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Dear Madam, Sir

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Issues for a New Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

We applaud the attempt to create a transport framework for the projected growth in the region. We welcome the fact that this planning process is conducted in conjunction with the local Issues and Options Report. We agree that the local planning agency has an important role in “managing traffic demand” (2.8) because with the projected growth, an unplanned development of traffic patterns would lead to unsustainable traffic patterns.

We split our response into two sections - a general section outlining key points on the strategy as a whole. In the second section, we add detailed comments on the specific themes outlined. Our initial comments have quantification as common thread. In the planning process quantification leads to predictable and balanced outcomes, allows enlightened choices, and ensures best value for money.

Section 1: Strategic Overview

Quantify Mode Share:

Both the city and the county have very the high rates of cycling. We occupy top positions in the national comparison. This is a significant achievement and the direct result of your work. Reference to this achievement could be presented more emphatically (“remains the highest” (p25, 29) seems to foresee a future decline). Indeed, exceedingly high baseline figures for active transport users make it possible for our region to explore innovative and visionary programs that other authorities will look

upon with envy. The document should set mode share goals based on current figures and put into place a resilient framework for achieving them.

Quantify Impacts: ROI

We would also encourage you to quantify comprehensively the impact the investment in specific traffic infrastructure has. Evidence is available which shows that investment in active modes has the highest return on investment for congestion relief.

Quantify Impacts: Health

Health related negative impacts of traffic go beyond crashes, air quality and CO2 emissions (3.10, 3.11). Given that the local authority will soon have responsibility for public health, it will find it easier to understand that transport planning is not only about the movement of goods and people, but that it is indeed facilitating one specific way of life. A robust, interconnected, safe and welcoming bicycle network does create healthy communities. Car-based living and working environments will create unhealthy communities. Both active and passive transport provision have significant health impacts, such that the provision of passive transport facilities has to be considered as a net loss of potential health gains. As the positive impacts of active modes have been proven in evidence base research, they should be expressed more assertively than in 3.13. Traffic modelling should not only forecast miles driven and congestion effects, but should be phrased in terms of Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) and premature deaths, as public health experts will advise you. Pollution impacts should primarily refer to human health impacts, while protected species and natural habitats are of secondary importance. (3.11) Spelling out in detail the cost to human health incurred by passive transport will add urgency and a comprehensive perspective to the document.

Quantify Impacts: Choice

We believe it would be a good over-arching principle if the strategic plan spelled out the aim to give all residents the choice of active modes which are safe and welcoming. We accept that motor traffic will not go away quickly and has to be provided for in a managed form, but we also know that many car trips could be replaced by active modes. Given the historic nature of the city of Cambridge, the area will come to a standstill if the envisioned population growth rates are not accompanied by a significant increase in active modes.

Quantify Impacts: Pricing

When demand exceeds capacity, a quantitative approach to pricing will be appropriate. This applies to managing parking capacity (7.1), but also to the access capacity to certain roads or areas. The public does understand that “free parking” is a fiction, and that some modes have less impact and space requirements than others.

Quantify Impacts: Taxi

The transport network set out in 3.1 does not yet include taxi service. Currently, an oversupply of taxis and a scarcity of waiting and parking areas for taxis leads to significant negative traffic impacts. The strategy should study and address this problem.

Quantify Impacts: Logistics

Many businesses in Cambridge use the bicycle for their logistics needs (Post Office, University Messenger Service, Outspoken Delivery, and many smaller firms). The strategy should study the impacts of this growing segment and put in place supportive measures if impacts are in line with goals.

Quantify Impacts: Road Safety

Initiatives for improving road safety are important. Funding should be evaluated so that it benefits all road users, especially the most vulnerable road users. In the past, road safety has often meant large and intrusive vehicular infrastructure, accommodating higher speeds and excluding active road users. The strategy should include language that makes it clear that road safety is not a funding source for “motorised dominance”.

Financing Mode Share Goals

The document should include a financing formula aiming to achieve the established mode share goals. A determinate and growing percentage of traffic funding should be marked for bicycle projects. That could include major projects like a necklace village infrastructure for bicycles (“M25B”), giving residents in the periphery the transportation choices they have so far been denied. As a major project, a project like M25B should include funding for compulsory purchase, where necessary. The council has already expressed a strong interest in the Chisholm Trail. It will offer a very significant improvements and should be listed in the strategy document as a major project. Other local and regional bicycle projects which will replace car trips with active modes should be identified during the consultation process.

The document already makes some reference to protecting historical and natural resources. We want to emphasise this aspect. We also agree that the rail corridor along the A14 will be very important to relieve congestion on the A 14. We also see the urgent need for a comprehensive discussion of land use as part of the traffic strategy. Without a planned integration of residential and business use the planning process would end up producing more and longer trips rather than less and shorter ones.

Quantification, as outlined above, has to be accompanied by a sustained strategic approach, which will advance bicycle planning from the occasional piece of infrastructure here or there onto a much more systematic and better funded approach, commensurate with the high proportion of bike trips in the area. This includes the implementation of a robust network over the longer term, with short and medium term goals. The quantitative approach also allows to put a monetary value on every additional bike trip generated, every car trip avoided, and the cost of every additional car journey undertaken (to include YPLL and other public health indicators). This will make financing available in a transparent manner, and will allow to develop high standard solutions for major bottlenecks like bridges, traffic arteries and intersections.

