

ref. S/0388/12/OL

Our ref: R 12 003

Edward Durrant,
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Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Edward Durrant,

Cambridge Cycling Campaign **strongly objects** to the Northstowe outline planning application ref. **S/0388/12/OL**.

Cambridge Cycling Campaign strongly objects to the application on the grounds of the inadequate cycling infrastructure proposed. The proposals do not even meet the requirements set forth by the Department of Transport for cycle infrastructure, never mind the higher standards achieved in the cycling capital of the UK.

A development such as this effectively creates travel patterns for the next 50 years. We want to see an exemplary development that genuinely presents cycling as the primary choice for a very high proportion of journeys, with Dutch-quality infrastructure. Instead we see shared-use (of the kind that generates ENDLESS complaints in Cambridge), lack of cycle parking, high traffic speeds, and poor access to the site for people who choose to cycle.

Cambridge Cycling Campaign believes that a reasonable target would be 40% to 50% of traffic within and into the development to be undertaken on a bicycle. The outline planning application makes no assessment for a target for the modal share of cycling that could be achieved. The target for 40% to 50% is readily achieved in many urban areas in the Netherlands, and in line with the current 50% target for Copenhagen.

Local councils already recognise the importance of cycling for the economic prosperity of the area. And recent motions have brought forward the wide adoption of 20 mph speed limits throughout the urban residential areas of Cambridge. Northstowe is designed to be urban, but has all the hallmarks of the worst characteristics of suburban development. It should be noted that cycling increased to 21% in Cambridge last year (Cycle Cambridge "get pedalling" newsletter). The Northstowe development should be redesigned to accommodate the predicted significant bicycle traffic and not just pander to the every wish of car drivers.

Whilst the intent of the application provided says all the right things, such as “Pedestrians, cyclists and buses are given priority on streets”, the implementation is far from exemplary, even in the local context. Since it is hoped that the majority of residents will move around the settlement on foot or cycle, the pedestrian/cycle infrastructure should be an integral part of the design and not an after-thought. Northstowe could and should be a world-class leader in how this can be achieved.

The development does not connect with the surrounding villages. Internally the majority of the cycleways are shared use, therefore by design putting cyclists in conflict with pedestrians – probably encouraging both to use the car. The design speeds for the roadways are too high, and is unspecified for the cycleways.

The development would sit next to one of the best pieces of cycling infrastructure (the Guided Busway cyclepath) in the UK, yet barely acknowledges that cycling can help solve many of the problems of today – congestion, obesity, climate change. The targets for the travel plans are totally inadequate. Given that 10% of the residents of Cambridgeshire cycle everyday, the development target of half of this is lower than the region’s average. It is significantly less than the 23% in neighbouring Cambridge.

Road Speed Limits

- Design and Access Statement, p35
- Design and Access Statement, p53
- Planning Supporting Statement, §4.54
- Environmental Statement, §7.171
- Health Impact Statement, §3.8.17
- Health Impact Statement, §3.8.22

The primary routes are indicated in the Design and Access Statement, Figure 5.5, to be a mix of 30 mph and 20 mph. There is no indication of any design or speed limit expectation for lower order streets. This omission is a serious issue. Cambridge Cycling Campaign would require that all streets within the development must be both designed for a motorized vehicle speed of 20 mph and have a 20 mph speed limit. This should include both the primary streets and the lower order streets.

The Guided Busway is stated to have a design speed of 30 mph. We have no issue with this.

However, the application states that the primary streets along which local buses will travel will have a 30 mph speed limit. This would not be necessary, and we therefore repeat the statement that all streets within the development along which motorized vehicles are able to travel should have a design speed of 20 mph and a posted speed limit of 20 mph.

These statements are contradictory to the Environmental Statement’s Traffic and Transport §7.171 that states that each 1 mph reduction in average speed will correspond with a 5% increase in personal safety. We would hope that this outline planning application would have been designed for the highest possible road safety, and therefore we would not accept anything other than a 20 mph speed limit on every road within the whole development.

The Health Impact Statement states that a 30 mph speed limit would “make the street environment within the proposed development safer and more pleasant”. We disagree. A 30 mph street is unpleasant, not only for cyclists, but also pedestrians. A 20 mph speed limit would make the development safer, yet this is not called for in the Health Impact Statement. The health of the population living or working in this new settlement would be improved if a 20 mph speed limit were required on all roads.

