

July 29, 2014

Our ref: J14001



Transport Delivery Team
Cambridgeshire County Council

CC1211
Castle Court, Shire Hall
Castle Hill
Cambridge CB3 0BR

transport.delivery@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Cambridge Cycling Campaign

Llandaff Chambers, 2 Regent Street
Cambridge CB2 1AX

01223 690718

contact@camcycle.org.uk

www.camcycle.org.uk

registered charity no. 1138098

Dear Transport Delivery,

Foot and cycle bridge between Abbey and Chesterton¹

Cambridge Cycling Campaign totally supports the principle of a foot and cycle bridge at this location. We consider that building a bridge here is the best way of reducing motor vehicle congestion in this area. Currently foot and cycle routes between these two areas are indirect, and Green Dragon Bridge is narrow, congested and a significant distance from the desire line of much bicycle and foot traffic. Improved foot and cycle routes should make many trips quicker than they currently are by car. The bridge must be wide enough to cater for future growth.

Location

We support Location 1 (close to existing railway bridge) but much closer

Any bridge here should be as close as possible to the existing railway bridge. Such a location will not only offer the shortest distance for many trips, and give a good alternative to the Green Dragon Bridge, but it will also be the least intrusive from a visual effect on Ditton Meadows. A skewed span parallel with the existing rail bridge, although slightly longer, would further reduce the visual intrusion on this sensitive area of Ditton Meadows.

A location further downstream is further off the desire line for many cycle and walking trips, especially if the 'Chisholm Trail' approaches this location on a new path next to the existing railway embankment. The intrusion of long approach ramps on both sides of the river will obstruct the vista of Ditton Meadows from many angles.

Bridge Design

¹ <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/newbridge>

We support Option 1 (through truss)

We do not think this is the location for an iconic (and expensive) design. It needs to be a robust structure in keeping with the existing rail bridge.

We have concerns over both a box girder, and a half through girder. Both these designs could have significant structure beneath the deck. This means that the height of the path above river levels will be greater. With a through girder we consider that the path level could be as little as 200mm above the headroom required for river traffic. The equivalent for a box girder is likely to be in excess of one metre. The crucial thing here is that for every 100mm of extra deck height, each approach ramp will need to be 2 metres longer. The extra 20 metres length of ramp required for a box girder will both make designing the ramps more difficult and create a greater visual intrusion. We fail to understand the concerns over any flicker effect. Such interference patterns are common, even with two sides of a truss structure.

Bridge width

We were concerned that, given the expected levels of foot and cycle traffic, the suggested width will be inadequate. We think anything less than 1.8m for foot traffic and 3.5m for cycles, will prove to be inadequate in the longer term. There needs to be space for those with pushchairs etc. to pass say a mobility scooter on the foot section. On the cycle section, a parent needs to be able to cycle, for protection, alongside a young inexperienced child on a cycle, while allowing another cycle to pass in the opposite direction. Given the need for a 1m clearance from the edge of the cycle path to the structure (LTN-2/08, Table 2.1, Page 16), anything less than a six metre width will prove to be inadequate in the future. We note that the Skanska report (Nov 2013) states:

“It would be considered unwise to opt for less than the minimum width on a bridge that could link into a major cycling route in the future.”

We think this is an understatement. The upper expectation of use is 5,000 trips per day, and this is without some recently proposed developments such as CB4. Note that use of the Riverside Bridge is double the original estimates.

Linking Issues

We fully understand the difficulties associated with the Fen Road level crossing, and the reason any route will need to link with the towpath. Although technically outside this consultation, we do not see how the design and location of the bridge can be adequately assessed without considering approaching routes and the ramps.

If the bridge is to be a viable link in the cycling and walking network from Abbey to Chesterton it is essential that careful thought is given to ensuring convenient access to routes at each end.

Although we realise that the ramps will be the subject of later discussions, we wish to register concern at this early stage by the suggestion of indirect ramps. The layout as depicted goes against the Chisholm Trail's natural desire line of a legible and direct linear park which runs alongside the railway. Page 23, section 7.2 of the Skanska report notes that one option would be to have the bridge “Built skew to the river at a limited distance away from the existing railway bridge” but this option is then not considered further. We accept that joining it directly to the railway bridge may be impracticable, but the option of having it perhaps 6 metres away should be considered very strongly.

Should ramps have to be used, these are likely to be some 50 metres long, and a gradual spiral could moderate cycle speeds, with that on the north side using the Network Rail land, and that on the south linking with the indicative new route alongside the railway embankment.

We would expect that steps will be provided at either end to enable those on foot easy access the paths on either side. Such steps will need to be on the same side, such that those on foot do not conflict with those on cycles.

When the location of the bridge has been chosen and the shape chosen, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the details of the position of ramps and steps.

Construction access and improved cycle/foot access

We note that the Skanska report looked at construction access. If a route via the Beadle Industrial Estate could be negotiated and linked to suggested access 'D' alongside the railway embankment, this would create least disturbance on Ditton Meadows, and after construction has been completed, could be used as a permanent cycle and foot access, reducing the need for changes on the existing paths, and enabling a more direct approach from Ditton Meadows for the many users.

In conclusion

Cambridge Cycling Campaign strongly supports the provision of a foot and cycle bridge to link Abbey and Chesterton. We consider that future levels will exceed the estimates, as happened with numbers of cycle schemes in and around Cambridge, and hence it is important that this major structure is designed to cope with more than 5,000 trips per day.

We understand the concerns of some groups about developments in green spaces, but only by improving accessibility for cycling, and hence providing a good alternative to the private car, can we prevent the city being even more congested and polluted by motor vehicles.

This bridge and associated links would provide an excellent alternative to many trips by motor vehicles, both current, and from or to new developments.

Yours sincerely,

Cambridge Cycling Campaign