

February 8, 2005

Our ref: C 05 005
Your ref:

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

Cc: Councillors Reynolds, Reid, Huppert,
C Rosenstiel, Johnstone

Cc: Brian Smith, Patrick Joyce, Clare
Rankin



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Mr Preston,

Experimental suspension of historic city centre cycling restriction

Following the decision on 17th January 2005 of the Cambridge Environment and Transport Area Joint Committee to support an experiment to suspend the cycling restriction in the historic centre for up to 18 months, we write with some suggestions on its implementation.

In writing, we wish to put on record that the Campaign strongly welcomes this move. Very many cyclists continue to find the existing ban a considerable inconvenience, one on which we have campaigned for very many years. We are glad that the long-standing lack of an adequate south to north cycling route through the city centre is finally being addressed, and indeed hope that the experiment will prove successful. We believe that pedestrians and cyclists can co-exist in the city centre, as demonstrated by the lack of current major problems on Sundays, when cycling has always been permitted.

Signage

We would like to suggest that the area concerned be re-designated as a 'Pedestrian Priority Zone', a term which we understand is in reasonably common use by other Local Authorities around the country. We feel that such a term, whilst not perfect, gives cyclists the clear message that they should take full account of the needs of pedestrians.

Along similar lines, we would also welcome signage stating 'cyclists and motor vehicles give way to pedestrians' or similar, based on signage in reasonably common use. This too, we feel, would encourage an air of co-operation and respect between user groups.

Education

We note the remark in the report to the Area Joint Committee that 'a commitment from cycle interest groups to support enforcement action on illegal cycle movements and to promote

sensible and responsible cycling throughout the historic centre pedestrian zone would increase the chances of any experiment being successful’.

We are happy to provide such a commitment, unreservedly.

The Campaign would be happy to be involved in production and distribution of leaflets upon commencement of the experiment, encouraging cyclists to obey the law (e.g. by using the streets in the designated directions, and not riding on the pavement) and to take care to respect the needs of pedestrians. We would be happy to liaise with the County Council on any such leafleting.

We also plan to liaise with the Cambridge University Students’ Union to see what work could be done to improve understanding of, and compliance with, the new regulations by students.

We would also like to suggest that a Code Of Conduct for cyclists be agreed which could be included in any publicity, similar to that in the City Council’s ‘Cycling on shared paths’ leaflet, produced by Clare Rankin, Walking and Cycling Development and Promotion Officer.

We wonder whether a Working Party could be established to ensure a co-ordinated response bringing these strands together with any work by the Council itself.

Enforcement

We ask that the County Council write officially to the Police, asking for targeted enforcement against illegal cycling (e.g. cycling on pavements or in the wrong direction), before and upon commencement of the experiment.

We have long stated our support for enforcement of all traffic regulations, for all categories of road user – cyclists included - to reduce conflict and road danger. You may be aware of our Position paper on responsible, legal cycling¹ which sets out our views on enforcement-related issues in more detail.

Hobson Street junction gates

We note the AJC’s decision to ‘retain the closure of the gates at the Hobson Street junction to control the entry speed of cyclists’. We are concerned that this will effectively encourage cyclists to break the law and inconvenience pedestrians by using the pavement either side of the gates – at a location where pedestrian space is not in plentiful supply. However, we also recognise and support the need to regulate the speed of cyclists entering that area.

We would like to suggest a ‘partial’ closure of the gates, i.e. in fact being slightly opened. This would mean making the gate lockable in an intermediate position. This would stop motor vehicles, give a way though for cycles and be a speed reducing measure. Such a measure would slow down entering cyclists by squeezing them through a smallish gap large enough for only a single person’s handlebars, whilst not encouraging law breaking.

The current situation is that there are two gates, each with a bolt that drops into a hole in the road. Not only that, but there are brackets on each gate and on the bolts that would enable a padlock to secure the bolts in the ‘down’ position. It would be possible to put a new small hole in the road, such that one gate was moved forward and the other back to produce a chicane yet not require cyclists to use pavement. The gates should be moved far enough to allow entry by a cyclist with a trailer.

¹ <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/papers/legality/>

We believe that this simple solution would remain within the spirit of the motion as passed by the Area Joint Committee, and would regulate cyclist entry speeds, whilst not effectively encouraging law-breaking. It would also act as a visible change that cyclists could point to if questioned by pedestrians. We therefore write to ask that this be implemented in the experimental scheme or at least be consulted upon as an option.

Simplifying the rules

We believe the suspension of the ban will result in a simplification of the current rules in the city centre, which should generally aid compliance with those regulations which remain.

We would like to suggest that the experimental suspension would be a good occasion to publicise the one-way nature of some of the streets involved, and in particular the fact that the roads that form the "historic triangle" form an anti-clockwise one-way system. We think this could be promoted in an attractive and simple-to-understand visual representation, put together by the Council's designers for use in publicity, to help increase understanding of the new regulations in the minds of users of the area.

Whilst writing, we repeat our view that Officers should consider the implementation of a 20mph zone in this area and throughout the central area, to reduce speeds and simplify the various regulations which currently exist.

Surveying

We write to ask that the system of surveying users during the experiment be given consideration in advance of the experiment becoming live. As you will be aware, we have had concerns with the methods employed by some surveying in this area in the past few years.

We feel it would be helpful for all concerned to agree a methodology for this in advance.

We look forward to hearing from you on the above points.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Martin Lucas-Smith
Co-ordinator