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Transport Delivery
Cambridgeshire County Council
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Cambridge Cycling Campaign

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Dear Transport Delivery,

Gilbert Road / Milton Road junction consultation

Cambridge Cycling Campaign represents 1,100 members on cycling issues in the Cambridge area. We publish a colour newsletter six times a year, hold well attended monthly open meetings and elect our committee annually.

Although the scope for improvements is limited by the £20K budget, we broadly welcome the changes proposed for this junction.

We should like to know more about why this scheme has come up for consideration now, and how the budget was set.

Comments on the Proposals

1. We strongly support the removal of the dedicated left and right turn lanes into Gilbert Road from Milton Road. Both lanes present problems for cyclists approaching the junction as there is currently no provision to help them get into a safe position for going straight on (northbound) or for turning right (southbound). Introduction of Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs) with approach lanes as proposed is an effective measure in solving these problems.

2. We see no good reason why the approach lanes to the junction cannot be 2 metres wide – which is the nationally recommended width. The lane will be used by riders accessing the Advanced Stop Line (ASL) both to turn right and to go straight on. Wider lanes help riders to get into position more effectively so that they are ready to make the turn when the lights change.

3. We surveyed walking and cycling traffic passing a line across Milton Road immediately to the north of its junction with Gilbert Road between 7:30am and 9am on Thursday 13th February. This was rush hour during term time. We counted 183 cyclists passing southbound on the carriageway and 71 cyclists riding southbound on the eastern footway, where cycling is prohibited. The proposals must tackle this problem. We'd suggest that consideration is given to continuing the on-road cycle lane southbound through the junction as has been done for example where the northbound cycle lane on Hills Road meets Station Road.

4. We welcome removal of the railings from the edge of the footway. Railings block potential escape routes for cyclists when they are cut up by motor traffic which is overtaking too close or by negligently turning across cyclists on their near side. We'd like all the railings in this area to be removed, and this includes the long section of railing directly opposite the end of Gilbert Road. This is where a dangerous pinch point is likely to occur when traffic squeezes between the railing and motor vehicles waiting to make the right turn. This also happens at the Milton Road / Arbury Road junction – but at that location the mouth of Union Lane provides some escape.

If the railings are removed it may be necessary to use strategically placed bollards to prevent southbound vehicles using the footway to by-pass right-turning vehicles.

5. The proposals are unclear about how vehicles going south and then turning right into Gilbert Road will affect southbound traffic on Milton Road. We expect that southbound vehicles will try and use the gap between the railing and vehicles waiting to turn right. In effect there will be two lanes of motor traffic just as now.

6. The plan does not show double yellow lines on the east side of Milton Road north of the junction. We should like these to be retained.

7. We would like all cycle lanes in the vicinity of this junction to be fully excavated and relaid using the same method and identical material to the Gilbert Road cycle lanes.

8. Proportional enforcement of existing regulations in this area would help all at this location.

Wider aims for improving this junction

We understand that within this limited budget alterations to the traffic signals cannot be considered. But if it is correct that a new planning application is being submitted for a building at this junction, we would like to know whether any additional land could be obtained to improve the junction and/or any of the Section 106 money could be added to the sum currently available for work on the junction.

The current hostile junction arrangement is forcing many riders to make illegal use of the footway. If that problem is to be solved then it must be both safe and convenient for cyclists to remain on the road through this junction. We think the best way to do this is to provide a segregated cycleway that continues through the junction for southbound cyclists. We note that buses currently require the full width of the carriageway to complete the turn, in the vicinity of the yellow boxed area, so until the whole junction is properly widened and remodelled it would be necessary to introduce a short length of non-mandatory cycle lane at this point.

We are interested that the changes will have little or no effect on the capacity of the junction. We should like to hear about any modelling that has been done that demonstrates this point. This is particularly important because across other parts of Cambridge the argument is being made for multi-lane junctions on capacity grounds. These proposals suggest to us that when the effect on walking and cycling is taken into account those grounds lose their validity.

Yours sincerely,
on behalf of Cambridge Cycling Campaign,

Simon Nuttall
Committee Member