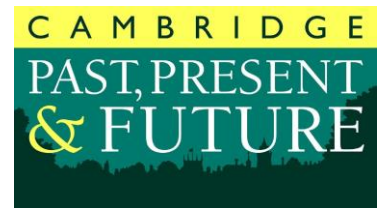


Greater Cambridge Partnership

By email to:

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28/07/2022

Dear GCP

Response to Comberton Greenway consultation

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.

CambridgePPF support the principle of greenways but wish to ensure that they avoid unnecessary harm and are implemented with the minimum impact on ecology, heritage and landscape.

All sections:

Many of the sections of the route pass through countryside or historic villages, it is important that the visual quality of these is not harmed by the greenway by introducing urban features such as coloured surfacing or excessive signage. The type and design of surfacing must be carefully chosen and appropriate to the setting. Black tarmac is not appropriate and we have previously been assured that this would not be used. A lighter colour surface blends into the chalk landscape much better. We have previously drawn your attention to a good local example of a sealed cycle path created by the National Trust at White Fen and we would encourage you to use that or similar.

The scheme as a whole, needs to provide a biodiversity net gain of at least 20% to meet the aspirations of the local councils.

Section 1: West Street and Barton Road through Comberton Village, with the junction of Long Road and Barton Road

Red surfacing is proposed for cycle lanes either side of the road for its whole length. However, from between Kentings and Woottens Close is within a designated conservation area. The red thermoplastic surfacing will introduce an intrusive urban feature in the village and is not sympathetic to the heritage setting. Please follow the recommendations set out by Historic England (2018) [Streets For All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places](#). In particular, p19: "In historic areas, coloured surfaces such as those often used for bus and cycle lanes should be avoided where other means to ensure safety can be used." One of the General Principles set out by Historic England for footpath and cycle routes is: "Avoid obtrusive colours".

We have previously drawn the Greenways team's attention to Historic England's guidance so it is disappointing to see that it is not being followed.

Section 3: Long Road

CambridgePPF owns and cares for Comberton Plantation, which is adjacent to the scheme. Therefore we are aware that vehicle speeds along Long Road are high and that reducing speeds would be beneficial not just for the new crossing but for cyclists heading towards St Neots Road. On the other hand, this is a stretch of road that has retained its rural character and heading south provides views over the countryside (for cyclists and drivers). It is not a very busy road and it has good visibility so a crossing here should not present a high risk and is preferable to a subway which would be environmentally harmful. We note that this is close to the historic Whitwell Way walking route. Therefore it is important that road markings, speed bumps/islands and signage are sympathetic to this rural context. It is hard to establish whether that is the case from the technical drawings however we are very concerned that they are not. In particular, the amount of signage is excessive, especially mounted on separate poles (there would be 10 new signs/poles along a 1km stretch as well as any that are already in place) and in our view will lead to clutter and a loss of character, which is contrary to good practice. For example, is it necessary to have two signs to indicate to drivers that horses and cyclists may be crossing? Surely the same issues apply to both user groups, or if one is more sensitive then just use that, eg horses crossing.

There are good examples from other projects around England on rural roads where traffic calming and signage has been provided in more sympathetic ways, for example: https://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Rural_roads_a_new_approach.pdf

Section 4: Long Road to Hardwick

We support Option B because it uses an existing track and therefore will have only limited impact on landscape, ecology and heritage. We do not support Option A because it creates new paths as opposed to using existing paths - and it cuts through woodland before entering Hardwick at the pumping station. Option A is likely to have much higher negative impacts on the countryside and ecology caused by loss of habitat and recreational disturbance on the woodland.

CambridgePPF consider that Option A would result in significant harm compared to Option B which uses existing rights of way. Option A would seem to contravene the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate).

Additionally, there is an aspiration that the Greenway can be extended to serve Bourn Airfield and Cambourne, as identified by Cambridgeshire County Council. Option B would facilitate that, whereas Option A does not.

Section 5: Long Road to Whitwell Way

This section of the greenway will have a significant impact on the character of the countryside. Sections 4 and 5 are the only sections of the greenway which do not run alongside a road and are in open countryside. The countryside along this bridleway is of very high quality. It is a rural rolling landscape with wonderful views including towards Cambridge. It is this type of landscape which makes Cambridge special and contributes towards the overall quality of life. It is part of the popular Whitwell Way and Harcamlow Way walking trails. It is for these reasons that the introduction of hard surface should be kept to minimum and the type and design of surfacing must also be carefully chosen and appropriate to the rural setting. A lighter colour surface blends into the chalk landscape better than a darker colour. We would also encourage you to consider whether the "track" appearance can be maintained – this has been used at Coton Countryside Reserve to provide a shared use path and it works effectively at the levels of use that can be expected on the Comberton Greenway.

The only lighting should be solar studs set into the path.

We support the routing of the greenway around the woodland at Long Road, rather than through it, in order to avoid harming the woodland.

The design of the bridge crossing Bin Brook, especially the height of the parapet, needs to be appropriate to its rural setting. British Horse Society advice states that they are not always required and may be acceptable at a lower height.

Section 6: Whitwell Way to High Street Coton

We note that a new signpost is proposed directly in front of the Plough Pub. We consider that this is inappropriate in front of a historic building in a Conservation Area and would contravene guidance set out by Historic England. The sign should be set to the east of the pub out of sightline, ideally locating the signs on existing street furniture, namely the lighting column which already has one of the proposed signs on it:



Section 8: Adams Road, Grange Road, Sidgwick Avenue and Silver Street

Red surfacing is proposed for Adams Road. Adams road lies within the Conservation Area and it is considered that a coloured surface will detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area. Please follow the recommendations set out by Historic England (2018) [Streets For All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places](#). In particular, p19: "In historic areas, coloured surfaces such as those often used for bus and cycle lanes should be avoided where other means to ensure safety can be used." One of the General Principles set out by Historic England for footpath and cycle routes is: "Avoid obtrusive colours". We have previously drawn the Greenways team's attention to Historic England's guidance so it is disappointing to see that it is not being followed.

The greenways project gives no consideration as to where cyclists will go at the end of the greenway. The Comberton Greenway aims to direct cyclists southwards to Silver Street. However, any cyclists heading to the city centre will use the more direct but narrower route along Burrell's Walk, Garret Hostel Lane and Senate House Passage. We, and many other groups, have already highlighted to you that the route along Garret Hostel Lane is already at capacity with pedestrians and therefore cannot cope with additional cycle use. We have previously discussed with you the need to manage this situation as part of your project, rather than creating a problem that someone else will have to solve. We are incredibly disappointed that you are

not proposing how this issue will be addressed as part of your consultation. The Greenways project needs to join up with the Partnership's other Sustainable Transport Programmes to ensure that the greenways do not bring cyclists into the city only to lead to conflict with pedestrians and further deterioration of the experience of all people using the congested medieval centre of the city.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer

cc

County Councillors – Newnham; Hardwick

District Councillors – Harston and Comberton; Newnham; Girton; Hardwick

Parish Councils – Barton; Coton; Comberton; Madingley; Hardwick

CPPF – Penny Heath