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Your ref:

Capital Programme Team ET1017 B311
Cambridgeshire County Council
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Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Hills Road Bridge Cambridge Cycling Campaign's Response to Consultation

The consultation leaflet sets out four options for altering the layout of Hills Road bridge. A principal aim of the proposals is "to provide better facilities for cyclists".

In our opinion the only way in which better facilities for cyclists can be provided is by adopting a variant of Option C. None of the four options set out in the consultation leaflet offer improved on-road provision for cycling. Our proposed variant of Option C would provide 1.5m-wide on-road mandatory cycle lanes for the whole length of the bridge and on both sides of the bridge. Pavement cycleways, if well designed, can be a useful secondary facility but in most situations, including this one, are not a valid alternative to on-road provision.

On-road lanes are needed on Hills Road bridge because:

1. The County Council's survey indicated that 4431 cyclists travelled across the bridge in a twelve-hour period. This is one of highest figures recorded not just for any Cambridge cycle route but for any cycle route in the UK. With the massive developments planned nearby (especially in the Station Area, Homerton Area and at Addenbrooke's Hospital) this number will increase substantially in the foreseeable future. Such a volume of cyclists could not possibly be adequately accommodated on pavement cycleways alone, especially at peak times. High-quality on-road provision is essential.
2. Much of the route between the City Centre and Addenbrooke's Hospital which carries such exceptional numbers of cyclists already has on-road mandatory cycle lanes. Provision of on-road lanes over the bridge would eliminate the most significant gap along the entire route and would link existing lengths of lane to provide a more continuous facility.

3. Where cyclists have a choice of on-road mandatory cycle lanes or pavement cycleways, as along Hills Road between Long Road and Hills Road bridge, our surveys show that a substantial majority prefer to use the on-road cycle lanes. Given this very clear preference, this is the kind of provision that is required if cycling is to be encouraged.
4. Government advice clearly indicates that on-road provision for cyclists is preferable to pavement provision. In the hierarchy of provision for cyclists set out in Local Transport Note LTN04, pavement cycleways come at the lowest point in the hierarchy (“Consider last: conversion of footways/footpaths to unsegregated shared-use cycle tracks alongside the carriageway”).
5. The difficult junctions at both ends of the bridge rule out any easy way for pavement cyclists wishing to travel straight ahead or to turn right to do so. The consultation leaflet states that the pavement cycleways offered are “safer than on-road cycling”. We consider this to be extremely questionable given the difficulties that many pavement cyclists will encounter at the road junctions which is where most of the cycle accidents occur.
6. Difficulties at the junctions will mean that many cyclists will continue to use the road whatever provision is made for pavement cycling. If on-road cycle lanes are not provided, they will face intimidation from motorists who believe that they should be on the pavement.

Our Proposed Variant of Option C in more Detail

1. Widths

We propose the following widths:

Shared-use pavements 3.1m wide on each side of the road.

On-road mandatory cycle lanes 1.5m wide on each side of the road.

Two vehicle lanes each 3m wide on each side of the road.

Central double white lines 0.29m.

2. Bridge Strengthening, Crash Barriers and Guard Rails

We consider it essential that the weak areas beneath the footways on both sides of the bridge should be strengthened with new beams at the same time as the other bridge improvements are carried out. Crash barriers to prevent HGVs from going onto the weak areas would destroy any possibility for adequate cycle and pedestrian facilities across the bridge.

We ask that existing pedestrian guard rails on and in the vicinity of the bridge be removed and that no new ones be installed when the bridge is redesigned. They present a hazard for on-road cyclists who may be crushed against them by vehicles, especially HGVs. The rails extending from the Homerton Street junction up along the southern side of the bridge are a particular concern for cyclists coming out of Cherry Hinton Road alongside two streams of right-turning vehicles.

3. Pinch Points

If any new pedestrian crossings are installed across the bridge we ask that no pinch points for on-road cyclists be created by island refuges for pedestrians. Given the very high cycle flows and the relatively smaller number of pedestrians in this area particular care is needed to avoid endangering cyclists by providing for pedestrians.

In conclusion we consider that option 'C', or rather our variant of it, is the only one of the four worth considering because it is the only one which makes possible 'reallocation of roadspace' to create on-road cycle lanes. The vast majority of existing cyclists who use this bridge would otherwise be seriously disadvantaged by changes.

Yours sincerely
On behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign

Richard Taylor

Postscript

We plan to write separately about the road junctions at each end of the bridge and about possible ways to provide at these junctions for the minority of cyclists who might use the proposed pavement cycleways.