

February 21, 2005

Our ref: C 05 006

Your ref:

City Council members



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Councillors,

Historic Centre Pedestrian Zone Cycling Restriction

We write with reference to the motion by Councillors Blencowe and Durrant, placed on the agenda of the Council meeting on 24th February¹, following the decision on 17th January of the Cambridge Environment and Transport Area Joint Committee (AJC) to support an experiment, subject to consultation, to suspend the cycling restriction in the historic centre for up to 18 months.

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. We believe cyclists should ride with consideration and give way to pedestrians when necessary (as many do), and we will do what we can to help this come about.

We therefore warmly welcomed the decision of the AJC. 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 (as recognised by County Council officers) through the city centre is finally being addressed, and hope that the experiment will prove successful.

County Council Officers in their report to the AJC noted the Department for Transport's recent reiteration that "there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas"². We agree, although work is needed to promote responsible and legal cycling as part of the experimental suspension.

We have placed a set of questions and answers³ and a Newsletter article⁴ on our website, giving background information on this issue, which may be of interest.

¹ <http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/public/councillors/agenda/2005/0224cncl/00.pdf>

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

³ <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/issues/cyclingban/faq.html>

⁴ <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/58/article1.html>

The motion to the City Council complains that the AJC decision was made "without prior consultation". We would like to point out that the AJC decision expressly states that the experiment will be "subject to consultation".

On 8th February, we wrote⁵ to Richard Preston (Environment & Transport Department, Cambridgeshire County Council), who has responsibility for implementation of the AJC's decision, with various suggestions and related points. In summary these are:

- 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 and drivers the clear message that they should at all times take full account of the needs of pedestrians.
- Confirmation that the Campaign strongly supports both enforcement action on illegal cycle movements and action to promote sensible and responsible cycling throughout the historic centre pedestrian zone. This is in line with our own Position paper on Responsible, Legal Cycling⁶. We recognise that the current actions of an inconsiderate minority are a significant barrier to public perceptions of the desirability of revoking the existing cycling restriction. We suggested that the County Council write to the Police, asking for renewed enforcement against illegal cycling (e.g. cycling on pavements or in the wrong direction).
- A suggestion that a Code Of Conduct for cyclists be agreed, for inclusion in any publicity.
- That a change to Hobson Street junction gates could be implemented to slow down cyclists entering the zone and to deter cyclists from using the pavement.
- An observation that the experiment should result in a simplification of the current regulations in the city centre, which should aid compliance with those which remain.
- That a Working Group could be established to look at these and related issues. We would hope that such a group would include representatives of bodies such as pedestrian groups and disability organisations, as well as stakeholders such as the Student Unions, who are in a good position to help promote positive behaviour.

Upon receiving our letter, Mr Preston responded "Thank you for your very constructive letter. Your suggestion of a working group is a good way of taking this forward" and that he intended to set up such a group in coming weeks.

Given all the above, we therefore hope that the City Council will respect the decision of the Area Joint Committee (which is after all a joint body formed by the City Council and the County Council) and join us in supporting what we believe is one of the most positive changes in favour of cycling in Cambridge in recent years. We particularly hope that the City Council will work with the County Council in ensuring that it is a success. Cambridge Cycling Campaign is prepared to play its own full part in achieving this.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Jim Chisholm
Committee member

⁵ <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/letters/2005/C05005CyclingBanSuspension.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/campaigning/papers/legality/>