

July 31st 2005

Our ref: P005 006
Your ref:

Richard Preston
Environment & Transport Department
Cambridgeshire County Council
Castle Court, Shire Hall
Castle Hill
Cambridge CB3 0AP



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Mr Preston,

CORE STAGE 4
FORMAL OBJECTION BY CAMBRIDGE CYCLING CAMPAIGN

Now that detailed plans are available Cambridge Cycling Campaign wishes to develop the position it adopted in its response to last year's consultation (attached).

In the detailed plans now available many of the suggestions we made in our previous response for tackling the congestion in Regent Street appear not to have been taken up. For this and other reasons outlined below we feel that we must now make the present response a formal objection to Core Stage 4 as a whole on the grounds that a far simpler set of measures could, we believe, achieve most of the Core Stage 4 aims at far less cost and with far fewer disadvantages for users of the city centre in general and for cyclists in particular. We applaud the aims of Core Stage 4 but disagree with the many of the proposals designed to accomplish these aims.

It should always be remembered that roughly the same number of people travel to and from the city centre by bicycle as by bus. Both need active support and encouragement to increase usage. It is imperative that support for buses should not be given disproportionate attention and that bus measures should not disadvantage cyclists.

We would stress that we strongly support the proposals to:

- Introduce a 20mph zone in the city centre (though we would, as explained in an earlier letter, like it to be made rather larger and more consistent).
- Control bus and taxi exhaust emissions.
- Increase cycle parking, especially along Regent Street.
- De-clutter the streetscape in the Emmanuel Street area.
- Improve cycling provision at the Catholic Church junction. We would like advanced stop boxes with proper approach lanes to be installed at all legs of the junction. We would like the central reservation on the Hills Road approach to the junction to be moved across to allow a cycle lane to be installed to approach an advanced stop box on this, the most difficult of all the legs of the junction.

- Improve the environment in the city centre more generally especially for pedestrians and cyclists.

PROPOSALS FOR THE REGENT STREET/ ST ANDREW'S STREET/ EMMANUEL STREET/DRUMMER STREET AREA

We fully accept the need to provide for more buses than use these streets at present but believe that such provision could be achieved by the four measures set out and explained on pages 1 and 2 of our earlier response. In brief these are:

- Radical restriction of parking and loading/unloading in Regent Street to provide more road space for buses. We do not accept the need for any pay-and-display parking in this street. Park-and-ride is now working well and the nearby Gonville Place multi-storey car park usually has space available. Businesses in Bridge Street, Trinity Street, Market Hill, Sidney Street, King's Parade and many other Cambridge streets flourish without any nearby pay-and-display parking and we believe that the time has now come to remove all such parking in Regent Street. At the very least a clearway should be established prohibiting all such parking during peak hours. It seems very strange indeed to have peak-hour clearways in Newmarket Road, East Road and even Cherry Hinton Road but not in Regent Street. Loading/unloading should, of course, also be prohibited during peak hours.
- On-street bus ticketing. To reduce bus dwell times and consequently the congestion produced by stationary buses, we believe that the early introduction of on-street ticketing which has proved so successful in London is essential. Even if the local authority has to contribute to the cost of the machines to secure rapid implementation, this innovation would be worthwhile. It is very disappointing to see no emphasis in the plans on the urgency of this measure.
- Revision of traffic light timings at the Catholic Church crossroads. Greater priority should be given to incoming traffic from Hills Road during the morning peak and to outgoing traffic flows from Regent Street during the afternoon peak. Most of the congestion along Regent Street derives from delays at these traffic lights. Our observations indicate that the delays are not so substantial that they would be difficult to resolve. Even at peak hours very few vehicles indeed travelling along Regent Street/ Hills Road have to wait for more than one traffic light change.
- Proper enforcement of existing traffic prohibitions in this area. The illegal use of Drummer Street and Emmanuel Street by non-exempt motor vehicles, the illegal use of St Andrew's Street and Hobson Street by through traffic and illegal left turns by non-exempt vehicles out of Downing Street must be stopped by effective enforcement measures (perhaps with cameras if the law permits this).

We ask for a properly monitored year-long trial of these four measures to be implemented to show whether they could resolve matters without the need for Core Stage 4.

Problems for cyclists that implementing this part of Core Stage 4 would create are:

- Increase in Left and Right Turns for Motor Vehicles.
Unlike earlier stages of the Core Scheme, Stage 4 would greatly increase the number of both left and right turns for motor vehicles including articulated lorries and other heavy vehicles. Such turns are statistically linked with road collisions and, for this reason, should not be increased without very strong justification.
For cyclists the dangers of turning vehicles are particularly great in the case of large vehicles (especially articulated vehicles) where the driver is high above the road. In such vehicles present-day mirror systems still have large blind spots in which cyclists alongside the vehicle cannot be seen by the driver (see article on page five of our April-May 2004 Newsletter, <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/53/article4.html>).

