

From: Councillor Ian Bates
Please reply to: Shire Hall, SH1102, Castle Hill, Cambridge,
CB3 0AP
Telephone: 01223 699173 (office)
Date: 17th December 2015



Dr Pearson
jaz22@cam.ac.uk

Dear Dr Pearson,

Safer Cycling and Walking to and from North West Cambridge Petition

Thank you for taking the time to present the above petition at the County Council's Economy & Environment Committee, held 3 December 2015.

Whilst I understand fully the points outlined by the petition and appreciate the concerns of the signatories, the planning and design for the new school was intended to address the schools catchment, which is entirely on the south-western side of Huntingdon Road, therefore not requiring children to cross the road to reach it. That said, as part of the planning stage a degree of out of catchment movement was anticipated, but, as this would be relatively small, the infrastructure approved was considered appropriate to allow safe access.

As Highway Authority, the County Council has a duty to ensure the safe and efficient movement of traffic (including pedestrians and cyclists). Unfortunately the County Council is not able to ensure that any parent choosing to send their child to a particular school can do so without encountering traffic. The amount of additional infrastructure required for such an undertaking would be significant, disproportionate to the situation and indeed undeliverable in the current financial climate.

The planning system requires that significant adverse impact be addressed by developers. In the long term, upon completion of the scheme, a route from Girton Corner along the Ridgeway, or a route along Huntingdon Road to a crossing point south of the new junction will be provided. This crossing leads to a traffic free route and, whilst this route is longer, is not seen as unreasonably so. Whilst I acknowledge that it is difficult to cross Huntingdon Road (having crossed Cambridge Road, prior to Girton Corner), this provision is deemed reasonable for the number of people crossing at this location. It was therefore considered that this arrangement is adequate, and improvement at the developer's expense would be unreasonable and unwarranted.

With regard to the Eddington Road junction; the width of the highway at this location is wider than the existing highway and therefore a realignment of the kerb is required.

Whilst a change in alignment of the kerb was always present in the original design, when the developer was on site, a conflict was discovered between the setting out of the junction and their land ownership.

This was resolved by marginally moving the point at which the new kerb joins the old, to retain the width of footway. The road marking (crosshatching) in the middle of the road was reduced to retain the cycle lane width and general vehicular lane width. Unfortunately this has reduced the amount of safe space for turning vehicles, albeit marginally. However it was not considered to be of such significance as to merit stopping the works for a more extensive redesign of the junction.

Whilst it would have been desirable to extend the junction widening further towards the Thornton Road junction, widening both the footway and cycle lane was not possible, due to neither the developer nor the County Council owning the relevant piece of land needed to carry out the widening. Again, in the planning process a judgement must be made as to whether the impact of the development required such a widening. The development was not anticipated to increase usage of that footway to such a degree (it being reasonable to expect that the number of crossing movements, such as they were, could be accommodated at the new Toucan crossing to the southeast) and it was considered unreasonable to require such improvement for the development to proceed.

As I am sure you will appreciate, work on the scheme is still taking place and the current layout is subject to regular, temporary changes whilst these works progress. At present the layout of this traffic management does not allow the provision of a marked cycleway, although I would like to reassure you that this will be provided in the future. The temporary traffic management itself influences driver behaviour and it would be premature to judge the final junction layout during this interim period. The final layout will be subject to an independent safety audit, once the works are completed and fully operational.

In previous correspondence regarding this development, the question was asked as to why a pedestrian crossing on Huntingdon Road was not incorporated within the approved layout. Wherever possible the Highway Authority would seek such provision where there is a need, and there is normally a need wherever the proposed junction lies within a built-up area.

However, when assessing this junction proposal it was found that to incorporate such a crossing would result in one of three impacts; firstly either the south-western kerb-line would be pushed further into the site, further accentuating the kink in the kerb.

Secondly either or both the right turn or left turn lanes would need to be omitted from the junction mainline. Removal of the right or left turn widening would increase delay significantly to vehicles at the junction. This junction will be under very significant pressure for capacity and lies on a primary radial road serving Cambridge.

Thirdly the cycle lanes would have to be removed to provide more space. Removal of the cycle lanes was not considered acceptable as they are extremely well used, and carry greater numbers of cycle movements than the anticipated demand for pedestrians crossing at this point (particularly given that there is to be a facility within a reasonable distance). In summary the accentuation of the kink, and enlargement of the islands would, in combination make the conflict with cyclists far worse.

Whilst capacity of a junction is not always an overriding influence on junction acceptability, in this case it is a significant one. Therefore given that there is a crossing facility to be provided within reasonable reach it was considered that a reasonable balance was struck in the final accepted design.

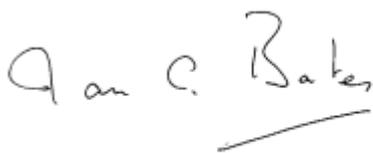
The Toucan is located between the two main parts of the junction system as this is where an orbital cycle way, strategically linking Cambridge North Station, the Science Park, Guided Busway, Darwin Green, North-West Cambridge and West Cambridge runs. This scheme is identified within the local plan and is intended to provide a major non-motorised link around that area of Cambridge. The movements on this route would, therefore, be anticipated to be much, much higher in number than those generated between the established residential areas of Girton and North-West Cambridge in this vicinity. This route would provide access to the school via a gate.

In summary the University has chosen to open the new school in advance of the trigger requiring them to do so under the terms of their planning permission. In doing so, the school is operating in advance of full infrastructure intended to serve it. Indeed whilst the main junction accessing the school continues to be subject to construction-related traffic management, unfortunately road users will experience some disruption and discomfort whilst travelling through this area.

I would like to reiterate that this situation is a temporary one whilst the additional infrastructure is built. However, regarding the final design, the Highway Authority considers that the planned provision is appropriate and reasonable for the volume of traffic and pedestrian likely to be generated between Girton and the new urban extension to Cambridge.

Whilst I understand that this response is not what you may have hoped for, I trust that it explains the situation thoroughly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian C. Bates". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Councillor Ian Bates
Chairman of Economy & Environment Committee

cc. Mr David Mackay FRS - djcm1@cam.ac.uk