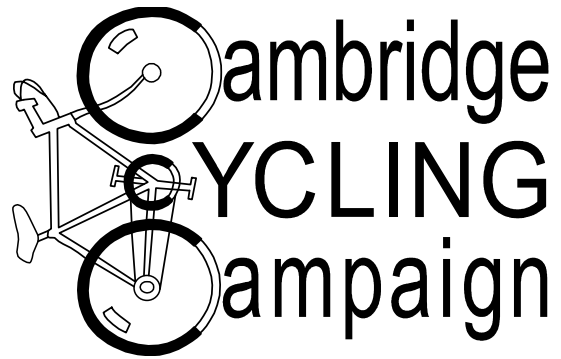


24th July 2006

Our ref: PO6O15

For the attention of Sarah Dyer
Sarah.Dyer@cambridge.gov.uk

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



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Sir,

New Planning Application for the Redevelopment of Betjeman House

06/0552/FUL

We are writing to object formally to the above application. As an organization dedicated to campaigning for better, safer and more cycling in and around Cambridge we confine ourselves to cycling issues.

We would like to start by saying that the applicants are to be commended for their willingness to consider cycling issues when these are pointed out to them. Most of the issues we raised in our letter of 8th December 2005 about the previous application were resolved before the application was put before the Planning Committee. From what was from our point of view initially a very unsatisfactory application, much improved cycle access, much improved cycle parking provision and a much improved layout for the road junction bordering the site were developed. The major remaining problem from our point of view was the proximity of the development to the road and the increased pressure on the mandatory cycle lane which carries a greater number of cyclists than almost any other cycle lane in the whole of the U.K.

In the reasons for rejection of the previous application, this issue was included:

“ Reason 1:- The proposed buildings by reason of their height, scale, massing and siting would result in a cramped form of development resulting in a poor quality living environment for future residents. In addition the proximity of the proposed development to the site boundaries, which is compounded by the presence of Block F in the centre of the site, fails to allow for the provision of on road cycle lanes of an appropriate width to ensure the safe use of the adjacent traffic junction by cyclists accessing the development. The development is therefore contrary to Policies P1/2, P1/3 and P8/8 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, Policies BE1, BE2 and TR17 of the Cambridge Local Plan 1996 and to PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development.”

In the present application the problem that the proximity of the building to the roadway creates has been partly addressed. We are objecting now because it still has not been sufficiently addressed to permit safe access for cyclists to and from the site. The proximity of the buildings to the roadway also fails to provide safe passage for the thousands of cyclists travelling daily past the frontage in both directions. It would be bizarre for the local authorities, who plan at great expense to widen Hills Road Railway Bridge providing safer passage for cyclists, to permit a development a little further along the same road which would, because of the number of vehicles including cyclists turning to enter and leave the site, create a pinch point much worse than the present one at this location.

The developers tell us that the frontage of Building E has been set back by 0.6m from the position shown in the earlier plans but this figure needs to be checked because we have not been able to confirm it yet from the plans we have seen and we do not know what length of the frontage has been set back. From the start we have argued that the whole new frontage needs to be set back by a minimum of 2m.

The developers also tell us that the alignment of the mandatory cycle lane has been straightened and its width increased to 1.5m. This is very good news provided that the overall width of the road has been significantly increased and both the inbound and outbound traffic lanes also increased in width (which seems highly unlikely). In our opinion all these traffic lanes are too narrow at present. As every cyclist who regularly uses the inbound mandatory cycle lane knows, large vehicles constantly (and illegally) encroach on the mandatory cycle lane at this location largely because the vehicle traffic lane is insufficiently wide to accommodate them. The outbound traffic lane must not be narrowed under any circumstances or this will impose huge pressure (and significant danger) on cyclists seeking to turn right from Hills Road into the development. This is why we continue to argue that the frontage of the building needs to be set back not by 0.6m but by 2m. This would, of course, have the additional benefit of providing improved visibility splays for vehicles, including cyclists, emerging from the development.

We repeat the formal request that we made in our letter of 8th December 2005 relating to the previous application. We ask that the transport management implications of the present application should go through the processes of stakeholder and public consultation and be considered by the Cambridge Traffic Management Area Joint Committee before the Planning Application is approved. The implications of the development for the adjacent roads and junction are considerable and these need a more thorough examination by councillors, stakeholders and the general public than can be provided by the planning process alone.

A final point relating to the colour illustration of Broxcap (we think this should be Broxap) cycle stands in the application: the stands shown in this illustration are entirely unacceptable as they conflict directly with Cambridge's Cycle Parking Standards which require that all stands must permit the frame of the cycle to be locked to the stand.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

James Woodburn