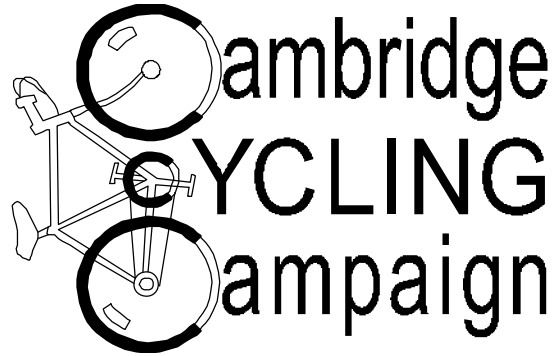


April 24, 2006

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Councillors of the Cambridge Environment
& Transport Area Joint Committee

Cc: Patrick Joyce, Clare Rankin



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Dear Councillors,

Cambridge Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee meeting, April 2006

We write to give our views on various matters on the agenda¹ for this meeting. We hope these points will be useful to the debate. We have endeavoured to keep the comments on each of the many agenda items as brief as possible, and have structured this letter in the same order as their appearance on the agenda.

5a) On-street Parking Account 2004/2006

We note the continued irony that the subsidy which facilitates the continued existence of the Park & Ride system (which is supposedly intended to reduce the need for such parking) is heavily dependent on revenues from parking.

The Campaign is strongly in favour of selective reductions in on-street car parking, as parked cars certainly remain one of the biggest barriers to safer cycling. Removal of spaces on Queen's Road and Station Road, to take two examples, would have significant safety and sustainability benefits. We ask Councillors to actively seek new ways of financing P&R which would allow on-street car parking to be reduced.

5b) Parking Policy Review

We strongly welcome such a review. However we ask the AJC to take into account the fact that the current availability of parking is grossly discriminatory against cycling. The high availability and dominance of car parking in Petersfield and Romsey, for instance, compares strikingly with the almost complete absence of any cycle parking in these areas. We feel the

¹ www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/db/council2.nsf/e0c624b01b2e9ade80256b14004eb73b/e12330c3122813a98025714f002d50ff?OpenDocument

AJC should require that any proposed residents' parking scheme should expressly include new provision for cycle parking, even at the reduction of a relatively tiny number of car parking spaces. (Some 5-10 cycles can be parked in the space of a single car.) Residential cycle parking would help reduce what are now very high levels of cycle theft around the city.

5d) Ravensworth Gardens

We welcome the Officer's recommendation for parking restrictions in Ravensworth Gardens and the statement by the City Council's Planning Committee which the Officer quotes that on-street car parking would lead to a "poor quality external environment".

6a) Core Traffic Scheme Stage 4: Central Area Measures

Part A : Emmanuel Street streetscape consultation

We continue to welcome the AJC's resolution that proposals for Regent Street-Downing Street-Tennis Court Road be deferred. These proposals should, in our opinion, not be considered further until the effects of the current Stage 4 proposals have shown whether such risky and problematic changes are really needed.

We welcome the proposal (paragraph 2.10) to develop plans for improving the Catholic Church junction but are surprised to see that the needs of cyclists are not mentioned. For cyclists this is one of the most difficult junctions in the city. We have many suggestions for improvement and would welcome preliminary discussions before the proposals to be brought forward early in 2007 are formulated.

We remain very concerned about the proposed loading and unloading bay in Emmanuel Street which would lead to contraflow cyclists being sandwiched between on-coming buses and on-coming vehicles entering and emerging from the bay. Some of these vehicles would have to unload from their nearside into the contraflow lane. The Officer's report states (paragraph 6.1) that the use of the loading bay would be restricted to off-peak times but the draft TRO (page 16) indicates that it would be available for no less than 20 hours out of the 24.

Even more worrying, the draft TRO indicates that the contraflow lane would not be marked on-road as it passes the proposed loading bay which would inevitably give rise to difficulties by failing to give visible legitimacy to contraflow cycling in a location where competition for road space will be at a peak. Our considered view is that there should be no bay of any sort on the north side of the contraflow cycle lane at the western end of Emmanuel Street.

We welcome the Officers' discussion in point 6.3 regarding the need to ensure that a contraflow lane in Emmanuel Street (which is essential if the Stage 4 changes are to go ahead) is visually well-defined

Part B: access arrangements and streetscape proposals for St Andrew's St. & Hobson St.

