

## Old Chesterton Residents' Association (OCRA)

### Response to Public Consultation

#### 2012 Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

Old Chesterton Residents' Association covers an area roughly bounded by Scotland Road, Elizabeth Way, the River, Fen Road, Water Lane and Green End Road. It is one of the founders of the Federation of Cambridge Residents' Associations and plays an active part in monitoring planning proposals and commenting on local planning policies, transport issues and matters affecting our open spaces.

The consultation document does not indicate any strategic thinking but is a hotchpotch of current concerns and a rather vague wish-list of themes rather than presenting a specific vision of what is to be achieved over the plan period. We have looked at the accompanying questionnaire and some of us have used it to respond as individuals.

The proposed new station in Chesterton is likely to set the tone for future developments for a much wider area. In the absence of an existing Area Action Plan for the northeast corner of Chesterton and the adjacent area of South Cambridgeshire, we consider that there needs to be a site-specific detailed analysis of the land use, transport, urban design and environmental planning options for its future use, which should form the basis of a further and joint public consultation by all three local authorities – South Cambridgeshire DC, Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Council.

We decided to focus on the vision and present a commentary upon that as a way of focussing our concerns and presenting them in a coherent manner.

#### Commentary on the Vision

In future, Cambridge and the surrounding area of South Cambridgeshire will be renowned for its efficient, accessible and sustainable transport system which will support a thriving and beautiful historic core, and provide efficient and networked links to and from the city, its major employment hubs, and the bustling villages and key centres beyond.

*This is a noble aspiration but a lot of work has to be done to make it a reality. The main problem is that all services are still required to run through the centre of a crowded mediaeval city using roads that were barely suitable for the horse and cart era let alone double-decker buses. Operating to subsidiary hubs at the railway station, park and ride sites and local centres with fast and frequent shuttle services from those through the centre would reduce congestion due to the proliferation of bus stops and waiting vehicles in the centre, possibly allowing space released to be used for taxis and loading and unloading during the day.*

*Transferable ticketing is already with us and although many journeys would involve changes the enhanced reliability of services would outweigh this inconvenience and make the whole system much more attractive to use.*

More and more people will walk, cycle or use community or public transport as the more sustainable option when travelling. This will help to reduce car traffic on key routes and protect the area's distinctive character and environment while supporting continued growth of the area as an internationally important cluster for high tech industries and research and

development.

*This will only be achieved by a focus on removing transport mode conflict as far as possible. This can be achieved by creating real cycleways clearly separated from pedestrian routes and active enforcement to ensure that pedestrian routes are kept clear of parked vehicles and cyclists.*

*OCRA supports the 'Chisholm Trail' in principle but there needs to be meaningful discussion with the local community on how the Chesterton end of it can be accommodated with least disruption to residents and our environmentally sensitive areas of Stourbridge Common, Ditton Meadows and within East Chesterton. We oppose the further degradation of these open spaces by additional cycle paths and have concerns over the environmental impact of any new bridge over the Cam in Chesterton.*

*Residents already have grave concerns over the impact of heavy cycle use in Water Street and across Green Dragon Bridge at peak times.*

*Transport planners must also realise that for some people walking or cycling is not an option and that the limited space on public service vehicles for baby chariots and wheelchairs is already at capacity at some times of the day on most routes. Accessible provision should therefore be made for those for whom personal transport is a necessity not a matter of choice.*

There will be an extended network of dedicated public transport routes with fast and frequent links to and from key destinations. This will link up with community or local transport at hubs which will connect with some more rural parts of the area. An improved system of safe and direct cycle and walking routes will provide a viable alternative for journeys between key destinations. Information about sustainable travel options will be readily available and new technology will make this even easier to access. This enhanced accessibility will help to sustain and enhance quality of life and well being of residents.

*We share this vision but unfortunately we have been going backwards for the last couple of years. The Citi2 was a useful service providing access to Milton that is severely curtailed to the Science Park, and only going that far by virtue of subsidy from the City Council. It lacks reliability, a wait of up to 40 minutes is not uncommon. One of the writers has waited 54 minutes on one occasion and the record appears to be 57 minutes in a survey reported to the North Area Committee a few years ago in the presence of Andy Campbell (but there were still six buses during the hour!). This unreliability has led to an observable loss of patronage as those for whom excessive and unpredictable delays in getting to work or to appointments prove unacceptable and they abandon the service.*

