

Cyclists Touring Club right to ride network

www.ctc.org.uk www.northhertsctc.org.uk www.sustrans.org.uk



Please reply to:

Right Honourable Peter Lilley MP

by email

Dave Borner
10 Mount Pleasant
Hitchin
Herts.
SG5 2BG

Susan Dye
55 Walsworth Road,
Hitchin
SG4 9SX

Alasdair Massie
67 Ashwell Road
Bygrave
Baldock
Herts
SG7 5DZ

24 June 2008

Dear Mr Lilley,

Hitchin Station Forecourt Redevelopment

Ten years ago we (the CTC) were involved in “consultations” preceding the redevelopment of Hitchin Station forecourt. At the time we gave detailed, robust feedback on what was needed, not only for people who cycle to the station, but to create a friendly and civilised environment for all people arriving at the station.

Regrettably, most of that advice was ignored. The forecourt has quite obviously failed to work as designed, and a decade on we are looking at digging it all up again.

You would hope that people would learn the lesson and take better notice of expert user groups like CTC. Sadly this does not seem to be the case. Ironically one of the main features of the current proposals (swapping the bus and taxi lanes) is something that we recommended 10 years ago, but the designers still appear to be stubbornly unwilling to take our advice.

We were passed plans of the current proposals in April by Simon Young at NHDC. Simon was concerned at the poor quality of the proposals for cycle access and wanted CTC's comments. He was right to be concerned, the proposals for a shared pavement are entirely inappropriate and unhelpful. It goes against national and county guidelines, and is a measure of last resort, not first choice. We gave detailed comments as well as drafting out a plan for a more “people focused” forecourt.

Improving conditions for cycling was second only to increased pedestrianisation in the surveys conducted for the 1998 Hitchin Transport Plan. This is not a minority concern.

Ours were not the only concerns. We are aware that some of the station's immediate neighbours, who rely on the forecourt for access to their properties, have strong concerns with the scheme.

At the time we understood that a proper public consultation would be carried out before plans were finalised. This has not happened. An exhibition was put up at the station this week however it has been made clear that this is not a negotiable scheme and peoples' views are not being sought. Needless to say, none of the detailed comments provided by CTC have been taken on board.

A copy of our letter and plans can be downloaded from our campaign page at:

<http://host.qsoftdns.net/~stevenag/site/campaignnews.htm>

This is a dreadful way for public transport infrastructure to be managed. Ten years is a very short life for such a vital piece of infrastructure. We cannot afford to go digging the station up every decade, there are

CTC is the UK's largest cycling organisation with 70,000 members

Right to ride is the CTC's volunteer campaign network – working for all cyclists at the local level



so many other pressing needs. It needs to be done once only, and done right. Rushing a scheme through while trampling users' opinions and best practice guidelines underfoot is not the way to go about it.

We have now managed to arrange for an on-site meeting with the designers after considerable pressure on our part, and with the assistance of the District Council. We may be cynical but we suspect that this will be an exercise in "justifying" the design rather than improving it. Past experience suggests that a couple of meaningless token changes will be offered in order to appease objectors without changing anything of importance.

This isn't acceptable.

We are asking for your assistance with the following:

- 🚲 This process cannot be rushed through. There needs to be a proper **public consultation**, followed by a period for review and reflection, and then the design needs to be improved to give the best, most balanced solution, taking those views into account.
- 🚲 The designers must approach discussions with open minds, **prepared to make changes**. Our impression to date has been that they are completely unwilling to contemplate any deviation from their own views.
- 🚲 People must come before motor vehicles. That is the stated policy, it would be nice to see it applied for once. Nobody wants more traffic on Hitchin's roads so let's genuinely encourage people to walk or cycle instead. That means **designing for walking and cycling first**, then fitting motor vehicle circulation around that, not the other way around.
- 🚲 The designers, Mouchel, are typical of most engineering consultancies (I am a consulting engineer so I know what I am talking about). They are fine at designing for motor vehicles but have little grasp of designing public spaces for anything else. Their instinct is to marginalise pedestrians and cyclists, putting them in a corner, out of the way rather than designing around them. We need a **specialist designer** on board who can bring some fresh air and imagination into the forecourt design. We recommend Hamilton Baillie Associates who are advising on the Cambridge Station redevelopment.
- 🚲 All cycling infrastructure must be designed to the **highest quality**, not the nastiest, most unusable facilities available. Cycling infrastructure should positively **encourage** people to use it. It should not put people off cycling by being difficult and hazardous to use. It is not difficult to design well, there is no shortage of guidance available; designers just need to apply that guidance instead of making it up as they go along.

Yours Sincerely

Alasdair DV Massie

Ceng MIStructE

CTC Right to Ride Representative,
North Herts

CTC is Britain's largest cycling organisation with 70,000 members. Formed in 1878 we have actively campaigned for better, safer roads, locally and nationally since our inception. We have a large and active section for Stevenage and North Herts.

Susan Dye

Secretary

Hitchin Triangle Residents
Association

Dave Borner

Cycle Campaigner