We regard the saw-toothed parking arrangement for buses in St Andrew's Street as unacceptable for two reasons:

1. Buses emerging from the stops will have less good visibility of overtaking cyclists in their mirrors because of the angle of parking. The number of cyclists using St Andrew's Street is even greater than those using Emmanuel Street.

2. It would apparently involve removal of the pavement cycle parking outside the Post Office (16 spaces) and perhaps even outside the Grand Arcade frontage (10 spaces). When the Planning Application for the Grand Arcade was accepted we were given categorical assurances that this cycle parking provision would remain.

The proposed loading bay outside Bradwell's Court would be even more of a problem. Contraflow cyclists would be sandwiched as in Emmanuel Street. Cycle parking would be drastically reduced from the 52 spaces which existed until recently (and which the accepted plans for Bradwell's Court indicated would be reinstated). It is important to remember that the Bradwell's Court development, contrary to the City Council's Cycle Parking Standards, provides no additional on-site visitor cycle parking whatsoever.

We do not understand why a loading bay is needed here. All the Bradwell's Court development is to be serviced by a loading dock accessed from Drummer Street. The shops in the Prudential building have rear access from Emmanuel Street. Loading for the shops on the West side of St Andrew's Street is to be provided largely from the Grand Arcade's facilities. We ask Officers to specify precisely which shops actually need loading provision in St Andrew's Street and whether this number is sufficient to justify a dedicated loading bay in so sensitive an area.

We regard the statement in section 11.9 as astonishing and completely unacceptable:

"Both layouts, combined with the new frontage of the Bradwell's Court development reduce the amount of cycle parking in the area. ... However, the new parking facility in the Grand Arcade development will offset the loss, but this will need to be actively promoted to ensure that it is used."

The Grand Arcade cycle park is supposed to provide 511 cycle spaces but this is well below the number specified for such a development by the Cycle Parking Standards. We have recently been informed that the space available is insufficient to provide even the agreed 511 spaces. Under the terms of the Cycle Parking Standards the cycle park should have been close to the main entrance of the development but instead it has been hidden away in the most inconvenient and least accessible corner. Moreover the development displaced more than 130 existing cycle parking places, many of them in more convenient locations.

The proposal for drastic reduction of cycle parking in St Andrew's Street where it is in constant demand (indeed, arguably the highest levels of demand in the city) and then using the poorly located Grand Arcade cycle park as a substitute must be strongly resisted.



6c) St Andrew's Street-Downing Street junction

This junction has long been unsatisfactory for cyclists and particularly pedestrians. One of the key problems is that cyclists turning left from St Andrew's Street into the contraflow do so when their traffic lights change to green which is at precisely the same time that pedestrians step off the pavement to start to cross the road.



We have long argued here that a 'cycle left' filter should be provided so that cycles can turn left out of phase. This is common in Germany and seems to be unproblematic there. (See reversed photo.)

We feel this would probably improve the pedestrian environment more than proposals for an all-red phase, as many cyclists would probably break the law (which we would not condone) by crossing during such a phase.

As an alternative, we feel this would be an ideal spot for Officers to request permission to the DfT for an experimental "Pedestrian and Cycle crossing phase". Again, this is not uncommon on the continent.

What could and should be done immediately is to make the existence of the cycle contraflow more visible to pedestrians at this junction. Red surfacing and a clear on-road cycle logo are needed.

7a) Milton Road Bus Priority and Traffic Management Review

For us, the key component of this scheme is the continued encouragement of on-road cycling by the provision of an inbound on-road cycle lane and an outbound bus lane in which cycling is permitted. For the majority of cyclists, including the many who cycle to work along this route, pavement cycling would not be a satisfactory option for obvious reasons: conflict with pedestrians, loss of priority at side roads, obstruction by street furniture, pavement-parked vehicles, misplaced wheelie bins and other obstacles.

We support the Officer's recommendations so long as good quality on-road cycling provision remains. The bus lane should be at least 4m wide to permit buses to overtake cyclists. The inbound on-road cycle lane should be at least 1.5m wide and should either be mandatory or, if advisory, reinforced by double yellow lines along its entire length.

We agree with officers that 24 hour bus lanes would be preferable to partial operation. Parking within such lanes causes problems for cyclists.