The increase in turns can be illustrated by the case of a large delivery vehicle travelling along Regent Street to deliver goods to Boots when the City Centre barriers are lifted at 4pm. At present its journey is direct with no turns. Under Stage 4 it would have to turn right down Park Terrace, left into Parker Street, left again into Emmanuel Street and right into St Andrew's Street. Such turns are inappropriate for large vehicles in a city so crowded with pedestrians and cyclists. They also work directly against the aims of the scheme because having to turn so frequently inevitably slows down the circulation of traffic including buses and increases exhaust emissions. It should be noted that the proposed obligatory turn for inbound non-exempt vehicles from Regent Street into Park Terrace could, in one respect, actually increase bus delays for buses outbound along St Andrew's Street/Regent Street. They could be held up by inbound vehicles (including buses) turning right across their path. Inbound buses might also be held up by traffic waiting to turn right at this junction. We believe that this particular turn would create particular problems and dangers for outbound cyclists travelling along Regent Street because some motor vehicles turning right would not give way to such cyclists. A two-hour period of peak-time observation at this junction in December 2004 showed that this is already a problem. To make this turn obligatory at all times for non-exempt vehicles would certainly increase the risk to cyclists. Allocating priority to inbound vehicles turning right from Regent Street into Park Terrace would probably improve the situation for cyclists by making it clearer who has to give way but would work against the aims of the scheme by delaying outbound buses.

- Emmanuel Street/ Drummer Street

If the Core Stage 4 proposals were to be implemented a welcome 1.5 metre wide contraflow cycle lane protected by a kerb from encroachment by buses and other on-coming vehicles would be provided. However serious problems for cyclists would remain especially at the Drummer Street end of the contraflow where it is proposed that a new taxi rank would be created where the London buses now wait. This would mean that cyclists would be dangerously sandwiched between on-coming taxis and on-coming buses and other vehicles. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that Cambridge taxis load disabled passengers using ramps up to the nearside of their vehicles and loading would therefore have to take place directly across the route which contraflow cyclists would be using.

We believe that the road restrictions of Core Stage 4 should not be implemented. Emmanuel Street should remain two-way but with access prohibited for inbound non-exempt motor vehicles as at present. The bus stops along the north side of Emmanuel Street could still be removed to free up pedestrian movement along the pavement and to improve road conditions for cycling. The long-distance buses could still be moved to a new location enabling taxis to use their proposed new rank. However this arrangement would permit taxis to face out-of-town and to load disabled passengers from the pavement, a much better arrangement for all concerned.

We are opposed to Station Road as the location to which long-distance buses would be moved. The station is a major destination for cyclists and cycling along Station Road is already rather difficult and dangerous. Locating long-distance buses there would make conditions worse for cyclists. We favour the proposals for the Station Area which suggest that Station Road should be made into an attractive boulevard with widened pavements and cycle lanes and without any on-street vehicle parking.

- St Andrew's Street

We oppose and regard as completely unacceptable the proposal to relocate the taxi rank outside Christ's College to the other side of the road because this would sandwich contraflow cyclists between on-coming taxis and on-coming buses and

other traffic and would cause difficulties for the disabled who would have to board taxis using ramps from the street side rather than the pavement side.

PROPOSALS FOR THE WESTERN HALF OF THE SCHEME (DOWNING STREET AND TENNIS COURT ROAD)

This half of the scheme should be considered separately.

We oppose it on the grounds that it is unnecessary and seriously disadvantages cyclists. We ask for it to be rejected outright, but, if Councillors are unwilling to take this step, we ask for it to be postponed and reconsidered at a later date.

Our reasons are as follows:

- We consider that the basic premise that traffic turning right out of Downing Street causes problems that could not be removed by simpler measures is incorrect. Improving traffic flow along St Andrew's Street/Regent Street by the measures suggested above would, we believe, allow this right-turning traffic to be accommodated as at present.
- The proposal to make the central section of Downing Street two-way for motor traffic would make this street considerably more difficult and dangerous for cycling. This street carries very heavy cycle traffic in both directions. For bicycles to have to contend with the increased traffic and turning movements here is inappropriate and unacceptable. We are particularly concerned that the mandatory contraflow cycle lane would be removed along this section of road which would damage the continuity of the contraflow lane which at present runs consistently along the entire length of Downing Street/Pembroke Street. The current contraflow facility is very highly regarded by cyclists and should not be damaged. The difficulties along this section of Downing Street would be compounded by the fact that emergency vehicles requiring access to the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the rear of the Grand Arcade, the Guildhall, the Corn Exchange, the Arts Theatre and other buildings in this area would be faced with real problems in getting through this proposed two-way length of Downing Street, inevitably congested between 4pm and 7pm, without endangering cyclists and pedestrians.
- The reversal of the traffic flow along Tennis Court Road and the prohibition of right turns at its junction with Lensfield Road would have some serious side effects. Traffic congestion would be shifted: it would be increased on the Lensfield Road section of the inner ring road which is already much more congested than Regent Street. The reversal would make it more difficult for inbound cyclists on Lensfield Road to turn right into Tennis Court Road because they would be faced by a stream of traffic turning left out of the street. It would seriously inconvenience the large numbers of cyclists who use the areas of off-road cycle parking along Tennis Court Road on the south side of the junction with Fitzwilliam Street. Because of the prohibition on turning right out of Tennis Court Road into Lensfield Road such cyclists wishing to cycle to Trumpington or Newnham would be faced with a long diversion. Because of the road conditions and narrow pavements at this location dismounting and wheeling the bicycle would not provide a satisfactory answer.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

James Woodburn