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**Cambridge Cycling Campaign**

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Dear Transport Delivery Team,

**Hills Road / Regent Street junction changes**

While we recognise that there have been efforts to improve this junction for cyclists, *the changes proposed do not go nearly far enough*. This is at a junction where improvements are desperately needed to increase safety, along with measures to encourage cycling and thus reduce congestion. While implementing the changes would be better than no change at all, the current proposals on their own are not worthy of Cambridge as a national leader in active transport, and do not comply with the County Council's stated policy of prioritising cycling, walking and public transport.

This is an opportunity to develop a scheme which actually encourages people to cycle rather than one which merely mitigates a poor situation on one arm of the junction. The failure to address this junction over many years suggests this is likely to be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to tackle the problems. Otherwise, the minor changes proposed are likely to stand for many years with no substantial improvement.

We appreciate the efforts of those within the Signals Team to develop a design which includes measures to benefit those cycling and we recognise that the proposed scheme would deliver some improvements.

However, *we reiterate that the opportunity must be grasped to plan a junction that cyclists can safely and easily travel through and which ultimately will reduce congestion for all modes of transport*. We assert that the intolerably bad levels of delays to all transport users here need to be tackled in the medium and longer term by encouraging cycling and public transport priority. But we recognise that this will necessitate carefully implemented demand management measures to reduce motor vehicle flows. However, the experience of the changes to Hills Road bridge is that motor vehicle flows adjust to alterations in capacity.

*If this is to be a scheme that genuinely improves cycle safety much more needs to be done and we detail the changes which we consider are necessary.*

The impacts of our proposals on traffic flows, particularly on Gonville Place and Lensfield Road, which form part of the inner ring road, could be significant so we think that our proposals need to be implemented in stages, giving traffic flows time to adjust. But the need for substantial change must be accepted and, as far as possible, planned for at this stage.

### **Our proposals**

We think that separate traffic lights for cyclists (advanced greens) should be trialled at this junction. This concept is used in several countries in Europe and described in our Newsletter 103<sup>1</sup>. We request that you approach the Department for Transport for permission to trial such advanced green lights at this junction now.

In addition we believe that the following proposals could be implemented now, without serious adverse effect on traffic flows:

- prohibit motor vehicles turning left from Hills Road into Lensfield Road
- measures to prevent motor vehicles rat-running through Newtown
- southbound cycle lane in Regent Street leading into the planned advanced stop box
- coloured tarmac to join up the Hills Road / Regent Street cycle lanes across the crossing making it clear that this forms a continuous route and highlighting the presence of cycles
- ban on vehicles except buses and bicycles turning left out of Lensfield Road into Regent Street
- northbound cycle lane along Regent Street heading towards the City Centre
- effective enforcement to prevent delays caused by the box junction being blocked.

In the longer term we believe that Gonville Place should be reduced to two lanes for motor vehicles heading towards the Catholic Church from three, in order to create space for 2.1m wide cycle lane provision, and cycle lanes created along Lensfield Road.

### **Our detailed comments and proposals**

As you may be aware, we are working on ideas to improve the ring road as an attractive route for cycling from Newnham to Newmarket (N2N). We have not yet drawn up detailed plans, but the vision is of a very high quality route that actively 'sells' cycling as the best way to travel across Cambridge. This concept, described in Newsletter 103<sup>2</sup>, needs to be taken into account when considering real improvements to the major intersection with Hills Road and Regent's Street.

#### **1. Hills Road, heading northbound into town**

While creating space for a northbound cycle lane is a clear improvement, the critical problem of conflict between cyclists heading straight on and motor vehicles turning left is not addressed. We think it is essential that a solution is provided to this problem. We think that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/103/article2.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.camcycle.org.uk/newsletters/103/article4.html>

the easiest and most effective solution would be a prohibition on motor vehicles turning left. Most traffic will be able to use Brooklands Avenue; only a very small number would be directly disadvantaged.

Associated measures to stop rat-running through Coronation Street would be needed.

