

Camden Council/CCC

Minutes from meeting on 18th November 2002

Present Dave Stewart (DS), Edward Quartey (EQ), Alex Djan, Daniel Glaser, Paul Gasson.

1. Major design phase issues

CCC strongly recommended that none of the schemes in this section are implemented until solutions for the more serious deficiencies have been agreed.

1.1. St Pancras Way

1.1.1. Baynes Street junction/Randolph Street 2 way

CCC is seriously concerned that the design does not cater for current high motor traffic flows across track into Baynes St; CCC and its membership are unanimous that making Randolph St 2 way is the only safe solution for northbound cyclists. CCC reiterated that it did not expect Randolph Street 2 way to be implemented at present, but this option must be shown to be viable before it could support the proposed St Pancras Way track design.

Actions:

- DS agreed to investigate feasibility of Randolph Street two way.
- St Pancras Way scheme will be modified for motor vehicles as follows:
 - The right hand lane to become a right turn only into Baynes St, with some type of build out to prevent motor vehicles proceeding straight ahead past the Baynes St junction.
 - The right turn into Baynes Street will have give way markings & signage prior to the cycle track. Whilst this is not technically necessary (ie under traffic law motorists are already required to give way to cyclists on the track), it was felt this signage would help improve motorist compliance.

Note: In a previous meeting officers had disagreed with CCC that cyclists had priority over other vehicles turning across the cycle track for junctions with a segregated track (eg turning from St Pancras Way into Baynes St, or Royal College St into Plender St). CCC had consulted a barrister who specialised in road traffic law and he confirmed that CCC interpretation was correct.

1.1.2. Design of Agar Grove westbound facility

CCC is concerned about the design and the substandard 1 metre track width (which is less than the minimum width of 1.5 metres in all specifications).

- Will there be adequate flow and queuing capacity for current and predicted cycle flows?
- Isn't there a risk that cyclists will ignore narrow facility with short green phase & use main carriageway?
- Is penning cyclists next to kerb wise given risk of either cyclist or motorist conflict if one has illegally gone through a red light?

DS stated current peak hour cycle flows are St Agar Grove westbound 88 (8-9am), St Pancras Way southbound 95 (15 turn left into Agar Grove) (8-9am), Randolph St 40 (5-6pm).

A discussion then took place over an alternative solution which does not require the 1m wide track, and relies on the ASL plus standard painted feeder with the advance cycle green signal phase light on the main traffic signal column. Officers were concerned that this would lead to increased risk (compared to a standard ASL) of cyclists being shunted from behind by motorists; CCC disagreed saying

that if motorists illegally moved off on the green cycle phase this was identical to a standard ASL solution.

CCC expressed unhappiness with the proposed realignment of the St Pancras Way pedestrian crossing (northern arm) as it was less direct than the current layout; CCC believes that there is no reasonable justification for pedestrian accessibility to be adversely impacted.

Actions:

- DS to review whether alternative solution without a track is viable.
- CCC to check with barrister if separate left turn phase requires separate signal head on an island or if it can be mounted below green light on main signal (ie to establish whether advance cycle phase requires separate signal head).
- Officers to reinstate missing pedestrian crossing phase in signal sequence.

1.1.3. Substandard 2 metre track width in St Pancras Way.

CCC reiterated its concern over the substandard 2m wide track width in St Pancras Way. The main risks are

- inadequate capacity if the scheme proves popular with cyclists,
- cyclists colliding with track kerbs or each other; and
- cyclists attention being diverted by above problems from motor traffic hazards.

CCC pointed out that its minimum width guidance (*1) and that of the government's "Cycle Audit & Review" publication was 2.5m. DS pointed out that the LCN Design Manual suggested a minimum width of 2m.

Actions:

- DS/EQ will further investigate widening the track between Baynes St & Agar Grove, but pointed out that turning circle requirements from Agar Grove into St Pancras Way had already pushed the track start quite a way south of the junction.
- DS/EQ to redesign scheme so that south of the Baynes St junction,
 - St Pancras Way is reduced to 1 lane wide for motor vehicles,
 - the cycle track is widened to at least 2.5 metres and
 - the narrow western pavement is also widened.

Note: CCC's design guidance is here

<http://www.greengas.u-net.com/FacilityDesign.html>

1.1.4. St Pancras Way (north arm of Agar Grove jct)

CCC were worried by previous design which it did not feel would work for cyclists arriving at the signal whether it was red or green. EQ presented revised solution which comprised painted cycle lanes on both sides of St Pancras Way. CCC suggested a 5 second advance cycle signal phase (similar to the alternative proposed for Agar Grove) could be incorporated into this design to assist cyclists arriving on red to get safely into the cycle track to the south of the junction.