8a) Cambridge Area Cycleways Programme - Prioritisation Process

We are uneasy in general about this proposal which seems too subjective to be usable and fair. Any two people attempting to score projects using the criteria specified would be likely to come up with quite different answers.

8b) Cycling in One-Way Streets

We are very disappointed by this report. Too much attention is given to problems and not enough to solutions.

Draft government guidance states that:

"Cyclists should be exempted from ... one-way orders ... unless there are overriding safety considerations that cannot be resolved"

“In assessing the safety issues, it is important to recognize that if a one-way street is not made available to cyclists in contraflow, they may have to use a more hazardous alternative ...” (Sections 4.2.8 and 4.11.6, LTN 2/04²).

Our considered assessment is that there are no overriding safety issues to rule out any of the seven streets under discussion and in every case alternative routes are much more hazardous.

Every past opening up of Cambridge one-way streets to two-way cycling has been preceded by warnings of problems and dangers but, to the best of our knowledge, every single case has worked out well in practice, as recent instances such as Bene't Street and Hope Street and the famous older example of Downing Street/Pembroke Street well demonstrate.

We would go so far as to say that this issue is a key bread and butter test of how cycle-friendly the City and County Councils are. If the Councils are to refuse such basic provision, we have to ask what support actually exists for genuinely improving the cycling environment and facilitating greater levels of cycling. The Campaign should not have to spend its time lobbying for such improvements.

Mackenzie Road, Willis Road, Covent Garden, Mawson Road and Kingston Street.

Mill Road has a high rate of cycle accidents. All five of these streets are turnings off Mill Road and opening them up to two-way cycling would reduce the need to cycle on a road known to be hazardous and greatly improve the permeability of the area for cyclists. Of these five streets, Kingston Street is the most important of all because it forms part of an obvious, natural cycle route through Petersfield. The present prohibition is the subject of frequent complaints to us. The street is no narrower than many of the other streets in the area in which two-way cycling is permitted and we can see no justification for continuing the prohibition.

We feel it regrettable that two of the four local Coucillors have issued a leaflet to residents of the street claiming that the proposals “are unlikely to be in the best interests of local residents generally, or of young cyclists in particular, whom the proposals are likely to put at risk”, without providing any justification for such statements or even including an option to support the scheme in the tear-off slip provided. We note that, despite this organised opposition, the responses to consultation from Kingston Street residents recorded in Appendix A are roughly balanced: four appear to be opposed to two-way cycling, while three are in favour.

The Officer's report expresses concern about permitting cyclists coming over Mill Road bridge to turn right into Kingston Street. But cyclists have always been permitted to make a similar right turn into Argyle Street on the other side of the bridge. If turning right into Kingston Street is a hazard, the proper way of dealing with it is by a 20mph motor vehicle speed limit along Mill Road.

We are more than surprised about the objection to opening up Covent Garden. Two-way cycling must not be ruled out because there is insufficient space for an island at the entry to the street. The No Motor Vehicle sign should be used (as at the entry to Hope Street).

Willis Road and Mackenzie Road are both important for rear access to Ruskin University.

² http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_localtrans/documents/page/dft_localtrans_028706-04.hcsp

Newtown: Panton Street and Brookside

Panton Street

We welcome the Officer's recommendation to approve two-way cycling in Panton Street. For us this is a crucial case. Direct cycling access from the city centre into Newtown via Tennis Court Road is needed to avoid the difficult and dangerous junctions at the Royal Cambridge Hotel and the Catholic Church where a large number of cycle accidents occur. Now that Councillors have over-ruled the advice of their officers and decided not to improve safety at the Royal Cambridge Hotel junction by installing traffic lights, it is all the more important to make it easier for cyclists to take routes which avoid this junction.

We believe that two-way cycling in Panton Street can be readily accomplished with no reduction of residents' on-street parking. The car parking should be moved to the other side of the street. It would extend further along the street because the junction with Pemberton Street must be kept clear. Moving the car parking would enable a red contraflow cycle lane to be constructed along the street.

Concern has been expressed about the right turn into Panton Street from Lensfield Road. We would draw attention to the nearby crossing which is available for cyclists hesitant about the turn.