The Health Impact Statement also states that there is a clear hierarchy of streets. We agree that some streets should be designed to carry more traffic than others and that these streets should accordingly provide more infrastructure to protect vulnerable road users such as people who choose to walk and people who choose to cycle. However, we disagree that this should be done by designating and designing some streets to be high-speed traffic corridors, and some as traffic calmed slow speed streets. The designation of a route as primary or secondary should be based on the volume of traffic not on the basis of speed.

Access to the Site

- Environmental Statement, §2.22
- Transport Assessment, §4.4

The text in the Environmental Statement, section 2.22 suggests that on and off road cycle and pedestrian routes will be created through the site, which will also link the proposed development with Longstanton. However, the Figure 2.5 (referenced from this section) only shows “Rights of Way” and not specifically whether these routes are only for pedestrians or also able to be used by cyclists. This is a major omission that must be resolved.

This section also suggests that a new pedestrian / cycle only crossing will be provided across the B1050. Yet the illustrations do not indicate this dedicated provision. The illustrations appear to show a primary route for traffic into the site that ends in a pedestrian route. This is a very car centric design that does not put either pedestrian or cyclist first.

Many villages are within easy cycling distance of the site. Yet this proposed development does absolutely nothing to improve the situation on the ground for cyclists accessing the development, or residents accessing the many employment opportunities in the surrounding villages. It is highly disappointing that even though the Cycling Audit in the Transport Assessment shows many of these villages are very close, most of the cycling facilities are graded as D or E.

We cannot believe that a development as large as Northstowe can be built without any highway improvements of the afore-mentioned cycling facilities for non-motorized-users. Even simple things like surfacing the existing cycleway from Rampton Drift to Girton is not suggested as a possible mitigation to the cycling environment.

Cambridge Cycling Campaign request that the following schemes be added to the outline planning application:

1. B1050 cycleway – segregated route along the B1050 from Northstowe to Bar Hill. This would join up with the proposed A14 NMU bridge at Bar Hill and provide residents with a safe route to the shopping and job opportunities at this large village just 3.5 km away.
2. Oakington Airfield Road – rising bollards should be installed. This route is currently designated for taxis, buses, pedestrians and cyclists only. Yet the traffic survey for the planning application discovered 265 vehicles per hour using this road in a morning peak. This road must be truly closed as part of this phase of development.
3. Ramper Road – this is the obvious route from Northstowe to Swavesey and the village college. This route is preferable because it is a mile shorter than going via the Busway. A parallel cycleway must be provided along this corridor to enable school children to safely travel to the college without having to interact with the 30% more vehicles along this route predicted in the traffic models.
4. Station Road to Willingham – a segregated route along the B1050 north to Willingham should be built. There is plenty of space along this corridor to build a segregated facility. The traffic volumes on this road must justify this. As this a major route from villages to the north, the traffic volumes increase by almost 600 vehicles a day, this will only get worse.

5. Northstowe to Science Park or Cambridge - the traffic assessment acknowledges that more confident cyclists will travel further than 5 miles by bike; in and around Cambridge, many already do. The Science Park will be an easy commute from Northstowe, and central Cambridge is not much further. From the centre of Phase 1, cyclists heading towards Cambridge will access the CGB Cycleway at the Rampton Road/Reynolds Drove junction. Currently, Rampton Road is a track for much of its length which can be muddy and the access to the cycleway involves lifting the bike over the concrete guide rails. At present, the only access to the cycleway mentioned in the documents is at Longstanton Park & Ride. Cyclists should not be expected to travel 800m or more in the wrong direction to get onto the cycleway. The grass/mud path needs to be upgraded to a bituminous surface, and the concrete rails at the junction need to be removed locally to enable a cyclist to ride across the Busway to the cycleway (similar to where the Girton - Histon footpath crosses the Busway, near the end of St Audreys Close, Histon). (see <http://www.cyclestreets.net/location/36094/> and <http://www.cyclestreets.net/location/36097/>)

It should be noted that the Northstowe Area Action Plan, NS11/9 states that “There will be a dedicated network of highly accessible, segregated, high quality, safe, direct, connected and convenient rights of way, including cycle, pedestrian and horse riding routes, within Northstowe, connecting with surrounding villages, and with wider rights of way network.” Cambridge Cycling Campaign does not see how this planning application meets these requirements.

