

## **A new road classification for Cambridge: Consultation 2022**

### **Response from Cambridge Green Party**

Cambridge Green Party is strongly in favour of reducing traffic and congestion, encouraging active travel, reducing air and noise pollution, improving public transport, reducing transport's impacts on greenhouse gases thus slowing down the rate of climate change, and enabling access for all including those with mobility issues. We welcome the opportunity to comment on these important proposals from the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Please find below our responses to the survey questions.

#### **3. Modal filters. *Strongly agree.***

#### **4. Level of Access for each type road user and class of vehicle.**

- Walking ***Agree***
- Cycling ***Agree***
- Bus ***Agree***
- Cars and motorcycles ***Agree***
- Commercial vehicles and coaches ***Agree***
- Emergency service vehicles ***Agree***

#### **5. Reasons for responses in question 4**

We support the levels of access proposed because we believe they broadly align with the proposed hierarchy of road users (pedestrians > cyclists > public transport > specialist service vehicles > motor traffic). Further thoughts: we support the Living Streets call for a ban on pavement parking. This is necessary to ensure pavements can fulfil their function of being safe routes for pedestrians.

#### **6. Are the road categories correct?**

- Primary Distributor Roads ***Agree***
- Secondary Distributor Roads ***Strongly disagree***
- Area Access Streets ***Agree***
- Local Access Streets ***Strongly disagree***
- Civic Streets ***Disagree***
- Neighbourhood Streets ***Agree***

#### **7. Reasons for responses in question 6**

This classification is overcomplicated and we agree with Camcycle that the road categories should be simplified to primary distributor, access street and neighbourhood streets

(combining secondary distributor with primary distributor and combining local and area access streets). Civic streets should be removed and replaced with a detailed core zone plan for the city centre which considers the unique needs of each street in this historic area.

We are concerned that, despite the user hierarchy proposed in the consultation (pedestrians > cyclists > public transport > specialist service vehicles > motor traffic) the plans are still giving greatest weight to motorised vehicles. For example, the consultation document includes route maps for motor traffic but not for walking, cycling, buses or specialist service vehicles.

## **8. Changes or additions to the roads categories**

In addition to the comments above, we believe there are a number of roads in the city, such as Station Road, which should be distributor roads allowing access of vehicles to pick up and drop rail passengers.

We additionally propose a default 20mph speed limit and a weight limit of 7.5 CWT on all the City's roads, enforced through suitable measures such as cameras. This would improve safety, air quality and congestion, and address the problems of vibration and noise experienced by residents in areas where large vehicles regularly use residential roads. It may be possible to relax these rules on certain distributor roads, but 20mph and below 7.5 CWT should be the default rather than the exception.

Notes on specific areas:

- Newmarket Road is notorious for being extremely busy especially at match times.
- There are too many distributor roads in the Chesterton Road area which include busy active travel crossings (e.g. the bottom of Castle Hill, Carlyle Road zebra crossing), shopping and leisure areas (e.g. south end of Milton Road, Mitcham's Corner), historic streets (Chesterton Lane, Northampton Street, Mount Pleasant) and residential areas (e.g. Victoria Road). This is due to how this area has developed historically. There is always a bottleneck at the Castle Road/Chesterton Lane intersection. Furthermore, Elizabeth Way is very busy especially in rush hours as shown by air pollution levels.
- Barton Road residents already report problems with heavy traffic. This could be reduced by imposing a 20mph speed limit within the city boundaries. The Queen's Road/Fen Road is a sensitive area in terms of conservation and environment.

## **9. Extent of agreement with implementing at the same time as Making Connections proposals - *agree***

The current proposals and Making Connections proposals are both needed to address Cambridge's transport problems. During the webinar we were informed that this scheme will be gradually implemented after traffic modelling, and if distributor roads get too busy, alternative solutions will be sought. For the scheme to work the bus services must be

improved in number and quality so that more motorists opt to use buses instead. This will also require reduction in costs via subsidy from car parking or road use charges (see also our response to the Making Connections survey, December 2021).

However, we are very concerned at the apparent lack of top-down strategy for transport in the Cambridge area. From our point of view as consultees, we have seen a large number of consultations in recent months, with overlapping scope and unclear relationships between them. For example, the current consultation states that “The extent to which a new road classification can be implemented will be, in part, dependent on how [the measures outlined in the Making Connections proposals] are taken forward.” We note that the Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board will make a decision on those proposals “later this year”, and wonder why the current consultation is proceeding before this decision has been made. Similarly, in the current Combined Authority consultation on the draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan it is stated “All future transport projects for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough will be guided by the plan. They include projects by local councils and partners like the Greater Cambridge Partnership.” So it appears that the Combined Authority strategy will sit above the Greater Cambridge plans, yet all the consultations are taking place in parallel with the Combined Authority one concluding more than a fortnight *after* the road classification one. The confusing plethora of consultations and lack of a clear overarching strategy is very likely to reduce public engagement with these important documents. We call for a clear set of specific objectives for transport in our region (of which reducing car use should be a key aim), agreed by the Combined Authority, Greater Cambridge Partnership and individual local authorities, and for all subsequent documents published by these bodies to state how they will work alongside other plans to achieve these objectives.

#### **10. Bus routes serving the City – agree**

The current bus network needs a major overhaul. Problems that must be addressed include the difficulties of making any journey involving changing to a different bus or transport mode. At present, Cambridge bus interchanges are scattered around the city centre and are poorly signposted. Since the Grafton, Emmanuel Street and Town Hall information desks have all been closed there are now no staffed places in the city where one can obtain public transport information. The amount and locations of signage of public transport information in the city is extremely poor and always assumes that the users are literate in English. This does not consider our many tourists. There is information available online, but this excludes those without access to the web. Bus routes do not join up well with coach and rail transport.