Section 2: Comments on the detailed proposals

Below we offer comments on the detailed proposals in the Appendix of the consultation document.

Appendix A: Managing the transport network***Access control measures***

We strongly support measures to reduce rat-running and through-traffic. The way that through-traffic is prevented in the streets of Petersfield, which results in high levels of cycling and walking thanks to the very simple closure points, demonstrates what is possible. Short-term increases in congestion are worth the sacrifice of seeing longer-term shift to cycling.

Traffic enforcement

The LAPE (DPE) system has, in our view, been vastly more effective than the previous police enforcement system. We urge that the County make a strong and robust approach to the DfT that the powers in the Traffic Management Act 2004 should be enabled so that the County can act as a pilot area for enforcement of rules against parking in cycle lanes and bus lanes. It would be illogical not to seek these powers given the reduction in congestion that will result.

Parking management schemes

The removal of parking from key strategic routes, e.g. the ring road, A-road routes within Cambridge and other key routes used by cyclists would have a major effect on improving safety and convenience of cycling, and thereby increase its uptake. Parking in such areas, e.g. Lensfield Road, should be replaced with genuinely Dutch-quality cycleways. Without this, cycling rates will not increase by any considerable amount; reallocation of roadspace is essential.

We wish to see an end to the assumption that the public space outside an individual's property is an extension of their property. The changes to Gilbert Road, for instance, have made cycling much safer and more convenient but came about after an extensive debate in which residents sought to preserve the privilege of use of public space to store private property despite the far greater benefits to the public in general.

Bus lanes

We welcome new bus lanes where they are designed to include a cycle lane within them that is additional to the width of a bus, and where they do not create a narrow lane on the other side of the road. Milton Road, for instance, is hostile to cycling because of the way that the bus lane eliminates the possibility of on-road cycle lanes on the opposite side.

Improvements for cyclists

The quality and comprehensiveness of the Cambridge cycle network is simply well below what other European cities with similar levels of cycling have achieved. Greater funding (from government and S106 allocations) is needed, as is – crucially – political will to see a proper cycle network installed. Despite the welcome efforts of the current teams working on cycling and traffic management, the County needs to go far further.

We wish to see an end to the view that shared-use pavement schemes are the way to improve cycling. On-road cycle lanes should be a minimum of 2m wide. Removal of parking would create space for Dutch quality cycle lanes (i.e. direct 3m-wide paths not mixed with pedestrians and with priority over sideroads), giving an enormous incentive for people to cycle, far more so than the current relatively timid measures.

The Newnham to Newmarket Road route should see a Dutch-quality cycleway, as wide as possible with 2m paths the norm for almost all the distance. Most of this could be achieved simply by redesigning the road. Only in a few places would there need to be any (relatively modest) roadspace reallocation. A reduction to two lanes from three will be needed in some places however. Although this will mean some short-term congestion will be inevitable, a shift to cycling will occur, meaning less congestion in the longer term.

The Chisholm Trail is another key strategic route, effectively joining up the two sections of the Guided Busway by running mostly alongside the railway, which will replace many car trips by bike trips. It

should be referred to by name. An indicative timeline should be drawn up, and landowners should be approached.

Currently, cars have proportionately far more roadspace than cycles when looking at the percentage split of car/cycle/bus/etc. A more equitable split is needed. Indeed, doing so is the only way to encourage more cycle trips, which will be essential if housing growth in the city is to happen, as the street network will simply not cope with the number of extra motor vehicles otherwise.

Pedestrian improvements

Currently pedestrians are treated as the bottom of the pile when transport improvements are considered. Indirect crossings, theft of pavement space for poor-quality cycleways and car parking, lack of cut-throughs and so on remain the norm.

Removal of parking to create space for bus/cycle routes

Our comments here are outlined in the “Improvements for cyclists” section.

Use of technology to reduce congestion

We feel it is scandalous that the bus companies still do not have on-street ticketing. These would massively reduce delays to buses and the knock-on delays these cause to other road users. They would also reduce the need for bus lane measures that take space away from cycling.

Improved travel information

We would like to see the signed cycle network show journey times rather than distances. We would like signage to make clear that people who cycle will experience a better and quicker journey.

Influence national funding decisions

We would like the County to make the case that a major cycle network should be seen in the same way as large road schemes are considered. If the amount of money projected to be spent on the A14 were spent emulating a Dutch street/cycle network, congestion in Cambridge would simply disappear, the population would be healthier, and the city would have far more capacity to deal with housing growth.

