

Cambridge Cycling Campaign briefing paper: Green Dragon Bridge, Chesterton

River crossings are clearly important links and we are aware that at busy times there is congestion at the Green Dragon Bridge. Nevertheless, it is a very important link and we believe that there is scope to make it safer for all users and at the same time more convenient for cyclists. Our objective is a bridge with good visibility at both ends so that people can cycle over responsibly without conflict with other users.

Existing problems

a) Width

Although the Green Dragon Bridge is perceived as narrow, it is 2.4m wide, which is wider than many of the shared use paths in Cambridge and comparable with the Fort St George bridge at 2.45m.

b) Signage

Perhaps because of perceived safety problems there are 'no cycling' and 'cyclists dismount' signs at both ends of the bridge. However, these are rectangular blue signs, which are advisory. There are mandatory 'no motor cycles' signs; the mandatory 'no cycling' sign is similar: circular with a red border and a picture of a bicycle. It is our suspicion that these signs help generate the antagonism faced by those cycling over the bridge.



c) Congestion

The Green Dragon Bridge is the most easterly place in Cambridge where you can cross the river (on bike or foot). The next is at Baits Bite Lock, more than 2 miles away, which can only be reached by unsurfaced public footpaths, not being on the road network. There has been a huge amount of residential and business development in the area since the bridge was constructed, increasing the amount of traffic using it. It is much used by pedestrians, often with pushchairs or dogs, runners and rowing coaches, as well as by cyclists. The bridge linking Riverside to St Andrew's Road is of little benefit to those going to and from East Chesterton or the Haling Way along the river, as it is less direct than using the Green Dragon Bridge. Using the Green Dragon Bridge means one can avoid the busy Chesterton High Street. However, when built, the new bridge proposed as part of the Chisholm Trail,

linking the south of the river with the area near the planned Science Park Station, should relieve some of the traffic at the Green Dragon Bridge.

d) Visibility

Poor visibility exacerbates the sense of congestion and perception of danger. On the northern side cyclists approaching the bridge have to make a 90° turn to get onto the bridge while if approaching from the south west there is a sharp turn, partially obscured by trees and complicated by a gate and a cattle grid with barriers on either side. The photo below, taken in February 2003, shows that the visibility was better as the vegetation on the left was not as tall as in September 2009.



Leaving the bridge at the northern end entails a sharp turn onto Water Street where visibility, especially to the right, can be very poor because of parked cars. In addition care is needed in wet or icy weather to avoid skidding or slipping, while at weekends and in good weather the area can be busy with pedestrians, as the garden of the Green Dragon public house is across the road, to the west of the Green Dragon bridge (on the left of the photo).



Cyclists heading east (out of town) often cannot see whether there are other cyclists or vehicles approaching because of parked cars. Although there are markings indicating that parking is not permitted at the end of the bridge, vehicles sometimes block the exits from the bridge.

Changes needed

Cambridge Cycling Campaign believes that it is possible for cyclists and pedestrians to share the bridge. If cyclists were required to wheel their bikes they would in fact take up *more* space than when riding them and they may cause additional congestion when they stop to get on or off their bicycles. We are also opposed to additional gates, the introduction of chicanes, or anything that constricts the bridge, as these would also impede the free movement of pedestrians, people with pushchairs or in wheelchairs, as well as those on cycles.

- 1) Parking restrictions on Water Street

These are needed so that cyclists can see clearly to turn safely onto Water Street. At the very least the white H marking, indicating parking is not permitted at the end of the bridge, needs repainting and enforcing. We consider that double yellow lines are also needed, especially immediately to the east of the bridge, outside 12 Water Street, as vehicles parked here obstruct visibility. This would also allow pedestrians who wish to cross Water Street, for example to patronise the Green Dragon pub, to do so more safely.

Realignment of the pavement might also increase intervisibility of pedestrians and cyclists.

2) Removal of 'Cyclists Dismount' signs

These are unhelpful as they are purely advisory but make some people think cycling is not permitted and thereby cause resentment. Nor is there any necessity for responsible and careful cyclists to dismount as they will be aware of the need to moderate their speed and give way to pedestrians. The inconsiderate cyclists who cause problems by cycling too fast, or without care and attention, would not be deterred by any signs. We would prefer signs saying "Cyclists give way to pedestrians", as used on the Cutter Ferry Bridge (see photo right).



The 'no motorcycles' signs need to be retained.

3) Management of vegetation at the Stourbridge Common side to improve visibility both as one approaches the bridge from Riverside and as one comes off it. There is no shortage of bushes and vegetation for nesting birds and other wildlife on Stourbridge Common and severe pruning or even removal of some of the bushes immediately adjacent to the south-west end of the bridge would make a great difference to visibility, as can be seen from the photos above, taken in February 2003 and September 2009.

4) Realignment of the paths where they converge on Stourbridge Common near the end of the bridge might help reduce the risks of conflicts and collisions but would entail significant work and is probably unnecessary if visibility is improved.

We do not feel the need to change the existing lighting and have no view on the colour of the paintwork but would want it to be in keeping with the rural nature of the surroundings.

Cambridge Cycling Campaign encourages *all* road users to be considerate and to take into account road conditions and other road users, here and on all roads and paths.