

Greater Cambridge City Deal

Initial consultation on better bus, cycling and walking trips

Milton Road

Response by Kings Hedges, East and West Chesterton Labour Parties

The Greater Cambridge City Deal has proposed changes to Milton Road as part of their ambitious plans to address the existing and future demand for travel into and around Cambridge. The City Deal offers a real opportunity for substantive investment into transport infrastructure to address the serious congestion problems in Cambridge which arise from the planned growth and expansion of the City. As one of the main entrances to Cambridge and a gateway for commuters from developments such as Cambourne, Waterbeach, Orchard Park and the North East Fringe as well as a primary access route for the new Chesterton rail station, it is clear that demand on Milton Road will significantly increase over the next few years and will result in significant congestion unless action is taken.

We are strongly supportive of the overall approach of the City Deal to tackling congestion as part of a package of linked schemes in and around the City and Greater Cambridge area, and the Milton Road proposals need to be seen in the context of the wider strategic plan to address congestion across the next few years. We agree with the City Deal that:

“The transport programme will focus on improving key routes to and from the city as well as develop links within the city itself. Transport networks between major employment sites, business parks and research institutes will be made more efficient and convenient.

To achieve this, the transport programme includes new orbital bus routes around Cambridge and new high quality public transport links into Cambridge along key routes, connecting with major employment centres. There will be a comprehensive network of pedestrian and cycle routes within Cambridge with links to major employment sites.”

Our response is therefore on the assumption that there will be a joined up approach across Greater Cambridge in regard to all transport modes and required infrastructure. We believe that there is no single solution for resolving the challenges that we face. A range of measures are needed and this is reflected in the various schemes already under consideration by the City Deal Assembly and Board, such as: the A428 / A1303 Better Bus Journeys Scheme; A1307 Haverhill to Cambridge transport improvement concepts; the Western Orbital – alongside the M11 with the potential to link Northwest Cambridge and the Busway to Southwest Cambridge / Addenbrooke’s and the Biomedical Campus / Busway; the Chisholm Trail cycling route and five Cross City Cycling routes; ‘Smart Technology City Management’ and the City Centre Access Study, including measures to reduce city centre traffic and restrict use of the inner ring road at peak times. We anticipate that further City Deal proposals will be brought forward, including more Park and Ride sites serving radial

routes as well as improving existing sites and making Park and Ride a more attractive solution for visitors and commuters.

We firmly believe that proposals need to offer tangible benefits both for residents in the City and for commuters, and there needs to be a transparent and public dialogue with bus operators who stand to gain significant increase in bus usage through investment of public funding in improved infrastructure. In particular we would wish to see bus companies investing in smart contactless ticketing, which would lead to more efficient bus services, and to commit to improving services for residents; for example, increasing the number of services which stop along Milton Road.

This joint submission from the Labour Parties of East Chesterton, West Chesterton and King's Hedges, including all the elected Labour City and County councillors for those wards, covers the current initial consultation on the Milton Road proposal which impacts on all three wards. We have listened to the views of residents on and adjacent to the area covered by the Milton Road proposals and we have attended residents' association meetings and public exhibitions with City Deal Project Officers. Elected Labour councillors have also been part of the North Area Committee Special Meeting concerning both Milton Road and Histon Road City Deal proposals currently out to consultation.

Milton Road

Milton Road is a key part of the highway network in the north of the City and a primary gateway into Cambridge, but it is also a lengthy residential street serving the local residential area both in terms of shops, cafes, pubs, churches and the necessary connectivity for local journeys across and between several wards including access to primary and secondary schools. It has a streetscape which reflects its residential nature. In some parts though the streetscape is of poor quality, reflecting a lack of investment in highway and pavement maintenance, poor drainage and some damage to verges from inappropriate verge parking.

We believe that any proposals for Milton Road must recognise its residential character and local connectivity, and balance the need to tackle current and future congestion with the needs of the local area alongside air quality and environmental enhancements. We are strongly supportive of measures which reduce the need for people to travel through to the centre of Cambridge:

- Chisholm Trail for cyclists travelling from the north of the area to Addenbrooke's and the Biomedical Campus
- Bus link through the NIAB site and University of Cambridge North West site to West Cambridge and the Western Orbital Bus Route which would also give access to Addenbrooke's and the Biomedical Campus
- Cambridge North and Addenbrooke's railway stations.