Cycle Infrastructure

- Design and Access Statement, p14
- Design and Access Statement, p52
- Design and Access Statement, p55
- Low Emissions Strategy, Table 4.2

Within the development there is an opportunity to create a world-class example of how to design and build a settlement around sustainable transport. This outline planning application comes far short of meeting these goals. The Design and Access Statement on page 14 states that “Pedestrians, cyclists and buses are given priority on streets”. However, this is not enough. Most traffic collisions between motorized vehicles and vulnerable road users occur at traffic junctions.

Therefore, cycling and pedestrians must also be given priority not only along streets but also at all traffic junctions. This must be stated as a requirement as part of this submission. Without such a statement, the “priority” cycle routes along the side of streets mean nothing when a cyclist has to stop and give way to cars travelling at 30 mph. The development must be designed from the point of view of the most vulnerable users with the less vulnerable fitted in around them.

This would include priority over all side roads, with no vertical or horizontal deviation of the cycleway or footway at such side roads. Junctions between streets of different classifications, for example a priority route and a secondary street, or a secondary street and a side road, should be built such that the traffic has to give way to the cycle traffic and pedestrian traffic in the same way that somebody pulling into a drive from a road would give way. Therefore all junctions should be built accordingly. These junctions must be documented in the design guide and this design guide must be approved before any junctions can be built.

The Design and Access Statement, p52, suggests that a faster commuter route is provided along the side of the Guided Busway route. However, there is no design speed quoted within

any document for this cycle route. It is assumed that guidance from LTN 2/08 would be used for the design speeds for this “high speed commuter” route. For the unfamiliar, Cambridge Cycling Campaign would only accept a cycleway with a design speed of 20 mph, a minimum stopping distance and sight lines of 25 metres and a minimum radius of curve of 25 metres. Figure 6.19 in the Design and Access Statement appears to show this high speed commuter route having a sharp corner in it for no apparent reason, with restrictive sight lines. This must be corrected taking into account LTN 2/08.

LTN 2/08 also states that “Two-way cycle lanes are not generally recommended”, yet the high speed commuter cycle route is a two-way cycleway shared with pedestrians. This is unacceptable in a corridor that is 21.5 metres wide. Within the development there must be a separation between traffic speeds. Until people can walk at 20 mph, cyclists and pedestrians must be physically segregated. This means that along the Guided Busway corridor, 2 metres should be given to pedestrians on both sides of the street, 2 metres should be given to cyclists on both sides of the street. This still leaves 13.5 metres for both the busway and trees. Care should also be given to how pedestrians would cross the high speed cycleway to access bus stops along this corridor. Again, a design guide must detail these.

All cycleways within the development must be a minimum of 2 metres wide. Where large traffic volumes are expected up to 4 metres should be provided, for example, near schools, community facilities, or two-way dedicated cycleways. The cycleway along the side of the Guided Busway between Orchard Park and Impington is 5 metres wide yet at some times of the day this is not sufficient for the volume of cycle traffic using this facility.

Design and Access Statement, p55, shows a diagram of a primary street with just 1.5 metres allocated for cycling, and 8.5 metres allocated for motorized vehicles. This is unacceptable. Along primary streets, that by definition will carry most of the traffic for the development, and by design high speed killing zones marked at 30 mph, people who choose to cycle will want to use segregated cycle facilities. These facilities should be segregated from motorized traffic and pedestrians. The only acceptable design would be to provide 2 metres for pedestrians on both sides of the street, and 2 metres for cyclists on both sides of the street. It is unacceptable that somebody who wishes to cycle has to cross not only a pedestrian footway, a water feature, two lanes of fast moving traffic, and negotiate their way past parked cars just to access a shared use cycleway. Cycleways must be provided on both sides of the street. Given the urban nature of these streets, perhaps space should be taken away from the “front gardens” of the buildings on either side to enable the urban drainage system to be retained.

The “east-west” primary streets appear to show two lines of trees, one interrupted by cars, the other not. Again, segregation of the cycle traffic from the pedestrian traffic is essential as detailed above.

Green Corridors

The green corridors, Design and Access Statement, p64, appear to show a single 3 metre wide shared use cycleway. The diagram also appears to show a car parked blocking the cycleway. We hope that cars would not be permitted to use these facilities, yet the diagram suggests that use of the cycleway by cars will be permitted. This must be corrected. Similar green corridors in similar urban areas, for example in Lund, Sweden, have a width of approximately 5 metres.

