



Historic England

Greater Cambridge Partnership  
By Email

Our ref: PL00775922  
Your ref: New Road  
Classification  
Telephone 01223 582746

18 July 2022

Dear Greater Cambridge Partnership,

**re: New Road Classification for Cambridge**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the New Road Classification Brochure and supporting information, which sets out proposals for reorganising the road hierarchy in the City of Cambridge and its immediate environs. As the government's advisory body on the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, we're keen to see that considerations for its protection and enhancement are incorporated at all stages of the transport planning process. We are therefore pleased to have this opportunity to comment on these proposals at this early stage.

Cambridge city centre comprises an historic townscape of the highest significance, combining the grandeur and magnificence of the University's college and ecclesiastical architecture with the beauty of the designed landscape of the Backs, set alongside the city's medieval layout and high quality traditional townscape with narrow streets and fine commercial and civic buildings. Its significance is reflected in the unusually high density of listed buildings – many of them listed at the exceptionally high level of grade II\* and I – and its designation as a number of conservation areas. Any proposals relating to transport infrastructure within this context will therefore be required to take this exceptional sensitivity into account, and where they may have an impact on the historic environment, we would expect them to be informed by an heritage impact assessment, and any harm avoided or mitigated through good design.

The consultation documentation sets out that a new road classification scheme for Cambridge would seek to re-organise the way in which motor traffic and other road users move around the city, and is being undertaken with the broad aims of improved local quality of life, reduce the impact of Cambridge's transport network on climate change, improve the quality of place, and improve health and wellbeing via more active travel and reduced air pollution



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Historic England have no objections to the principles underlying the proposed changes to the road hierarchy, and support measures that would make the city centre a safer, more welcoming environment for people on foot or using active modes of travel. We consider it likely that this would result in reduced air pollution in sensitive historic areas. Particulate air pollution is an established<sup>1</sup> cause of the degradation and decay of the historic environment, particularly the fabric of historic buildings in areas with high levels of atmospheric pollution, such as heavily trafficked city centre road networks. Overall, we consider that the proposed changes could, depending on the detailed design of any interventions, lead to a greater level of enjoyment of Cambridge's unique historic environment.

We welcome the principle of enhancements to the public realm enabled by a reduction in private motor vehicle traffic, but would highlight that any signage and other infrastructure associated with the introduction of modal filtering and other changes such as more cycle parking should be integrated sensitively into the streetscape, particularly within conservation areas or in the setting of listed buildings and registered parks and gardens.

We note also that the brochure highlights the potential for an intensification of bus movements into and through certain parts of the historic city centre. As noted above, Cambridge is a particularly sensitive historic townscape. We previously highlighted, as part of the 'Making Connections' consultation in 2021, that proposals to intensify bus activity could lead to negative impacts on the fabric of historic buildings owing to vehicle noise, vibrations or – depending on which streets are identified – the possibility of physical impact. As such, we would again recommend that the potential impacts of additional bus traffic are formally assessed against an understanding of the significance and sensitivity of the routes identified, and that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential impacts on the historic environment where necessary.

We note for example that the Bus Routes/Pedestrian Priority map on page 15 indicates the removal of bus services from Pembroke Street. The western end of Pembroke Street and Trumpington Street is narrow with very tight corner radii, enclosed as it is by the northern ranges of Pembroke College (grade I listed), as well as other buildings on the north side of the street. It is highly unsuitable for the regular double decker bus and HGV traffic it currently carries, which detract from the immediate setting of the listed buildings, but also create a public safety issue for the people who need to cross at this junction to walk into the city centre. We would therefore welcome this change. An intensification of bus activity along Bridge Street, on the other hand, could result in negative effects on the listed buildings along this key area including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Little Trinity (grade I), so the changes to the route in this location would need to be carefully considered.

We would draw your attention to our detailed advice on Works to the Highways and Public Realm in historic places: Streets for All, which can be found on our website. We would also highlight the need to ensure any improvements to active travel

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<sup>1</sup> See: English Heritage (2014) Practical Building Conservation: Building Environment. London: Routledge





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infrastructure should have regard to the government's National Design Guide and Manual for Streets 2, as well as meet the requirements of LTN 1/20.

For the avoidance of doubt, this letter does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on or, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise as a result of the Road Classification project, where we consider these would have an adverse effect on the historic environment.

Please contact us if you have any queries.

Kind regards,

[Redacted signature]

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[Redacted name]

Historic Places Advisor

[Redacted contact information]

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