Actions:

- DS to review advance cycle phase option.

1.1.5. St Pancras Way/Georgiana Street junction.

CCC requested improved protection for cyclists from motorists turning across the track from St Pancras Way into Georgiana St; a raised speed table across Georgiana St and the track was preferred.

Officers explained that the bridge construction featured a waterproof membrane which they believed would be breached if a speed table was constructed and that the expense of reinstating the membrane made this option impossible. CCC suggested that at the very least cycle logos should be laid along the track as it crossed the junction to alert motorists to the presence of cyclists. CCC queried whether it was possible to improve the design to accommodate cyclists who wished to use the track but remain in St Pancras Way past Georgiana St jct; no solution became apparent during the meeting.

Actions:

- DS to get motor traffic flows for vehicles turning right into Georgiana St.
- Downstream zebra crossing zig-zags to be shorted to allow cycle logos to be applied to cycle lane as it crosses the Georgiana St junction.

1.1.6. Royal College St/Georgiana St junction

CCC pointed out that design changes were required and had been promised by officers on several occasions should the Royal College St (RCS) route be extended northwards. The most important change is improving the slip alignment from the track into the main carriageway, which is used by all cyclists who continue northwards up RCS. The design for cyclists travelling in either direction between RCS and Georginana St (east) is not ideal; furthermore the junction is poorly designed and confusing for pedestrians. Another possibility is for a Toucan to allow cyclists to cross from Georgiana St into the RCS track whenever the signals are red for traffic in RCS.

CCC referred to the RCS case study which specified the key change required; officers were unaware of this study (which had been assembled to try to avoid us all repeating the same mistakes for future schemes).

DS stated that only alignment changes can be made this year; more ambitious modifications such as the Toucan would have in a subsequent year.

Actions:

- PG to advise officers of RCS URL
<http://www.greengas.u-net.com/RCSCaseStudy.html>
- DS/EQ to send plan of junction to PG
- PG to send back CCC's proposed changes for junction.
- DS/EQ to find out if TRL report cover RCS scheme has been issued, and if so get a copy for CCC.

1.2. LCN route 6 through Bloomsbury

CCC is unhappy with officers' intention to proceed with option 2 (against CCC's recommendation) and deploy only 'lining and signing'; this will lead to substandard facilities. Is of greatest concern for the area around Russell Square which is a known trouble spot for cyclists.

In response officers stated that no work was now planned on this route south of the Euston Road this year.

1.3. Seven Stations Link east from Gordon Square

1.3.1 Two metre track width

CCC is seriously concerned by the proposal for a track width of 2 metres; it reiterated that the consultation did not specify the track width; it felt this to be a significant oversight. CCC's concerns are because:

1. 2 metres is below the national technical standard

2. it offers inadequate capacity for a major east/west corridor
3. cyclists will have to focus on negotiating track/avoiding other cyclists instead of traffic hazards at junctions
4. cyclists cannot safely overtake
5. there's a risk of cyclists avoiding the track and transferring to main carriageway (due to above issues)

DS stated that contrary to his expectation at the previous meeting, the track width between Gordon Square and Woburn Place could not be widened to 2.5 metres. Discussions ensued on how the track could be widened.

Actions:

- Officers to try to increase the track width to 2.5 metres (or close to this) between Gordon Square east and Woburn Place; they will advise CCC at the next meeting what the widths would be.
- The island on the southern side of the Bedford Way junction and the adjacent kerb line will slightly modified to improve the turning circle from Bedford Way into Tavistock Place westbound, and thus allow the cycle track to be widened on the western approach to this junction. CCC agreed that if necessary the ASL on the southern side of the junction can be removed.
- The kink in the track on the eastbound approach to the Bedford Way junction will be smoothed out such that it does not impede cycle flows.

1.3.2 Gordon Square eastern junction

CCC is concerned that the proposed design will replicate the existing problem at western side of square - see 'generic solution' later in this document. CCC does not know what the current motor vehicle flows are at this junction, but suggests that for minor (ie very low vehicle flow) unsignalled junctions, an acceptable solution is for the track to run on a raised table (see 'generic solution' below). No agreement was reached on this issue.

1.3.3 ASLs on main carriageway

CCC stated that ASLs need to be considered for the main carriageway to cater for cyclists joining cycle track.

Having covered the most critical issues in 2 hours, the meeting finished at this point. The remainder of the agenda follows overleaf.

