

Minutes of Camden Cycling Campaign Meeting. 8 September 2003.

Present: Paul Gasson (chair), Stefano Casalotti, Paul Gannon, James Brander, David Arditti, Jean Dollimore (minutes), Peter Wills (for the Camley street item) Apologies: Jane Boardman, Daniel Glaser.

1. Regents Park

We discussed the value of the differing approaches of Rick Andrew and the CCC/T2000 group. Stefano reported that although the first meeting of the CCC/T2000 group discussed only the outer roads, the second addressed the issue of cycling in Regents Park, although Stefano would prefer to keep the two issues separate.

Rick advised CCC of his plans and suggested that the CCC/T2000 group proposal is best delayed in order to simplify negotiations. He is expecting the long-awaited Royal Parks cycle review.

Stefano said that the CCC/T2000 group is not yet ready to make a proposal, but when they do, the closure of the outer roads should not be described as a cycle facility. We agreed that Rick has been working on this for a long time and that while we should wait a little longer for him to achieve something, people were feeling frustrated.

It was suggested that Stefano should enlist help from pedestrian groups via Nick Harding (of the local pedestrian association) or Philip Connolly (TfL officer for pedestrians). Ben Bradshaw (ex environment minister) was also mentioned.

As a result of Rick Andrew asking for Camden Council to get involved, Gerry Harrison had held a meeting between Camden Council and Royal Parks represented by George Hipwell.

2. BG Forum 10th Sept

Paul Gasson asked for someone to attend. James will try to do so.

3. Camley Street link report

Tom Young's draft report was tabled and Paul Gannon asked all of us to send our comments to him. The committee was very impressed by the scope and quality of the report. Paul Gannon suggested that comparing it with the Chalton Street/Oakley Square link (p6) is not helpful. We all supported Paul Gannon's suggestion that we need a single drawing showing clearly the context of the link.

Paul Gannon suggested launching the scheme at the November meeting when Tom Young has promised to talk to us. He suggested we should meet nearer to the site, e.g. in Maiden Lane Community Hall or in the Irish Centre. We would invite the press, councillors and local people.

What to do next? Talk to Peter Bishop via Geoffrey Hopwood (Camden officer responsible for coordinating Kings Cross development). Possible sources of cash are Groundwork (landscaping) and Argent St. George.

Paul Gannon wants to ask for another grant from CCCU to do the costing. We will discuss this further at our next meeting.

4. Streetscape design manual

Paul Gasson asked for someone to attend on the evening of 17th September. There were no takers.

5. Southampton Road/Malden Road Cycle Bypass – Lisa Bailey

Lisa Bailey has been consulting Paul Gasson. We agreed that we are happy for Paul to continue with it.

6. Scrutiny Panel on Road Safety

CCC will give evidence to the scrutiny panel. Doug Amer, who had just arrived said there will be three-weekly meetings and Tim Young is head of scrutiny. Doug also told us that the scrutiny panel has not yet met to decide how it will structure its evidence taking. He emphasised the importance of CCC's input to this panel.

7. Trams (or have we had enough of this?)

We agreed to continue this discussion on the CCC mailing list.

8. Next engineering meeting with LB Camden

Jean will agree some dates with Paul Gasson after 5th October and then arrange the meeting with Dave Stewart and Ed Quartey.

9. CCC technical policies – should we continue to establish them?

Paul Gasson asked whether CCC should continue to work on the development of policies for the design details of cycling facilities, with a view to promoting them to Camden council officers to use in their cycle schemes.

We discussed whether this would overlap with the LCN+ design manual, but Paul Gannon says the manual has severe compromises. Paul compared this very prescriptive guide, which follows the UK style where regulations are required to make things legal, with the Quebec one, which is descriptive with illustrations of good practice.

James suggested that we should feed our ideas into CPEC+, which is a London-wide forum. But Paul Gasson felt that due to differing views of its members, the ideas may get diluted. In addition, as Camden is the lead borough we don't want them to get lost. Paul Gannon agreed that there is a case to get Camden to do things in a particular way and that supporting photographs of examples are useful.

David restated the position that we shouldn't work alone, but try to promote our ideas upwards through the hierarchy of cycling organisations, i.e. first to LCC, then to CCN and CTC, to try to reduce the extent to which these organisations' policies currently conflict with ours.

The outcome was that we should continue with this work, but also try to feed our views into CPEC for LCN+ design manual inclusion.

Members Meeting

Present: the above plus Doug Amer, George Coulouris, Helen Vecht, Alex McKinnell, Stephen Plowden, Peter McKay, Peter Wesley.

10. Car-free Day: details of morning cycle ride

Car-free day is September 22nd. Stefano explained that CCC is not participating in the Camden event, as a protest against the fact that its scope has been reduced since last year and that it is on a weekday when people are at work. However, Stefano is leading a ride starting at 8 pm outside Swiss cottage tube station. It will be a 45-minute ride, carrying posters, via Finchley Road, Fitzjohns Avenue, Camden Town to Museum Street (which will be closed at 11 am for the day). For publicity, James offered to leaflet on 21st and Stefano will try a press release.

11. Camden Town bike removal

A member had told CCC that bikes were being removed by Camden Street wardens. Paul Gasson started an investigation into this by asking Julian Fulbrook to contact the council. Paul received a prompt reply from Kenny Wilkes on behalf of the council. James read this reply to the meeting. To summarise, it said that there was no general policy of removing bikes from street furniture. Only abandoned bikes or those causing an obstruction or those being used in association with 'drug paraphernalia' would be removed. James pointed out that CCC members need to know how to get their bikes back.

