significant barrier to public perceptions of the desirability of revoking the cycling restriction in Sidney Street and Market Street.

We note the Officer reference to the Department for Transport's recent reiteration that "there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas"². We believe that pedestrians and cyclists can co-exist in the city centre, and that a Pedestrian Priority Zone would be workable.

Indeed, the continued allowance of cycling in the city centre on Sundays without significant problems demonstrates already that pedestrians and cyclists can co-exist. Many cyclists adjust to this by regulating their speed and/or voluntarily dismounting in the busiest areas. Designation as a Pedestrian Priority Zone would further encourage this.

We hope the Committee will take the political lead in considering revoking some of the restrictions on an experimental basis.

5. CYCLEWAYS PROGRAMME

Firstly, we are disappointed that the Committee's past approval of converting the Burleigh Street / Norfolk Street crossing to a toucan crossing has still not been scheduled.

Growth Area Delivery Grant (page 7): We welcome these improvements, to be funded by ODPM monies, and look forward to the consultation on this group of schemes. We strongly welcome the proposed Newnham Bridge and we ask to be consulted on the detailed design as soon as possible, particularly on its width. This new bridge (and, indeed, all new local pedestrian/cycle bridges) must be wide enough to meet national cycling standards. We are concerned that some recent bridges have not been designed to be wide enough.

Milton Rd / Cowley Rd cycle route (page 7): We have already written³ to Officers about major problems with this scheme.

Coton Path widening (page 8): We are pleased to see a completion date for this long overdue scheme. We hope this will include remedial measures for the two blind corners between the East Forum and the M11.

Beehive Centre (page 9): We have taken part in productive meetings with City and County Officers on this and we look forward to seeing the plans resulting from these meetings.

¹ www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/papers/legality/

² www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_localtrans/documents/page/dft_localtrans_028707-08.hcsp

³ www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/letters/2004/NA05003NorthCambridgeJunctionImprovements.pdf

One-Way Streets (page 10): We are extremely pleased to see that this initiative has been resurrected. Opening up one-way streets for two-way cycling is recognised by government guidance as providing a simple and low-cost way of facilitating increased levels of cycling. On the detailed list:

- We would ask that Fitzwilliam Street be pushed up to 'medium' level. This would help cyclists to avoid the highly problematic Trumpington Street / Pembroke Street junction.
- As part of the (useful) Kingston Street scheme we ask that cycle parking be included;
- We are very glad to see the inclusion of Panton Street. Opening this up for two-way cycling from Lensfield Road as far as Pemberton Terrace would be an important improvement, although we feel that making the full length of the street two-way for cyclists would create much better access, especially to the many schools in the vicinity.
- We feel it is important that items on the 'low' list, and other streets not mentioned, be progressively moved up and scheduled for work in the following year.

6. RIVERSIDE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES

We strongly support the Officer recommendation. We feel the proposed closure to motor vehicles would enhance the benefits of this prestigious new bridge and provide a better pedestrian and cycling environment.

8. HIGHWAY AGENCY MONITORING REPORT 2003/04 - CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

We would ask the Committee to give consideration in this area of work to finding ways to improve levels of maintenance of off-road cycle tracks, an issue on which we receive many comments from members of the public throughout the year. We feel that the increasing levels of cycle track provision are not being matched by appropriate increases in maintenance for what is a more difficult form of provision to maintain.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

We are concerned that there is still no city-wide initiative to address the considerable shortage of cycle parking, which remains in short supply across the city, not just the city centre.

Levels of cycle theft remain high, and many areas suffer from the clutter of cycles on pavements, causing blockages to pedestrians. The latter is particularly a problem in terraced areas such as Petersfield and Romsey, where the problem is further compounded by allowing pavement car parking. Increased levels of secure cycle parking would also provide an incentive for modal shift away from car usage.

Rationalisation of car parking, as suggested in this Report, provides one opportunity to implement cycle parking (although a more strategic initiative to address the shortage on a city-wide basis is still required). We ask the Committee to instruct that cycle parking be included as part of the plans listed in this Report.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Martin Lucas-Smith
Co-ordinator

Cambridge Cycling Campaign's suggestions for additional measures to improve the road design for two-way cycling in Corn Exchange and Wheeler Street

AJC Meeting 17th January 2005

AGENDA ITEM 4a

CORN EXCHANGE STREET/WHEELER STREET

We warmly welcome and support the design set out in the Officer's Report for the January 2005 AJC meeting. However, we believe that certain additional improvements set out below are possible which should be incorporated as the design work proceeds (see paragraph 2.5 of the Officer's Report).