2. Critical safety issues for existing cycle facilities

These generate regular complaints from cyclists about serious hazards - casualties are anticipated.

a. Seven Stations Link

1. *Gordon Square. This junction generates the greatest number and most strident of complaints to CCC. Note there was a fatality here 3 years ago (before the SSL was constructed). Introduction of traffic signals or closure are only safe options.
2. *Gower Street. Vehicles making left turn into Torrington Place cut across cyclists stopped on track and/or demolish segregating bollard.
3. *Tottenham Court Road. Conflict between cyclists & motorists turning out of Torrington Place, and major hazards for cyclists turning from Tottenham Court Road into Torrington Place.
4. *Charlotte Street. Vehicles turn left into Charlotte St across path of cyclists (often at inappropriate speed, and/or cutting corner so badly they overrun pavement where pedestrians wait to cross).
5. Ampton Street/Grays Inn Road. Motorists cut across oncoming cyclists exiting Ampton St - minimum change required is lengthening of advance cycle signal phase which appears to have been reduced or totally removed from original phasing

* Items marked with an asterisk have been extensively documented in terms of problem & potential solutions, and are on the web here:

<http://www.greengas.u-net.com/SSLdesign/SSLroutedesign.html#DesignMods>

b. Royal College Street

1. Plender Street & Pratt Street junctions: Cyclists on the track continue to experience difficulties with motorists pulling out across their path, with biggest problem being motorists not expecting southbound cyclists; motorists also sometimes turn into these side roads across the path of cyclists. Can any further design tweaks be made to improve these junctions, or is the only answer to adopt one of generic solutions below?

3. Generic design solutions required

a. Track across unsignalled junction (eg Gordon Sq, Plender St, Baynes St)

1. CCC propose that for all but low vehicle flows across track (ie > 60 vehicles per hour) to high flows solution is either road closure or traffic signals.
2. For low vehicle flows cycle track must be on raised table, and other measures may be required to reduce motor vehicle speeds and enhance cycle priority .

b. Track in narrow carriageway at junction (Eg Torrington Place/Gower St)

1. Stop lines for cyclists & motor vehicles need to be pulled back much further from junction than usual.
2. Consider pulling traffic signals back as well to improve vehicle compliance with stop line markings.
3. If road crossing track is one way, consider offsetting centre line to allow easier turns.
4. Segregating island needs to run as far as stop line to ensure protection for cyclists from turning vehicles.

4. Policy & process issues

1. Scheme quality: How do we strike a balance between CCC's push for high quality, and under-resourced officers needing to get schemes implemented within financial and timeline constraints?
 2. Communication to officers: How can we improve CCC to officer liaison?
 3. CCC will seek to respond to cycle facility consultations at least a week before the deadline.
 4. CCC will alert an officer as soon as we believe we have uncovered a major issue.
 5. Question for officers: What else can CCC do to help?
 6. Communication from officers: Improving officer to CCC liaison.
 7. The council has now agreed that Dave Stewart will act as cycling officer and will be the main point of contact with CCC.
 8. We have yet to agree simple procedures to ensure that CCC is brought into the design loop early on and is kept well informed of progress on all cycle facility schemes.
 9. We are unaware of any mechanisms in place for officers to record issues raised by CCC or other cyclists, and track through to resolution. CCC is therefore planning to set up a new web page to do this.
 10. To help CCC prioritise and allocate suitable resources in advance, it wishes be advised of key milestone dates for cycle schemes.
 11. To ensure that CCC is able to support officers for high profile schemes, we would like to be emailed feasibility studies and officer reports on cycle schemes as soon as they are available.
- CCC recognises that Camden Council is at the forefront of local authorities in terms of its partnership approach to cycle schemes. However we have to acknowledge that this is proving stressful to all parties. CCC therefore recommends developing a 'best practice' methodology for CCC/ council liaison which would serve as a model for other local authority/ cycle campaign groups. CCC is happy to draft some guidelines, but will only do so if the council indicates that it is interested in such an approach.
 - Technical standards. The various technical problems which have arisen with Camden cycle schemes have been due to 3 main factors.
 - Innovative designs breaking new ground in the UK and giving rise to issues which no one has anticipated.
 - Officers failing to tackle safety or other issues raised by CCC at the design stage or later.
 - The use of 'minimum' standards as the default rather than a minimum to only be utilised in rare instances.
- CCC therefore suggests that the agreement of a set of technical standards for high quality scheme design could greatly simplify scheme design, and reduce stresses in the CCC/ officer relationship. Our cycle facility design web page might serve as a start for this.