Along the green corridor, the inadequate cycleways are only along one side. This removes the ability for residents on the wrong side of the greenway to use this facility. Therefore cycleways should be provided on both sides of the greenways to maximize the utility of cycling.

In the Design and Access Statement, Figure 7.1, a cycleway appears to be shown crossing the water between two primary streets. However, the bridge does not appear to link into the street network on the far side of the river. This therefore does not provide a direct route between the two parts of the development. This must be rectified as it does not align with the statement from the travel plans that “A connected network of pedestrian and cycle routes will be provided along key desire lines.” At no point should a cyclists have to cross these greenway water features by cycling to a primary street. Bridges should be provided along strategic cycle routes.

Local Centre

The proposals appear to surround the local centre with traffic on three sides. This is against the design principles established in Cambridge and Ely where through traffic has been removed from the centres to create an enjoyable space. It would be best if the local centre did not have any major traffic going along the side of it. The details of how cyclists would access this area safely is unclear.

Travel Plans

The documents include a number of travel plans that indicate that cycling will be one of the transportation choices promoted within the development. We support such measures. However, the targets for the level of cycling within these travel plans are nothing short of abysmal.

The promoters of this project must be aware that the level of cycling within Cambridge is approximately one quarter of all trips. For some employers it is approximately half of all journeys to work. A cycling level of 5% as the target is an order of magnitude short of what the development should be designed to achieve. Cambridge Cycling Campaign request that a reasonable target of 25% be set. Obviously, this would have significant economic, environmental, and health benefits for the residents. These benefits are widely documented, and partly explain why Cambridge is such a vibrant and economically productive environment.

Addressing Climate Change

- Design and Access Statement, p10

Given that cycling is the most efficient form of transport ever invented, it is questionable why the section on Addressing Climate Change neglects to mention cycling as a method to reduce the carbon footprint of the development. It is recommended that use of a bicycle to move around the development and from the development to neighbouring villages be added to the solutions being provided at the site to address climate change.

Cycle Parking

- Design and Access Statement, p56
- Planning Supporting Statement, p74

A major disincentive to using a bicycle for a journey is the lack of cycle parking at the destination. The Design and Access Statement, p56, states that “Cycle parking will be designed as an integral component of the housing plot layout and will be provided in key public spaces including the mixed-use local centre, employment area and the public square by the primary school.” There is no mention of cycle parking at the sports hub, or along the green corridors.

The sports hub must include a significant volume of cycle parking. The green corridors should also have frequent cycle-parking opportunities so that people can cycle to these locations and then go for a walk.

The town centre should be designed to reduce the use of cars to access it and encourage the use of cycles. This means that cycle parking is not located in one place, but is adjacent to the cycleway next to the shops. Cars should park further away from the shops than cycles. It should be noted that it is far safer for motor vehicle occupants on foot to cross a cycle route than for cyclists on foot to cross motor traffic.

Cycle parking will be provided with houses for residents, but there is no statement about visitor cycle parking. Cambridge Cycling Campaign requests that as much cycle parking is provided along streets as that provided for car parking. If a street is able to cater for 20 cars parked, then cycle parking for more than 20 cycles should also be provided.

Cycle parking for all employment sites should be closer to the employee entrances than car parking. Visitor cycle parking should be provided at all buildings in the same proportion to visitor car parking. This visitor cycle parking should be closer to the visitor entrance than the car parking.

Permeability of the Development

The general design of the street network appears to be rectilinear. Whilst this is in keeping with the surrounding settlements, there appears to be no restraint on the movement of motorized vehicles along these streets. This will therefore mean that more vehicles will use streets without any significant cycling infrastructure. This is unacceptable. Within Cambridge, many streets have been blocked to through motorized traffic. This reduces the traffic volume on these streets, thereby promoting cycling and walking along these streets. The site plan should indicate where such traffic restraint is proposed.

We accept that this may mean that some journeys by car will be longer than similar journeys by bicycle. However, if cycling is to be prioritized then those journeys must be made more convenient. The only way to do this is to make the journeys for motorized vehicles less convenient. Obviously, this should not apply to buses, as they are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

We are always happy to meet with developers to discuss cycling issues we have raised.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Robin Heydon