## **2. Regent Street, heading southbound out of town**

An advance stop box for cyclists is shown here, but no cycle lane leading into it. When there is little traffic this will benefit cyclists but if traffic is allowed to form two lanes going towards the lights there will not be space for cyclists to reach the advance stop box safely.

We understand that it is deliberately left vague as to whether a single or double lane of traffic is intended. We object to this 'fudge' as it will merely lead to two lanes of traffic squeezing cyclists. As the number of vehicles here will be relatively small compared to the other arms of the junction, and traffic would not stack up considerably, we feel this must be formalised to be a single lane heading out of town. This then creates the space for one traffic lane 3m wide, and a cycle lane, complying with the national standard width of 2m, in each direction. A proper 2.1m cycle lane of this nature is entirely appropriate given the volume of cycle traffic.

We consider that the traffic may actually flow more smoothly with a single lane for motor vehicles as there will be less likelihood of delays caused by traffic not being able to pass vehicles illegally blocking the yellow box junction.

## **3. The crossing itself**

Red (or green) tarmac should be used across the crossing in order to join up the Hills Road / Regent Street cycle lanes, making clear that this forms a continuous route and highlighting the presence of cycles. The same should also be done for the other axis.

We understand this is something the Signals Team is willing to add into the current scheme.

## **4. The Gonville Place approach (westbound)**

It has long been our view that the change from two lanes to three lanes around 10 years ago has made the ring road far more hazardous and unpleasant for cycling, and there has been a consequent drop in usage as a result.

Gonville Place forms part of our proposed N2N route and our strategic vision here is of a proper, 2.1m segregated, Dutch-quality path joining Newmarket Road to Newnham. This would require that the Gonville Place stretch with three lanes approaching the junction would need to be reduced to two lanes.

We recognise there are difficulties in implementing such a change at this junction in isolation because the effect on congestion further up the ring road would be significant, and that cyclists at those other, upstream, junctions would thus be disadvantaged by increased congestion there. Nonetheless, a reduction to two lanes is needed. As a first stage, County officers must model the effects of congestion by drawing up plans for the full route that we propose, but taking into account a shift from car to the bicycle that would result.

## **5. The Lensfield Road approach (eastbound)**

This section is extremely hostile to cyclists and pedestrians, and will remain so under the current plans. In fact, because the lanes are so narrow, this section where cycles and cars are squeezed together, is arguably one of the worst in the whole city. The presence of an advance stop box will do little to help because it will not be possible to reach it safely.

Because of the St Andrew's Street closure, the number of vehicles turning left into Regent Street is now much less than it used to be, which means that a left-turn movement here could be restricted to buses and cycles only, leaving the current central lane reserved for straight-ahead and right-turn movements only. The small number of cars needing to access this part of the city can use Trumpington Street or turn left at Parkside.

The approach here involves waiting space for only around 10 vehicles. However, combining the remaining lane into a dual straight-ahead and right-turn lane would, we acknowledge, create increased delays in the short term, because motor vehicles turning right would partially block those heading straight on to Gonville Place.

However, the main destination for those heading right would be either the station or Hills Road heading out of town. Thus within a short period of time, those driving vehicles from Newnham or Trumpington Road would soon learn to head along Trumpington Road and then turn left into Brooklands Avenue. Both of these roads are more able to cope with the level of traffic than the inner ring road. Others would, with the safer bus/cycle-only approach, and the addition of our proposed N2N route in the medium term, switch to cycling.

In summary, we are adamant that, for the Lensfield Road approach: (i) the left lane should become cycles and buses turning left; (ii) a left-turn ban for other vehicles should be introduced, and (iii) the right lane should be for all other traffic going on or right.

Please could you send us copies of any modelling that has been done on the effect of reducing lanes on the ring road, specifying to what extent any enhanced cycling conditions have been included in such modelling.

We reiterate that this junction is not, and will not be, worthy of a cycling city, unless the additional improvements described are made. Please give far higher priority to the safety of people cycling here by prioritising cycling, thereby also reducing congestion in the medium/long term.

Yours sincerely,

**Cambridge Cycling Campaign**