We agree that the exclusion of large buses from the historic city centre would have numerous benefits, including making this area safer and more pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. The challenge will be to ensure that the new bus network improves accessibility for everyone. Smarter Cambridge Transport have previously proposed a ‘hub and spoke’ model for the bus network (<https://www.smartertransport.uk/could-lollipop-bus-routing-be-the->

[answer/](#)) which appears to us to be a practical and coherent approach, and we urge Greater Cambridge Transport to consider it. We realise that this may be outside the scope of a consultation on road reclassification: this is an example of where better join-up is needed across different proposals and consultations.

We strongly support the idea of a zero emissions shuttle bus service to connect travellers in the city. We suggest it should have both a driver and a fare collector/information person who can advise users on how best to travel. The route(s) should be clear and stops very clearly posted. Provision must be made for disabled travellers including wheelchair users, and for those with prams, pushchairs, shopping trollies etc.

**11. Pedestrian and cycling priority – *strongly agree***

**12. Alternative routes for cyclists – *agree*.**

We agree with the principle of providing alternative routes for cyclists to decrease conflict with pedestrians. Clear signposting will be needed to ensure all groups understand which routes they are able to use. It will be important to get the detail of these proposed alternative routes right and we urge the Greater Cambridge Partnership to work with expert groups such as Camcycle to develop these proposals.

**13. Alternative ways around for disabled people – *strongly agree***

We strongly support the concept of improving access to the city centre for those with mobility needs by increasing the shop mobility system and the zero-emissions shuttle bus. Disabled people should have priority on this bus service and it should be free for them to use. We urge the Greater Cambridge Partnership to consult with disability groups to ensure services are genuinely accessible to all users (for example, people using sports wheelchairs which may be wider than other types). We support this service being available for non-disabled users, as long as disabled users are given priority.

**14. Extent of agreements of new approach for Hackney carriages and private hire cars – *neither agree nor disagree*.**

This is a complex issue and we wish to highlight the following points:

- Hackney carriages are subject to regulations in terms of quality of service, accessibility and safety. These requirements do not apply to all private hire vehicles that have access to the city, including some licenced outside the city. We therefore believe there is therefore a case for exemptions to allow hackney carriages to use more of the road network.
- The total number of hackney carriages licenced to operate in Cambridge is under the control of Cambridge City Council. It is therefore important to ensure join-up between these two areas of policy, making sure that an appropriate number of

hackney carriages are licenced bearing in mind the capacity of the road network after classification changes have been implemented.

- For some residents, particular those on a lower income and/or with a disability, hackney carriages and private hire vehicles are an essential means of transport. It is essential that any changes to the approach for taxis does not disadvantage these groups.
- We suggest that all taxis which comply with Cambridge City Council environmental, safety and accessibility standards should be considered for exemptions to new road restrictions.

## **15. City Centre deliveries – *strongly agree***

### **16. Reasons for answer to Q15**

Reducing emissions and congestion would be good for air quality and traffic flow. It is important to note that swapping standard vehicles for an equal number of low emissions vehicles does not decrease congestion, therefore this is not sufficient in itself. We would additionally suggest a maximum size of 7.5 CWT for the low emission delivery vehicles.

In the webinars it was stated that this scheme would be subsidised. We support this: small traders play a vital part in city life and it is important that new schemes do not disadvantage them. There will undoubtedly be an extra financial cost and there would be a time delay whilst goods were being pooled and then delivered. It will be necessary to trial and adjust these schemes over time.

### **17. User exemptions**

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| • Blue badge holders based on level of disability | <b><i>Very Important</i></b> |
| • Care workers                                    | <b><i>Important</i></b>      |
| • Health workers                                  | <b><i>Important</i></b>      |
| • Public Service Vehicles eg refuse collection    | <b><i>Very Important</i></b> |
| • Delivery vehicles making multiple drops         | <b><i>Very Important</i></b> |

### **18. Reasons for responses to Q17**

Blue badge holders: We are strongly committed to the principle of ensuring accessibility to all disabled road users. This may not be fully achieved by exempting Blue Badge holders. If a person is newly disabled because of accident or illness, they will not yet have a Blue Badge but may have increased need to travel to medical appointments etc. It is not easy to get a Blue Badge, and there would likely be an additional financial and time cost, as well as potential distress, for people applying for the proposed 'more disabled' badge. It is also not clear how exemptions would work in practice: Blue Badges apply to an individual not a

vehicle so, for example, automatic vehicle detection would not be appropriate. These details need careful consideration and consultation with affected sections of the community.

Delivery vehicles making multiple drops: We believe this access should be for low emission vehicles or e cargo bikes only. We would suggest restricting access low emissions vehicles above 7.5 CWT to outside peak times.

## **20. Road safety - *improve***

### **21. Reasons for answer to Q20**

Reducing traffic congestion is key to improving road safety for all users. When new measures are implemented, there may be a transition period where things appear to be getting worse. Clear communication with the public will be critical so that everyone understands the importance of the changes and what they will achieve in the longer term.

If a default 20mph speed limit is applied to all (as we propose in Q7) this will further reduce accident numbers and the severity of the consequences of accidents.

### **22. Will these proposals positively or negatively any persons or group?**

We strongly believe that reducing traffic congestion will bring significant net benefits for everyone. Getting the details right will be essential to avoid disadvantaging any particular groups, as discussed in our responses to several questions.