Doug Amer offered to ask Kenny Wilkes to tell us how to retrieve such bikes, but assured us that the council is not interested in doing this regularly. Also that Kenny Wilkes does not know of any bikes that have been removed for obstruction.

12. Discussion: with Doug Amer head of Street Policy Camden Council

How can CCC and the council work together to achieve improvements for cycling within the borough?

Who's who in Environment: Doug presented us with a chart showing the structure of the Street Management part of the Environment Department. (see <http://www.george-jean.connectfree.co.uk/ccc/AmerChart09.03.pdf>)

Street Management is organized as seven sections. Doug is head of the Street Policy Section.

Tom McMahon is currently acting as the leader of Street Management since John Judah left, whilst Kenny Wilkes is acting head of the Environment Services section.

The three largest sections are Engineering, Parking (operation, not policy) and Street environment (which deals with an unusual combination of a wide variety of services including refuse collection, street wardens and energy management). The smaller sections include Doug's Street Policy as well as Boulevard (which is implemented by officers in other teams) and Business Support, which deals with direct labour and consultancy as well as the LCN+ account. Camden Council is consultant for other authorities, e.g. LCN, structures, bridges and a TfL contract to manage London's road network

Doug's Street Policy develops policies into plans and outcomes, gets the funding and has the plans implemented by Engineering. The important point is that policy is separated from engineering.

Doug told us where the officers we know are located. Dave Stewart, Ed Quartey and Lisa Bailey are in Engineering. Doug's section includes Cliff Thomson (casualties and road safety), Natasha Brown (walking and cycling plans) and Keith Hamilton (vehicle policy). He has three managers: Sam Monk (works with TfL), Alan Butcher (develops local policy) and Belitha Clahar (safe routes to schools).

Relationship between politicians and officers: Doug feels that as campaigners we should be clear of the separate roles of politicians and officers. Politicians suggest policy and get funding, whereas officers give strategic and legal advice. If a policy is legal, officers will carry it out. Campaigners can influence politicians w.r.t policy and officers as to the details of a scheme.

E.g. the government target to double cycling by 2012 is represented in Camden's Green Transport Policy. The officers develop a strategy for carrying it out. The Cycle Plan says how to deliver cycle policies.

LCN+ is a TfL initiative, Camden's role as leading borough is as interface between TfL and other boroughs.

Consultations: Doug stressed that a consultation is not a referendum – its role is to find out what people think. E.g. a scheme to reduce child casualties might be implemented even if the majority of respondents are against it. Camden council takes consultation seriously but does not always get it right – officers can be threatened with injunctions and judicial reviews.

There is a consultation board but it is not practical for it to check the details of every small consultation – instead, they have defined types of consultations. The CPZ consultations involved 5-6 months work in each community before the leaflet was issued – they are now completed. CPZ is council policy, officers did the details.

How Camden and CCC can work together: Cycling officer – we contact Dave Stewart about engineering issues. However, Doug says that a single cycling officer is only practical in boroughs that do less for cycling. CCC can discuss strategy with Doug or Natasha Brown.

The forums currently available to CCC are WCRSAG and the meetings with the engineering officers.

CCC dislikes the big fire-fighting agendas of WCRSAG and its lack of strategic discussion. Doug feels that a separate forum for cycling would make the opposition become even more hostile. Doug encouraged CCC to use WCRSAG, which has an open agenda and is chaired by a politician, Julian Fulbrook who is very committed to the needs of cyclists. CCC could raise the issue of the discussion of excessive details at a WCRSAG meeting. Doug already filters this to some extent, for example, he refused to supply casualty maps – just statistics.

As cycling has increased, the public mood is becoming more hostile (e.g. re pavement cycling and light jumping). Thus politicians struggle at the ward level. CCC can influence other cyclists and should consider its interface with the public.

Doug foresees another funding problem from TfL which subsidises buses and has failed to raise as much as expected from the congestion charge. We asked how we can put pressure on GLA via the council. As the GLA acts only as a scrutiny panel, there is no point in lobbying GLA members to come up with novel ideas. Doug said apply pressure via the political structure at the local level. In practice this is hard because a single individual, the mayor makes the policy and has many issues and little time; Rose Ades has said that she feels like a small voice.

However, CCC does have influence with TfL via the Camden officers who are consulted when the strategic cycling plan is updated. Doug and Rose Ades liaise with Festus Agwu Jones (manager of LCN+) over LCN+ design. Doug develops street policy in Camden, which is input into regional policy and LCN+ is the output.

Doug says that the council tries to organise cycling requirements into all schemes, for example, ASLs are now taken for granted and so are cycle gaps in road closures.

Doug said that addressing speed is important. He compared the attitude to speeding now with the attitude to drink driving in the 50s and 60s. He would like to see 20 mph as a default in London, but a change in national legislation is needed. As to enforcement, humps have been proved to reduce casualties. Politicians are not ready for hidden cameras. Humps reduce speed by 9 mph but flashing ‘slow down’ signs by only 1-2 mph. The council is about to try a new technique: ‘ripple print’ which makes an awful noise inside speeding cars, but little noise outside. Doug encouraged CCC to report how this technique affects cyclists.

Peter Wesley had suggested that CCC needs to define its objectives better and Paul Gasson concluded that we need to develop our strategy to bring it up to date.

Finally Doug urged CCC to look at its relationship with WCRSAG.

Next meeting: Monday 13th October.

JD 17/09/03