

Meeting and Tour of Cambridge on 10th/11th September. 2008

To discuss and demonstrate projects for Cambridge Cycling Demonstration City.

Meeting at Shire Hall on Wednesday 10th September 2008.

This meeting was attended by about 25 Stakeholders who ranged from Cycling England's team thro' Cambs C.C, Cambs City and South Cambridge D. Council to user groups such as CTC and the Cycling Campaign as well as representatives of industry.

The keynote speech was given by Councillor Brian Smith who made the strong point that the position of cycling in the City's provision for transport had change from being a rank outsider 15 years ago to being centre stage. He made the point that even the limited facilities that have been provided over the last 15 years has resulted in a huge use of cycling for transport within the city. He also made the point that this usage was not limited to College Students but was virtually universal with users of all age groups.

Councillor Smith outlined his vision for Cambridge. He suggested that the funding available from Cycling England for the CDT project needed to be used in a way that would show its effect on the infrastructure. The leading point was Bikeability which aims to train people in the use of cycling. Though the County was applying this to its cycle training for children it also was promoting active training for Adults. He then went on to suggest that the best way to widen the scope of cycling was to reach out to the Necklace Villages by improving the available routes into the City. He then agreed that Monitoring Maintenance and Review were important tools in the development of the cycling infrastructure.

There then followed a presentation by Martin Lucas-Smith of the Cycling Campaign. He raise the Quality Issue, new European design and Marketing promotions. He also used it to promote various Cycling Campaign projects such as the Chisholm Trail. Clearly the cycling Campaign hopes to play centre stage in any projects that might be developed.

Cycling England Rob Marshall told us about the history of Cycling England and the funding being offered through it from government and how Government has gone from about £3M in 2005 to £45M for developing structure in the Cycling Demonstration Towns (& Cities). He told us that some £3.5M was to be allocated to Cambridge. He made it clear that we had to demonstrate one or more major initiatives in the use of this funding.

There was then a discussion session in which City Council put forward its support for a blanket 20mph zone for residential and non feeder routes within the city. We also heard from a member of Marshall board how they were in favour of improvements to cycle routes particularly the Tins path which he told us which he considered was a major opportunity as the land holdings Company that owns the necessary land was likely to agree to the sale of a strip of land on the lake side of the path.

Sebastian Kindersley from SCDC made the point that there was a real market for extending cycle use to the villages via improved routes and that SCDC was actively supporting any such projects.

David Bard made the point that poor maintenance was a major failing which made cycling unattractive to users. It was necessary to build a maintenance system into the provision of Cycle Tracks. I think he also made the point that substandard facilities had a very similar effect.

Mike Stapleton made the pointed out that publicity aimed at showing that cycling was generally safe was necessary to attracting new riders. He also pointed out that integration with other road users was an important part of the initiative.

The general feeling of the meeting was upbeat. It was clear that a great deal of work will have to be done in order to plan and execute viable ideas. It was recognized that existing infrastructure was a major problem.

Tour of potential Cycling Developments. Thursday 11th September.

This was preceded by a discussion at the Wesley Methodist Church which I was not invited to attend.

The tour started with a photo opportunity at the new Riverside Bridge. The CEN sent their Chief Reporter Chris Elliott and a photographer. A report appeared in the Friday issue of CEN which gave a good appraisal of the planned initiatives.

Northfield Ave. Cambs C.C. Propose to redesign the junction with Kings Hedges Road to remove the fast left hand slip road which is considered dangerous and to provide a Toucan crossing to Arbury Park and the Guided Busway Bridleway. It was accepted that facilities going west were unsatisfactory with pinch points and narrow lanes.

B1049 crossing bridge over the A14. This is a dangerous crossing due to the high speed circulation system. The ideal solution would be a bridge but the cost would rule it out. The problems are different at each slip road. There are some solutions such as light controlled cyclist crossings which would help but for competent cyclists the safest way is probably to use the road and rely on the signals for motor traffic.

Guided Busway. We went into Histon to view the Guided Bus way. Questions were asked as to whether it would provide a viable alternative to the B1049 route. It would provide a good route to the Science Park and Northfield Road but might be too long for cyclists heading for the Histon Road. We were told that it was not going to have street lights. We were told it would have a hard top as far as Longstanton.

