
Title **Making space for people on Mill Road**
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The closure of Mill Road while a sinkhole was repaired prompted people to wonder whether the road could be closed permanently to through traffic. Some have called for a trial closure and Camcycle is putting forward a vision for a Mill Road with wider pavements, improved streetscape with parklets, and more cycle parking.

The café tables on the pavement around 196 Cocktail Bar hint at what a vibrant street culture we could have if Mill Road were more hospitable for people, and less so for motor vehicles. As a local, I'd love to see this. It's exactly the vision that our local community should be aspiring to.

But, wearing my Smarter Cambridge Transport hat, I have two concerns: the first is about the practical impact of a closure point on vehicles needing to access homes and businesses. Even if Mill Road were opened up in the early morning for shop deliveries, at other times, motor vehicles of all sizes (other than buses) would have to be directed around loops through residential streets either side of the closure point.

A bigger concern is the effect of treating this part of the city's road network in isolation. Mill Road is special, particularly to those who live around it, but it's not the only city street deserving of special attention. Camcycle acknowledge that some through traffic would be displaced to Cherry Hinton Road. However, it argues that this would be temporary, as more people choose to walk, cycle, or use the quicker bus services along Mill Road. People who live around Cherry Hinton Rd may not be convinced.

How about we support each other in making *all* our streets safe, vibrant, healthy, clean and quiet places to live, shop, work and play? Rather than displace traffic, let's aim to reduce the volume of motor traffic everywhere in the city by making alternatives to driving a whole lot more attractive:

- safe and attractive walking and cycling routes throughout the city;
- easy and affordable bus travel to any part of the city;
- fewer, smaller and zero- or low-emission delivery vehicles.

This vision is broadly shared by Smarter Cambridge Transport, Camcycle, the Bus Users Group and others. We need our politicians to agree on how to make it happen.

The mayor's proposal for a 'metro' with tunnels under the city is excitingly ambitious, but it distracts from all the other stuff we need to be getting on with. We are unlikely to see a 'metro' line open within a decade because much has yet to be decided: the network geography, technology, funding, and integration with other public transport, in particular Cambridge

railway station. Parts of the city, especially around the Biomedical Campus, cannot wait ten years. For now, walking, cycling, train and buses are the only viable alternatives to driving.

Outside the city, part of the answer is to build travel hubs for buses, similar to rural railway stations, with good walking and cycling links to as many homes as possible, as well as workplaces and schools; a pick-up/drop-off area and limited parking; lighting, shelter, cycle parking, toilets, accurate information and WiFi to make them safe and convenient places to make connections.

Bus services must become a convenient alternative to driving. That means running more 'express' services, following direct routes between hubs and widely spaced stops, longer hours of service on most routes, and fairer fares (the two-zone system makes a return trip to Cambridge from Sawston the same price as from Peterborough!) A multi-operator ticket with free transfers at more or less the same price as a single operator ticket would expand the network available to people, and encourage other operators to compete with Stagecoach.

A frequent complaint about buses is that it takes too much time and effort to go anywhere other than the city centre. Drummer St has to be the most confusing bus station in Britain, with twenty-three bus bays in five locations and no central information point (other than an unusable kiosk). You may have to walk 200m and cross roads with no designated, yet alone controlled, crossing points. This needs to change.

And, while we're about it, we should stop running large buses through the narrow, crowded streets of central Cambridge: St Andrew's St, Hobson St, King St, Jesus Lane, Round Church St, Bridge St, Magdalene St, Silver St and Trumpington St. Credit to the bus drivers for safely navigating these streets every day, but people walking and cycling would feel much safer without large buses. Smarter Cambridge Transport has some detailed ideas for how to achieve this, which you can find on our website.

Radical reorganisation of buses will probably require the Combined Authority to use its franchising powers, but there are some intermediate steps to get there, which Smarter Cambridge Transport is exploring.

We need sensible conversations about how to reduce traffic and re-allocate road space. More parking controls, access restrictions and a congestion charge will all seem more acceptable to those affected if they have viable alternatives to driving and parking in the city.

What would help you and your visitors to use a car less? Could you share a car or use ZipCar? What holds you back from taking the bus? Or cycling? Or walking? Write to your councillors if you have suggestions that could help reduce dependency on cars. Smarter Cambridge Transport, Camcycle, the Cambridge Area Bus Users Group and Railfuture will all be happy to help you make a difference.

If you're a resident of Romsey, you may want to talk to your local councillors about bringing in a residents parking scheme. The new West Coleridge residents parking zone, combined with the

opening of the new mosque, is likely to generate more traffic around Mill Road and create additional competition for on-street parking.

You can find out more about Smarter Cambridge Transport and ideas we've put forward to improve all modes of transport in and around Cambridge, and sign up for our weekly *Thought for the Week* on our website smartertransport.uk.