Appendix B: Influencing and changing behaviour

Transport impacts of new developments

New development after new development is seeing compromised or barely-adequate cycling conditions being installed. Dutch-quality provision should be the norm, not shared use pavements. Cycle parking should not be hidden in basements or be cramped. The location of car parking should be designed to discourage car use for short trips. The County needs to insist on far better cycling conditions rather than turn a blind eye to mediocre provision. Not to do so means that the taxpayer will pick up the cost in coming years and decades for trying to fix the inevitable problems that will be created. Although many of the new developments display some best practice in terms of Manual for Streets–style local streets, key connecting streets and road layouts are too car-dominated. This must change.

Travel Plans

Travel Plans are, in our view, too often seen as a way for developers to avoid spending money on proper provision of transport infrastructure. For instance, the proposals to increase the Lion Yard trading area were accompanied by proposals for a Travel Plan yet the developer was not prepared to meet the basic cycle parking standards. There is no hope to see a shift away from car-based access to the development (which is not economically or environmentally sustainable) if there is, in practice, nowhere to park a theoretically-increased number of cycles.

We strongly support expansion of the Travel for Work partnership, which is crucial in ensuring that Travel Plans actually result in real changes. When implemented, personalised travel marketing and employer schemes can be very successful.

Car clubs

We support car clubs, and wish to see their expansion much more rapidly, by replacing existing car parking spaces with car club spaces. All new spaces should have cycle parking adjacent, as this increases the accessibility range of each such space.

Travel information

We believe every new housing unit should receive a cycling guide – which we would be happy to produce if funding were available – and that this should be accompanied by personalised travel marketing. We would like to see active promotion of the CycleStreets journey planner that we helped create.

Road safety

Cycle training should continue to be based on the Bikeability scheme and not the Safer Cycling Scheme. The benefits to young people (and adults) – their health, independence, and access to employment/economic opportunities is considerable – and furthermore an early-trained cyclist means a better adult driver. Cycle safety must be based on the principle of convenient, safe infrastructure, and not helmets or protective equipment. The Police must be pressured to take a much stronger approach to policing speeding, use of mobile telephones while driving, and other road safety problems. This should be accompanied with work to enforce responsible cycling. The balance between cycling/motoring enforcement should be based on an objective measure of comparative road danger.

Alternatives to travel

Naturally we welcome work to improve telecommuting.

Appendix C: Providing new transport capacity

Networks of very high quality segregated cycle routes between settlements

We are encouraged that, for the first time, the County recognise the need for ‘Dutch standard’ cycleways. We strongly support this, believing this must become the norm for all cycle schemes. Joining the missing links will have big potential for removing barriers to cycling. And the need for a third cycle park in the city centre is now urgent.

Our main comments here are outlined in “Improvements for cyclists” above.

Car / bus / bicycle interchanges at public transport

Cycle interchange with public transport provides the means to increase the number of people able to access public transport, as it reduces the effective time people have to spend to get there.

Larger scale road safety and capacity improvements

New road schemes should include a cycle element, and must not sever existing links. Equally, the A14 needs to have a cycleway alongside.

As noted above, we would like the County to make the case that a major cycle network should be seen in the same way as large road schemes are considered. If the amount of money projected to be spent on the A14 were spent emulating a Dutch street/cycle network, congestion in Cambridge would simply disappear, the population would be healthier, and the city would have far more capacity to deal with housing growth.

New Busway routes parallel to strategic roads

Where new Busway routes are created, such routes should not be at the expense of cycleways, which, going through Cambridge, would have a far greater congestion reduction effect. New busways should include a cycleway alongside – the success of the current busway cycleway shows the effectiveness of this approach.

New Park & Ride sites

We welcome further P&R sites if they can be demonstrated to reduce congestion by being matched by consequent reduction in parking spaces in the city centre(s) they surround. Cycle parking should be included at such sites, to enable 'Park and cycle'.

Cycle parking

Substantially more cycle parking is needed all around the city, not just in the centre. A third cycle park is needed in the city centre, possibly in Post Office Terrace or at the expense of a retail unit. There should also be a rolling programme of replacing a single car parking space (or two spaces) per year in every street in Romsey and Petersfield, as it has been successfully implemented in Copenhagen. Over a 10-year period this would mean that pavements could be reclaimed for pedestrians, and yet residents would not face problems because the turnover of new residents in these areas is high (i.e. people would adapt as they move in).

Improvements to A road junctions

As the consultation document identifies, it is also important that congestion is simply not pushed down to the next junction. Changes should also avoid large amounts of new traffic being brought into Cambridge as a result of releasing currently-suppressed demand. Where changes are made, the opportunity should be taken to include cycle priority crossings in the plans.

Demand Led transport services

We have no comments to make on these proposals.

Rail capacity improvements

New rail capacity should include high levels of cycle parking (which over time will still become full), and the County should press for cycle spaces on trains.

Closing Points:

Rupert Goodings (CTC) has shared with us the response of the CTC. We fully agree with all the points made there. Given the high baseline rates of active transport, we strongly encourage the council to adopt a more visionary approach, which includes specific standards (LTN 2/08 etc) and commits new developments to reduce car dependency. We trust that based on quantitative data, the “Doing More” option will be transformed into a “Doing Much More” option.

Finally, we would welcome an opportunity to address the Joint Strategic Spatial Transport Members Group.

Sincerely

Dr Michael Cahn
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