*We think it important that those planning such services actually have real-time experience of using them for all their activities. This will bring home the need for better management of what should be an excellent resource for getting around our city. Areas for improvement are timetable reliability, better location of bus stops and comprehensive information where it is needed, e.g. the railway stations and local hubs.*

*As indicated above we support greater use of hubs other than Drummer Street/Emmanuel Street/St. Andrew's Street linked by high frequency direct shuttle services rather than meanders all around the city's housing estates. There is a need for the latter but these can best be provided by less frequent but more reliable services. This approach will reduce the impact of*

*congestion hot spots on the generality of services and encourage reliance on buses for local travel. This would make a significant contribution to improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions.*

Both the strategic and local road networks will operate efficiently and reliably, with most car traffic choosing to access the rural hubs or Park & Ride hubs. Accident clusters and congestion hotspots will be addressed and the impacts of congestion on the bus network will be reduced significantly. Although car trips to the city centre will still be possible, they will be channelled along routes away from buses and cyclists.

*We agree with the aspiration and see the greatest strategic priority as upgrading of the A14 by removal of conflict with local traffic by removal of access roads onto it between Quy and Girton and providing a local traffic route alongside. OCRA made this proposal in their response to the government's recent consultation on the A14 and this appears to have been accepted in part by Government but we would wish to see an end to half-measures and commend our full proposal to you.*

*The major local road improvement we wish to see is an unrestricted vehicular access to Chesterton Fen suitable for the many HGVs that currently have to trundle through residential areas and negotiate a very busy level crossing to get to and from their bases. The opening of the new station will make this problem worse but could provide a cost-effective solution. (see below)*

*Parking is a major concern of residents living close to the proposed Chesterton Station as they are aware of the situation that already exists in residential areas south of the existing station. We think there should be some reasonable way of deterring commuter parking without the imposition of an expensive residents parking scheme.*

*There should be adequate free short-term parking close to local services without the need to double park (an existing problem outside TESCO in Chesterton High Street), or park on double yellow lines as is necessary at Chesterton Post Office for those unable to walk from the lay-bys further along the road.*

*We would stress the point made above that for many people a car is a necessity not a luxury. Chesterton is a working community and many of our residents provide the backbone to public and private sector operations in the city at unsocial hours. If they are to rely on buses they must start early and finish very late, a lot of residents get home between 11 and 12 midnight. It is also worth pointing out that workers going out of town to work or returning home from work need buses that operate early and late into the countryside, for them bus services that only operate from 9am to 6pm are of no use.*

*Bus lanes are only of real value where they can give priority over an extended part of a route, as at Girton where the bus lane bypasses incoming commuter traffic, but elsewhere they cause more problems than they solve. Newmarket Road is a particular example whose only function appears to be the generation of fines income as motorists find themselves straying into the bus lane through having to chop and change lanes to reach the part of the retail park they wish to access. We believe that removing the bus lanes and creating a gyratory system on this section of Newmarket Road, thus removing all right turns across traffic, would be a simple, inexpensive and effective traffic management measure of great benefit to all.*

*Hills Road is another example where the bus lane is out of use for most of the day through parked cars and delivery vehicles (and on one occasion an abandoned vehicle that was not removed for over a week). This is a busy commercial and shopping street and a principal access route to the railway station and the bus lane is at best a marginal benefit for City bound buses but does not improve things for most users.*

A frequent and reliable rail service with enhanced services and capacity to London, market towns and cities across the region will ensure that rail travel will continue to be a popular choice for a growing number of residents, commuters and visitors. The Science Park Station and improved City Station will provide links to St Pancras International, Stansted and Gatwick airports, to the European mainland, and to the rest of the UK. The Cambridge City Region's profile as a thriving, attractive and accessible business destination will be further enhanced.

*We agree with this part of the vision but are dismayed by the plans for Chesterton Station so far released. The current station proposals demonstrate a lack of vision and appear out of touch with reality by using open land for single level activities when the rest of the city is expected to live in multi-storey edifices. The new station is an opportunity to maximise the use of the space in this part of Cambridge by decking over the railway as part of a multi-storey development providing for access by road above the platforms, offices and services for railway use car and bicycle parking and using the adjacent land for income generation for the future. The decking over of the station would also form part of a new vehicular access to Chesterton Fen and sort out once and for all the long standing need for an unrestricted vehicular access suitable for HGVs.*

*We would wish to see support for electrification of the rest of the rail network in East Anglia and for the proposed link to Oxford via Stevenage, Bedford and Milton Keynes. The economic case for both measures is very strong and electrification will be a big contribution to improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions*

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27<sup>th</sup> September 2012