The tour continues back on the B1049 through the various crossing east of Histon and on towards Cottenham We were told the the Council hoped to provide a new off road section of the cycle path from Cottenham but had a problem where the houses started about half a mile north of Histon. The existing cyclepath is of very poor quality with some sharp bends. It carries about 100 cyclists a day rising to 800 cyclists south of the Histon junctions. There are major schools at Cottenham and Impington which are served by this route.

There is not enough room to fit in a normal 2.5M wide shared use path in front of the houses. There is not enough room on the road for any form of cycle lane. There is no possibility of a segregated use path. Traffic calming is not an option nor is there an alternative route. The road is relatively narrow and heavily used especially at peak times. Cambs County Council have no complete solution to the problem. They invite suggestions.

Our next stop was the junction of Kings Hedges Road and Cambridge Road just south of the A14. This junction has been signalled for cyclists with a three stage crossing. It is a poor solution and most cyclists will favour the on road route. We were told that children regularly cross against the lights. Again no obvious solutions though making the on road route more clearly identified might help so motorists accept cyclists on the road. Would anyone who regularly uses this route comment and check road markings.

Gilbert Road. This has been a problem due to parking on the non mandatory cycle lanes on road. Various solutions were suggested with the possibility of a Dutch type of cycle lane separated from the road by lines of cobbles. This would not conflict with DfT guidelines. There is clearly a need for some visitor parking which would have to be provided inside the cycle lane with sufficient space for doors to open without hitting cyclists. There appears to be room to accommodate this solution but it would be at the expense of some grassed areas. The trees along this road would remain in place.

After lunch we proceeded via Mill Road where the Cycling Campaign demonstrated problems with signage leading at the entrance to Kingston St. They also raised the question of the lack of on road cycle parking in the terraced streets in Romsey. It was suggested that some car parking bays should be removed and Sheffield stands places in the spaces created.

The route of the proposed Chisholm Trail was discussed. The problem with the route for the Chisholm trail is that the land is all owned by National Rail who are unwilling to sell it to the Council. So far nothing has been built on it. It would save about 20 minutes for North/South commuters as well as being much safer than the existing on road routes.

The Tins path. It was agreed that this path was very narrow and bumpy. The approaches to the railway bridge are severely up hill and have very sharp bends. There is a possibility that the owner of land on the lake side of the path might be agreeable to a sale so the path can be widened and realigned so the bridge crossing can be improved. There is also a need to improve the path south of the new leisure site where it runs down the back of the houses.

The Cherry Hinton traffic calming was then considered. The Council agrees it was one of the first attempts at traffic calming back in about 1990 and has several unsatisfactory features. They agreed it should be reconsidered and will need upgrading. There are unsatisfactory cyclist chicanes and excessive use of railings so people can easily get trapped with no escape from the traffic at some points.

Cherry Hinton Road. There is some room for improvement to the Cycle Path at the Cherry Hinton end and North West of the Ring Road. There is the basic problem that any cycle path can only continue as far as the shops where the existing path becomes too narrow to accommodate cyclists.

Hills Road Bridge. There has been major works at this point connected with the Guided Bus works. Some lessons have been learned from the traffic restrictions that have been put in place for the works. It has been found that cyclists using the bridge have been passed by vehicles in spite of notices asking them to stay behind cyclists. There may well be a possibility of restricting vehicles to two lanes over the bridge and providing a cycle path beside the lanes that are separated from the traffic. The cycle usage at this point is very high at rush hour periods which would justify this approach.

Coe Fen. City told us the path along the South East of the Fen from Trumpington Road to the Cam Bridge was to be relayed and widened to 2.5M starting next week.

I would like the Cambs DA to be involved in any developments but feel we do not have the expertise or time to make a major contribution to the details of the future works. I suggest we all keep a watching brief and if anyone feels they can make a realistic contribution that they relay their ideas via the Right to Ride group to Cambs C.C. and other interested parties.

There are other major routes into the City that need upgrading. There is a major initiative to provide a new off road route from Hauxton Mill to Trumpington via the access bridge over the M11. There is the ongoing problem with the redesign of the Hauxton Rd/Addenbrooke's access road just south of the Park and Ride site. It is likely this junction will be finished before the off road route is

completed. There is the ongoing problems with the Barton Road route which needs maintenance at the very least and has some unsatisfactory points that could do with re alignment. It is at the very minimum, 2M, for a shared use path even in out of town.

Mike Stapleton 13th September 2008