We therefore ask that any solutions using Milton Road take into account these and other measures which would reduce the requirement for changes to the road. We are critical of the format of the consultation which in effect encourages people to choose between 2 options which are very similar in approach and, for instance, have

exactly the same proposals for banning turns. We also believe the closed format of the questions could mislead decision makers on the views of respondents.

Our Response

Our overall views are:

- We need to enable more local residents and people from South Cambridgeshire to use buses and cycles rather than cars, with more peak-time Park and Ride and buses for commuters and residents and smart contactless ticketing for more efficient bus services. Some bus stops should be relocated to avoid buses causing delays to other traffic.
- We need segregated cycle lanes and pavements on Milton Road to encourage cycling, prevent clashes with cars and pedestrians and cut air pollution on the road
- 2 bus lanes are not needed on Milton Road. Single Bus Lanes should be provided where they improve the flow of buses, typically leading up to junctions. The potential for a morning and evening peaktime tidal flow central bus lane should be investigated.
- High quality trees, verges and pavements are an essential part of retaining and improving the residential nature of Milton Road for local people
- The City Deal needs to consult with residents on parking options at the next stage
- Any scheme must not encourage rat running in our residential areas and must retain resident access and connectivity across the local areas at key junctions along the road

At a more detailed level:

Cycle Lanes

Any proposals need to take into account local needs. For example, children in the city wards served by Milton Road may attend any one of at least eight primaries and 3 secondaries. With the pressure on school places not all can attend their local primary school and we need to facilitate safe cycling routes to encourage sustainable modes of travelling to schools. There should be no expectation that children should have to cross Milton Road twice when travelling to school in the morning. Any provision which does not take this into account will mean that cycle lanes will not be used fully for these journeys.

Junctions

We understand that the rationale for banning turns is to lessen delays to the through traffic, but believe the impact on local streets and for connectivity between local areas is totally unacceptable, particularly when both options consulted on propose the same series of junction changes. Rat-running is already widespread in some streets along Milton Road, and this would both increase use of existing 'ratruns' and introduce new ones. There is a potential to create the need for traffic restrictions on streets which may suffer from traffic displacement and many local journeys would be lengthened, increasing air pollution from local traffic:

- Banning a left turn into Kings Hedges Road would encourage use of Ramsden Square and possibly Lovell Road for access to Kings Hedges Road. Both already suffer a degree of rat running. The left turn from Milton Road into Kings Hedges Rd should be retained and does not unduly delay traffic along Milton Road.
- Closing off Union Lane to all traffic (except cyclists) will seriously compromise local connectivity between East Chesterton and Arbury/Kings Hedges and some parts of West Chesterton. Arbury Road contains a doctor's surgery, vet, schools, shops, the City Homes North office and a community centre which are all well used by residents across the ward boundaries. East Chesterton's main ingress and egress routes would be reduced to Green End Road and High Street alone which will put significantly increased pressure on those roads, particularly at peak traffic times. Kendal Way may become a ratrun onto Milton Road and Hurst Park Avenue/Leys Road suffer far greater use to access Arbury Road. Modelling should be done on a representative sample of local journeys, for example, getting from Scotland Road to Arbury Court. It may be possible to consider limiting options at Union Lane, for example, banning the right hand turn out of it onto Milton Road, but we consider detailed modelling to be required for this and firmly believe that closing it off altogether should not be an option.
- No right turn into Arbury Road would encourage other right turns including into King's Hedges Road and through Campkin Road, or into Hurst Park Avenue.
- We are not convinced that a case has been made to close off Highworth Avenue. Further weight and detailed consideration needs to be given to the views of residents of this area and any impact on nearby streets, including the combination of the closure of Highworth Avenue and other junction changes, as well as on the removal of the roundabout which is valued by many residents as a key environmental and landscape feature along the road.
- No right turn into Gilbert Road would encourage people to travel down alternate routes, rather than Elizabeth Way, such as Chesterton Road or from East Road and Newmarket Road through Maids Causeway, Victoria Avenue and then up from Mitcham's Corner. We also share the concern of many residents of increased use of and congestion on Ascham Road and Gurney Way which is often currently gridlocked as it is the main road entrance to Milton Road School.
- Mitchams Corner. We share the aspirations of the Labour run City Council and of residents that the longstanding problems of Mitchams Corner should be addressed, not just by highway engineering solutions, but by high quality urban design that create an attractive environment which will meet the needs of local residents, cyclists, pedestrians and businesses in what is another key entrance into the city. We consider that placemaking should be given equal weighting to the need to get traffic through what is currently a difficult and hostile environment.