Speed Reduction and Street Ambience

The argument (in Appendix A) that a 20mph speed limit is unnecessary because most vehicles are already travelling below 20mph is not acceptable. Rules are needed to restrict the minority of drivers who will drive at 30mph even when a contraflow is in place. Observation in the late evening in Corn Exchange Street (and also in Trinity Street) indicates that a significant proportion of drivers do not take sufficient account of road conditions and drive at well over 20mph.

At present 20mph limits exist in Silver Street, Emmanuel Road and Bridge Street but not in the city centre. We favour the imposition of a camera-enforced 20mph limit either everywhere within the ring road or in a narrower city-centre zone which would be designed to include Corn Exchange Street.

The few vehicles permitted to use the city centre between 10am and 4pm are, rightly, subject to a 10mph camera-enforced speed limit during those hours. If the junction with Wheeler Street turns out to be a safety hazard for cyclists and pedestrians as the safety auditors fear, we believe that a twenty-four hour 10mph limit should be considered. The DfT has recently approved a 10mph zone in Plymouth¹.

In our view the key to success for the entire Corn Exchange Street/ Wheeler Street area is to change the ambience by good design from one in which vehicles dominate and have priority to one in which motor vehicles, cycles and pedestrians interact on equal terms. For this to be achieved general speed reduction and control of rogue motorists and cyclists are essential elements.

The likelihood of better interaction between motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians in these two streets has been increased by the traffic reductions achieved by the recently-introduced Silver Street traffic control measures. If further restrictions are imposed in Silver Street (which we would support) further reductions in traffic along these two streets may be expected.

¹ <http://tinyurl.com/58j9x>

Loading and Unloading in the Short Section of Wheeler Street between the junction with Corn Exchange Street and the junction with Peas Hill
(Problem A1.1 of Safety Audit)

We consider that loading and unloading in this area should be banned. A loading bay should instead be constructed in Peas Hill (next to the cycle parking area on the north side of the entrance to Wheeler Street). On those infrequent occasions in which heavy scenery is brought to the Corn Exchange which cannot be unloaded in Parsons Court, a special dispensation to park in the prohibited area could be granted. (Vehicles carrying such scenery already have to obtain a special dispensation to travel down Bene't Street in the wrong direction.)

Proposed Evening Taxi Rank in Corn Exchange Street

We consider that a taxi rank in the proposed location in Corn Exchange Street would be a safety problem for both with-flow and contra-flow cyclists and for pedestrians. We suggest that instead the rank should be located in Peas Hill.

Wheeler Street Design

We suggest that the designers consider for Wheeler Street the kind of layout without kerbs between pedestrian and vehicle areas which is to be installed in Exhibition Road in London. (*The Times*, 6 January 2005²). We have not seen the detailed design and so are not in a position to advocate it but we do think that it is worthy of consideration.

Car Park Entrances

In the proposed design contraflow cyclists are expected to give way to vehicles travelling north and then turning right into the entrances to the upper and lower car parks. We consider that instead right-turning motorists should be expected to give way to contraflow cyclists. The advantage of our suggestion here is that it follows normal and expected road practice in which those travelling straight ahead have priority over turning traffic.

To slow down both turning motor vehicles and contraflow cyclists so that they can interact safely we propose a third raised table in addition to the raised tables at the car park exits and along Wheeler Street. This third table would extend across the whole width of Corn Exchange Street and would, we consider, be an important additional speed reduction measure.

Signage

We consider that the legitimate presence of contraflow cyclists is insufficiently prominent in the proposed signage and especially in the contrast between the large schematic sign directing motorists to the upper and lower level car parks and the very small signs indicating the presence of cyclists. We consider that some adjustments are

² <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1427660,00.html>

needed which we propose to discuss with those responsible for the road design.

Car Park Exits

We consider that both the car exist and the proposed arrangements for taking contraflow cyclists past the car exits have been much improved from earlier designs. The raised table at this location is to be designed to slow down cyclists as well as motorists and we believe that the Safety Auditors' suggestion (paragraph A1.9e) of cyclists going past the car exits at 20 to 25mph is implausible if the raised table is appropriately designed and installed.

At present numbers of cyclists cycle across the car exits as they are legally entitled to do if they have walked their bicycles along the footway beneath the car park. Yet the Safety Auditors record no injury accidents involving cyclists either at the car exits or anywhere else in Corn Exchange Street or Wheeler Street. Although there undoubtedly will be some risk for inexperienced, incompetent or careless cyclists, motorists and pedestrians even after the car exits have been improved as planned, we consider that there is insufficient justification for treating this scheme any differently from any other Cambridge road scheme. Supposed risk of litigation must not be allowed to prevent implementation of this scheme.

James Woodburn
On behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign