

WEST/CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE – 20 October 2005 Questions and answers at the Open Forum on minor cycle schemes in the area and issues to do with cycling.

The Chair, Councillor Hipkin, introduced:
Dave Bradford, Cycling & Walking Promotion Officer
Clare Rankin, Cycling & Walking Development Officer
James Woodburn of the Cambridge Cycling Campaign.

Residents and councillors asked the following questions:

Resident 1: Will the path across Queen's Green be made into a proper cycle path (from near West Road across to Silver Street)?

Clare Rankin said that it would but that the funds were to come from the planning obligation undertaking made by Cambridge University in relation to the development of the West Cambridge site. *The timing of this relates to cycle and pedestrian trip rate targets which are monitored on an annual basis.*

Resident 2: Within the central pedestrianised area, it is unclear which streets are one-way for cyclists.

Clare Rankin There are clear no-entry signs at the entrance to Sidney St and Trinity Street. (see below re. signage discussion)

Resident 2: The cycle route along Malcolm Street, Hobson Street, St Andrew's Street is only marked in parts. Many drivers especially taxis and buses are unaware of it, creating a dangerous situation.

Dr Woodburn added that the problem was exacerbated by illegal vehicle use from Hobson Street to the end of King Street at the roundabout. Councillor Dixon affirmed that this was a considerable problem.

Clare Rankin said that she had had meetings with Stagecoach about similar problems in Magdalene Street and she would bring this issue up with them. The cycle ban in the city centre was lifted partly because this alternative route was poor in places with problems of road width and loading bays. The issue of highlighting the contra-flow cycle lane has been raised with the County Council.

Resident 3: (via email read out by the Chair): The signage intended to inform and regulate cyclists in the Park Street area is ineffective.

Resident 2: signage in King Street is also unclear about what is one-way.

Resident 3: Cycling in Bridge Street. Is this now officially two-way for cyclists, as is Trinity Street?

Councillor Dixon thought that signs which said “including” cyclists rather than “except” cyclists would be more user friendly. Resident 3 clearly thought it was now two-way for cyclists on Trinity Street and that was not the case.

The Chair clarified this point that it is certain that Trinity Street is only one way for all traffic including cycles.

County Councillor White thought that putting up signs alerting people to the changes as had been done in Trumpington Street would have been helpful.

Councillors Reid and Cantrill were reluctant to add to the plethora of signs but agreed the issue was important and should be taken up with the County Council.

Resident 3: The signs in Portugal Place are so high that it is easy for any cyclist to claim they have not seen them. Cycling in Portugal Place is prohibited and dangerous to pedestrians. The City Council has I think a duty of care to prevent this. Inappropriately placed signs would seem to breach that duty. Injury to a pedestrian could give rise to an action in tort against the council as well as against the cyclist, who is likely to be uninsured. I bring this to your attention so that we might take action to avoid such claims falling on the public purse.

James Woodburn explained that street signs had to be 2.4metres above the highway by law and he acknowledged that this did lead to a problem with visibility. He also referred to the sign of a motorcycle with a car beneath on a white background which was to indicate that cyclists were allowed to go up that street but motorised vehicles were not. Many motorists did not understand this sign but the Department of Transport will not allow a no entry sign that says except cycles on it although they permit except buses!

Councillor S Reid thought it was important to emphasise that signs were only one thing a cyclist considered when cycling; the whole streetscape gave information.

Councillors C and J Rosenstiel were aware of the problem in Portugal Place in their ward but expressed concern about the legal status of the signs there.

James Woodburn clarified that any rectangular signs were advisory rather than mandatory and had no legal status.

Resident 3: The signs on the boardwalk along the river between Jesus Green and Quayside are intended to say “Cyclist Dismount”. I take it this is meant to be imperative rather than informative – cyclists clearly do NOT dismount. The signs are in a sorry state and are ignored or not understood. Last week I was present when a cyclist had an accident entering the boardwalk by the Mimosa Restaurant as the boards were wet and slick with slime. He was unaware of the notice, which has lost several letters and gained a number of small fly posters. “DANGER: do not cycle on the boardwalk” might be more appropriate.

James Woodburn said that cyclists should cycle responsibly by, for example, giving way to pedestrians.

Resident 3: Enforcement of cycling regulation. Is there any? Can you supply statistics?

The Chair read out an email from Sergeant Cross of Cambridgeshire Police who had been unable to attend the meeting.

Apologies from Inspector Gregory and myself. I have received a lot of complaints about cycling on the pavement, cycling through traffic lights, contravening no entry signs and cycling in the hours of darkness without lights. In addition to this I have a similar number of complaints regarding motorists not stopping at traffic lights/pelican crossings, failing to observe no right turn restrictions and talking on mobile telephones whilst driving. Our operation to deal with all these issues commences next week with a media campaign aimed at encouraging responsible cycling and responsible driving. This will be followed by enforcement commencing Monday 31st October. Offenders will receive either a £40 fixed penalty notice or a summons.

The main enforcement effort will be targeted at the hotspot areas, many of which are in the city and west area (I welcome any suggestions on hotspots at simon.cross@cambs.pnn.police.uk) Primarily enforcement will be the role of neighbourhood team PCSOs supported by traffic motorcyclists. I will supply details on enforcement to the next area committee meeting. This operation will run across the city as the problem is widespread.

Councillor J Smith was concerned about the number of cyclists (9/10 in her estimate) who fail to stop at the pedestrian crossing lights on Silver Street. This highlighted the need for education.

Resident 4: Could there please be more signs on Midsummer Common as the behaviour of cyclists completely spoiled the pleasure (and safety) of pedestrians enjoying that open space. This was often caused by students coming to and from the boathouses on the river.

Clare Rankin said that when new routes are planned, the segregation of cyclists and pedestrians is recommended. However, there was still a need for considerate cycling and this was an on-going educational issue. All City Council cycle related publications included messages to cyclists encouraging considerate and legal cycling and that pedestrians should be given priority on shared paths. She had worked with the University Student Union to ensure that the Fresher's week guide also included this message and information about the one-way system around the city centre.

Resident 5: Concern about cyclist safety in Hills Road. From Station Road to the Catholic Church there is a cycle lane that then disappears within 100 yards of the church. Something similar happens on Histon Road.

James Woodburn said that the Cycling Campaign had been wanting changes on Hills Road for a long time. On the outgoing side there is room for narrowing the carriageway and moving the central reservation to make more room for cyclists. However, this would be costly.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.