Bus Lanes

Milton Road is not typical as peak traffic flow can be in both directions because of the employment sites at the north of the road. The effect of the new railway station is difficult to predict and any measures elsewhere in the city may increase the level of traffic heading north during the peak hours.

It is our belief that 2 bus lanes are not required for the length of the road and other options should be progressed:

- A bus lane on the side of the road approaching junctions with preferential traffic signals for buses
- A tidal flow bus lane in the main direction of traffic in peak hours

It is also vital that bus companies are part of the solution. They are being provided significantly improved facilities through investment of public money. They need to sign up to better provision of bus services for local people and invest in contactless ticketing so that buses stop for the minimum time at bus stops.

Consideration should also be given to the location of all current bus stops and changing them as part of the scheme if that would improve traffic flow. The bus stop after the Union Lane junction can cause real delays in traffic getting through the junction even when the lights are on green. We also suggest that the bus stop at the Science Park junction could be relocated to the slip road on Cowley Road.

Parking

Locally commuters and shoppers park in our area for extended periods and in some areas this has the potential to increase when the new Cambridge North rail station is open. This can create unsafe conditions, particularly at junctions. We therefore believe that, where residents agree and when considered as part of an overall package including measures to reduce rat running, parking restrictions may be needed to deter commuter parking in our area.

We also need to make sure that the parking needs of residents are taken into account. Many residents on Milton Road do benefit from road parking but residents at the southern end of Milton Road and in the side streets rely on 'on street' parking as they have no alternatives. Their needs must be met.

Environment and landscaping

Residents have long valued the green and residential nature of Milton Road and as residents ourselves so do we. We also recognise that a lack of investment in high quality maintenance over the years has resulted in the highway and pavements being significantly degraded. As one example, the pavement between Cook Close and Green End Road is in an appalling state – rough, uneven and in wet weather puddles cross the entire pavement, making it a slip and trip hazard for residents. Drainage in many places along the footpaths needs to be cleared, cleaned and sorted out. Many verges have suffered from inappropriate verge parking and in some places have deep muddy ruts. Milton Road often has pot holes along the length of the road after the winter months. Not all trees have been replaced where they may have failed to thrive or if normal tree maintenance has required removal.

We consider that any scheme taken forward should include dealing with drainage problems, reinstating footpaths and green landscaping as well as consideration of future maintenance and management needs so that this important gateway to Cambridge is, and continues to be, one of the highest quality. People coming into Cambridge should see an avenue of trees and a green streetscape that reflects the local residential nature of the road. To maintain the quality of reinstated verges, verge parking should be banned through use of a TRO similar to that planned for Kings Hedges Road. Any trees that need to be removed must be replaced with high quality mature trees.

Summary

The decision has been made that the green belt around Cambridge will not be used to house the increasing population of the area. Satellite towns will be built, often on brown field sites while most of the new employment will be closer to Cambridge. In preserving the green belt, we have to ensure that people can move between the new homes and the centres of employment and leisure. We also must acknowledge many local people who work in Cambridge can no longer afford to live in Cambridge. These are often the sons and daughters of residents. We therefore have to provide alternative modes of transport other than cars and adopt measures which discourage people from using cars.

We acknowledge that Milton Road needs to be part of the solution to cope with the increased pressure from the 18,000 homes that are being built north of the City. Measures will be needed to reduce the proportion of people driving down Milton Road, but they will need attractive alternatives – a carrot and stick approach.

Milton Road can be part of the carrot – high quality streetscape, segregated cycleways and buses that serve local and wider needs and run on time. Milton Road must not become a car park with cars queuing for over 30 minutes to cover a mile. This will result in higher levels of pollution, noise and other problems for local people.

However, Milton Road is a residential street and residents have the right to retain their quality of life and not feel they live on an urban motorway. The measures that we support in any final scheme put forward will mean that the residential nature can be retained.

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Councillor Jocelyne Scutt - West Chesterton

Councillor Nigel Gawthrope – King's Hedges

Councillor Martin Smart – King's Hedges

Councillor Kevin Price – King's Hedges

Councillor Fiona Onansanya – King's Hedges

Councillor Margery Abbott – East Chesterton

Councillor Gerri Bird – East Chesterton

Councillor Peter Sarris – East Chesterton