

Consultation: Cycling plus, investing in Greater Cambridge Active travel network

16th July 2021



General concerns

Cambridge Green Party strongly supports proposals to increase active travel (i.e. “physically active modes such as cycling, walking, or horse riding, and walking or cycling as part of a longer journey”) to help reduce the carbon footprint of Cambridge and Cambridgeshire residents. The IPCC report of 9th August 2021 demonstrates the very urgent need to reduce carbon emissions caused by petrol or diesel-powered vehicles, and the current congestion in the city makes it clear that even electric-powered vehicles will need to be limited in number. Active travel offers many additional benefits, including improved health and well-being as a result of reduced pollution and noise, and through the creation of safer spaces for play, leisure and travel. Active travel is an important part of meeting “Vision Zero” for carbon emissions, and also reduces deaths of pedestrians and motorists.

We recognize that the survey is specifically to gather views on existing and proposed active travel routes, but we feel that it is nevertheless useful to offer some general comments.

A Dutch-style system for cycling with separate pathways for walking and cycling should be used, and in some areas additional streaming of separate cycle lanes for fast commuters, with slower lanes for leisure cyclists, people with children, disabled people with special needs and older people.

Our main concern is that the survey has a single question relating to disability and nothing about addressing women’s safety, which we feel this is completely inadequate.

Disabled people often have particular needs for routes that avoid traffic, and active travel infrastructure should be designed with the requirements of such users in the forefront, whether independent wheelchair users, disabled cyclists or users of mobility scooters. Disabled people have very varied transport needs and the GCP should be seeking their views, if not through this survey, then through other means such as advisory committees, in order to fulfil the Disability Act requirements. Consultation with this group should be based on the Equitable Leadership model, drawing on the direct daily experience of members of this community.

The issues of women’s safety was highlight by Sarah Everard’s sad death, and all involved in designing transport routes need to be aware of this and reduce all possible risks. The GCP should therefore be taking specific advice from women’s groups on how to improve active travel safety, as well as making sure that local police are involved. This will enable women to participate fully in all active transport options, and help to decrease their use of private transport.

The development of good cycling infrastructure requires both long term and short term thinking. It must include provision of safe parking for people shopping, commuting to work or taking periods away from home, and cargo bike and specialist disability transport. This means thinking about luggage storage and good links to public transport. For example, the lack of lifts at Cambridge Railway Station multi-story cycle park makes the upper floors inaccessible to many. It is usually impossible to find suitable parking on the ground floor which has very very limited space for cargo bikes and specialist cycles, particularly those designed for people with disabilities. Furthermore, many people are not strong enough to raise their bikes onto the higher level of the 2-rack system (often the only spaces available) and may be unable to push their bikes up the ramps to the 2nd and 3rd floors. Locations for safe and legal parking of cycles in surrounding streets are extremely limited.

Cambridge Green Party suggestions for use of the £2 million funding

Since this is a response on behalf of all members, we have not prioritised any one of the 13 possible new corridors. However, we consider high priorities for use of the funding to include:

- Routes to be designed and built to the highest standards, with separate cycle and pedestrian pathways, and routed to be “Off Road”
- Priority given to routes that will ensure children can travel to school off-road and using active transport
- Growth of trees adjacent to corridors to be taken considered more carefully – many recently constructed cycle paths are now in a bad state of repair as a result of root growth (e.g. busway cycle path to Trumpington; the beginning of the Tins etc)
- Regular maintenance of all existing routes and the new ones to be assured (many existing routes are not adequately maintained)
- Dropped kerbs to be put in place wherever needed; in many parts of the City these are absent but are vital for independent wheelchair users, people carrying luggage and parents with buggies;
- Good connections between cycling/pedestrian routes and public transport access points to be ensured;
- Where active transport routes have to cross roads, crossings must be carefully designed, especially where cycle routes intersect with each other and/or cross roads.
- Major improvements need to be made to awareness-raising materials and signage for “off road” safe routes, and these should be kept up to date. The information should be presented in different formats, including signage, Apps, paper form and updated Google Maps, and should be widely distributed to schools, parents and active users of the system and in public places. Many people are unaware of existing active travel routes. The current cycle maps are out of date and do not show the active travel routes that have been added in the last few years.

We understand that the £2 million currently available will only cover the cost of 2 Greenways. We propose that the funding is used in the following way:

- Design and implement one of the routes (the one that will bring greatest benefit to local people) to the highest quality, ensuring that Dutch standards are used.
- Support two or three smaller projects that will fill gaps in current city cycle and walking provision, such as improving pathway surfaces and facilities for pedestrians and disabled users, and providing better parking, luggage storage and signage, focusing on disabled groups, women’s safety and local communities.