Brookside

We have read the Stage 2a Safety Audit on these proposals and note that the audit team recommend that two-way cycling should not be permitted in just one of these streets, namely Brookside. Their grounds are that this street "is extremely narrow with parking on the eastern side" and "The audit team do not feel that it is safe to have cyclists going against the flow along this length." We do not accept this argument and urge that the proposal to legalise two-way cycling in Brookside should be accepted.

In our opinion the audit team should have taken account of Cambridge streets which are equally narrow and in which two-way cycling operates successfully. Brookside is 4.9 metres wide. Hobson Street, which carries far more traffic than Brookside, is for part of its length exactly the same width.

There are also plenty of examples of Cambridge culs-de-sac which are as narrow or narrower than Brookside which have parking along one side and which permit not just two-way cycling but two-way motor vehicle traffic as well. For example Derby Road (a turning off Cherry Hinton Road) is much narrower (only 3.9m-4m wide) with parking along one side and quite a lot of vehicle movements, including many cycle movements. Vehicles travel slowly and give way to each other. Regular cycle users report that they have never seen any instance of conflict. Regent Terrace is a better example because it lies on a primary cycle route and carries very heavy two-way cycle traffic in combination with light two-way motor vehicle traffic and evening car parking along one side. At 4.9 metres its width is identical to Brookside (and like Brookside lies alongside an attractive green vista). Again vehicles travel slowly and give way to each other.

Observation indicates that the problem in Brookside is that it is used as a cut-through (rat run). By far the majority of motor vehicles using this narrow street are not stopping there. Nor is it a necessary vehicle access for neighbouring streets. Its use as a cut-through could be largely eliminated by appropriate traffic calming which would slow down the traffic and make conditions much more like those in Regent Terrace.

We consider that Brookside could and should be a useful route to enable local school students and also cyclists going to and from Trumpington and the new southern fringe

developments to avoid the Royal Cambridge Hotel junction with its high figures for cycle accidents. It is not, and could not be, a substitute for Panton Street, but is a significant candidate for two-way cycling in its own right. We consider that residents, cyclists and walkers would all benefit from motor vehicle reduction and encouragement of walking and cycling along this particularly attractive street.

It should be noted that all (or almost all) of the residents of Brookside have access to their own private parking off Brookside Lane, a private road to the rear of their houses. They should have no need of residents' parking in front of their houses. It would be desirable (though not essential) to redistribute the existing parking along the street to create more gaps to allow contraflow cyclists space to give way when faced with an on-coming vehicle.

Conclusion

If Councillors consider that opening any of these streets to two-way cycling would be hazardous, we urge that the hazard should be dealt with by a 20mph speed limit and/or by traffic calming rather than by continuing the prohibition on two-way cycling.

9c) Gonville Place-Gresham Road Toucan Crossing Upgrade

We support the modernisation of this crossing. We would stress the importance of retaining the excellent loop system which changes the lights for cyclists so effectively at this crossing.

10a) Proposed Home Zone Order

We are delighted to see a proposal for a Home Zone in the Cambridge area and hope that Councillors will enthusiastically support the developer and City Council's aspirations for such a Zone.

10d) City Centre Taxi Ranks

We welcome the proposal to provide a trishaw rank in Market Hill and the Officer's statement that 'Provided trishaw drivers use common sense when waiting, there is scope within the busy tourist streets for the expected low numbers of trishaws to wait for custom without causing an obstruction

Concerning the King's Parade rank, the Campaign takes no view on whether taxis or disabled motorists should use the space. However, we believe that if changes are made, this would be an ideal opportunity to reduce the considerable shortage of cycle parking in the area by provision of a small bank of cycle parking stands in part of the parking bay area. Currently cycles are parked insecurely or against lampposts and sometimes block the pavement. We hope the AJC will insert this simple request into any resolution on changes here.

We believe that the proposal for a taxi rank in Fair Street with the taxis facing in the wrong direction presents a hazard for cyclists and should be reconsidered.

10e) Sainsbury's Roundabout Improvements

We consider that on-carriageway improvements for cyclists should here, as elsewhere, be the first priority, but we accept that, in this instance, the most appropriate use of the limited funds available would be the improvements proposed in the Officer's report. A minority of cyclists (those who are less confident) would, undoubtedly, make good use of such facilities. We are concerned that all three crossings (and not just two) should be upgraded to toucans.

Yours sincerely,

Committee members of Cambridge Cycling Campaign