

March 24th 2008

Our ref: C 08 011

Your ref:

Toby Williams
Cambridge City Council
The Guildhall
Cambridge



Cambridge Cycling Campaign

Cc: City/County Council Cycling Officers
Cambridge Evening News
Market Ward Councillors
Members of the Planning Committee

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Dear Mr Williams,

Grand Arcade Cycle Park

Thank you for your letter of 17th March concerning the above, in response to our letter C08008 of 13th March. We are most grateful for your fast and comprehensive response.

On 14th March we received notifications from members that they had observed work restarting on the cycle park, to move the stands to a wider spacing.

On 19th March we were kindly taken on a tour of the cycle park by the developer and were given an opportunity to ask questions about its progress. During this period we also met the operator of the cycle shop based at the cycle park. Six of our representatives chose to attend, indicating the level of concern that has surrounded this issue.

As a result of this tour, and having seen the stands now correctly installed at an optimal distance, we are pleased that the cycle park does, at last, now seem to be on track for opening on 27th March. Indeed, we feel it has much potential to be an impressive and excellent facility (despite its poor location within the overall development).

Areas now satisfied

a (i). Cycle racks and spacing: spacing between stands

We confirm that the spacing between stands within each row seems correct. The rows are very slightly closer to each other than might be ideal, but we feel this is not likely to be problematic. There are also spaces to be set aside (and marked) for those arriving with trailers, which represents good practice that we can endorse.

a (ii). Cycle racks and spacing: number of stands

We were concerned at the suggestion that about half the stands would not be available for public use, but be taken over by the commercial operator for valet parking.

We understand the plan is now that some retail outlets plan to pay for or provide subsidised cycle parking spaces in this valet parking area for their employees. Assuming this takes place and is well-managed (as now appears likely), this would be an excellent arrangement. It ensures that those

using the area for longer stays will have a more secure parking area which is furthest away from the entrance, thus retaining the more convenient stands closer. It also helps promote the use of cycling to work for such employees.

However, we write to put on formal record that we cannot regard allocation out of the mandatory provision of stands (under the mandatory Cycle Parking Standards) for commercial, paid use as setting any kind of precedent for future planning applications. In our view there was never any suggestion – during any previous review of the Cycle Parking Standards – that the mandatory requirements could include paid-for stands.

In summary we feel it is acceptable, in this situation, that some of the stands required under the Cycle Parking Standards are being commercially managed, as long as the retail outlets are generally providing free/subsidised use for employees as described above.

b. Lockers and other facilities

We note that both the changing facilities and the lockers appear to be located in a best-practice location, which again we endorse. (Neither were open at the time of our visit but preparations seem adequate.)

d. Management and charging regime

We have addressed the issue of charging above.

We are extremely pleased to note that the cycle park operator, Station Cycles, have excellent plans for provision of art and other ideas, which will enhance the public facility.

e. CCTV and security, including gates

The CCTV cameras do appear to be installed and well-located. We understand this will operate on a 14-day monitored and retrospective basis.

f. The establishment, terms of reference and membership of a user group

We note your expectation that the Campaign should be a part of the initial establishment of a user group, which we welcome. We ask that this be expedited so that it can come into early operation.

Areas of concern remaining

c. Hours of opening

This remains a pressing concern. We understand that the car park is open and managed 24 hours. This is also the case for the Park Street Cycle Park. The new Grand Arcade cycle park also replaces public, on-street provision which was available all-night.

Given these facts, in particular the issue of parity with provision for motorists, and given the strong sentiments expressed by Cllr Colin Rosenstiel and Sian Reid that it should be open 24 hours a day, we feel that the proposal to have limited opening hours is unacceptable. The existence of security around other parts of the development and management more generally should enable 24-hour working to exist.

If this cannot be provided, we reiterate our call that some on-street parking (e.g. in Fisher Square) to replace the 24-hour parking which has been removed, should be re-introduced.

g. Cycle and pedestrian access arrangements to the cycle park including details of the location, design, gradient and materials

The developer proposes to install a sign instructing cyclists to dismount as they enter the cycle park. Some of our members feel this to be a matter deserving of ridicule. No motorist expects to have to push his/her motor vehicle into the entrance of an area designed specifically for motor vehicles. We understand Park Street Cycle Park is set to remove this existing requirement, and we see no reason why this should not be applied likewise here.

In this case, both ends of the ramp are at a bend, so there is no chance of cycles proceeding at a fast pace. There is also to be a sign reminding people that they enter at their own risk. Together, these facts should satisfy any concern about having taken reasonable precautions in terms of liability. Despite this, the developer's representative claimed that the insurance company had specifically requested a dismount sign.

We ask that the City Council refuse this nonsensical requirement, or request a copy of the insurer's requirement for a 'cyclists dismount' sign before approving such signage.

Cycle parking for the Magistrates' Court

Thank you for confirming that 26 spaces are to be provided, though we have yet to see evidence in practice. We feel this matter is of relevance to us, as enforcement of the Cycle Parking Standards remains an ongoing, wider issue around the city.

Discrepancy between the Planning Condition and the Section 106 agreement

We note your agreement that there has been a discrepancy between these two documents. This points to the need for increased vigilance in future applications.

We concur also that it has been rather unfortunate that the public area of the cycle park has not been opened earlier. That has been of particular concern in this case, given the very visible way that the car park has been opened in time for the opening of John Lewis, whilst the cycle park has remained shut with a complete absence of alternative cycle parking as part of the development, and previously existent public cycle parking having been removed.

Concluding remarks

The visit kindly arranged for us by the developers has provided us with sufficient reassurance that we are able to pass on to our members and the public at large. As noted above, we are disappointed that the required changes have been made at such a late stage, but, moving forward, we feel that the cycle park has the potential to be an excellent facility.

Assuming it is well managed and that the remaining points above can be resolved, we will be happy to assist in its promotion, and (aside from its poor location in the overall development) feel that it could be deserving of national recognition as an example of best practice.

We would be grateful to hear back from you on the remaining points above.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Martin Lucas-Smith
Co-ordinator