

FEN DITTON PARISH COUNCIL

Cambridgeshire County Council Planning Department
SH1311, Shire Hall
Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

16 August 2016

Attention: Case Officer [Elizabeth Verdegem](#)

Dear Sirs,

Response to: **Planning application ref: C/5005/16/CC** – Chesterton Cycle Bridge

We refer to the above planning application of 25 June 2016 and submit the comments of Fen Ditton Parish Council (FDPC) to support our recommendation on the above consultation. FDPC's response is presented below in 2 parts:

-Part 1 shows our overall objections to the proposed siting in Ditton Meadows and the towpath on the left (northern) bank towpath of the River Cam. It also details our recommendation that the Bridge application should be considered alongside the Chisholm trail since the two schemes cannot fulfill their potential independently;

-Part 2 shows our objections and other comments relating to the details presented in the application and supporting documents. These mainly focus on the abutment, the approach paths, the ditch realignment and the usage modeling. We have indicated suggested some points where our objections could be overcome by attaching suitable Conditions if Planning Permission were to be granted. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you those areas where the application requires clarification or has omissions.

We expect you will receive many individual responses from our residents since the proposals have been widely published within the community. However, we have been informed that many residents, both opposed and in support, have experienced difficulties in accessing your website to view and make comments. We also share the concern of many of our residents that such an important consultation should be taking place in the holiday season; a well publicised, further extension of the consultation period would mitigate this.

May we take this opportunity to thank you for the invitations to the earlier consultation meetings extended to FDPC and residents.

Yours faithfully,



Sarah Smart;
Parish Clerk
pp, Fen Ditton Parish Council
email: clerk@fenditton-pc.org.uk

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Part 1 – FDPC Objection to Proposed Siting on Ditton Meadows

- 1) FDPC recognizes the importance of Ditton Meadows and Stourbridge Common as water meadows forming the green, River Cam Corridor and notes that Ditton Meadows and Stourbridge Common are part of a conservation area and a City wildlife Site/ Protected Open Space. Approximately one third of Ditton Meadows lies within the parish of Fen Ditton and designated Conservation Area. The whole of Ditton Meadows facing east from under the Victorian iron railway provides a backdrop to views of this ancient village characterised by curve of the river, riverside graded properties, the tower of St Mary's, traditional farm outbuildings and mature native trees. With the exception of two iron kissing gates all foot bridges, stock fencing and gates are timber in keeping with the conservation status and character of the meadows. The relationship of Ditton Meadows to Fen Ditton on this east side of Cambridge is as Granchester Meadows is to Granchester village to the west of Cambridge. The tranquillity, rural aspect, grazing cattle and sustained ecological management of the meadows under the Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme: "The meadows have been grazed by cattle for centuries and traditional grazing management continues today" all adds to its character and charm.
- 2) The meadows downstream of the railway bridge form a tranquil area used by picnickers and walkers and the views towards Cambridge across the meadows from the village are of high importance to the community.
- 3) FDPC has a policy of objecting to development on the meadows downstream of the railway bridge. Our previously submitted objections include responses to:
 - a. preliminary consultations on a new cycle/pedestrian bridge linking Abbey and Chesterton (July 2014)
 - b. the Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (September 2013);
 - c. aspects of Planning Application C/05001/13/CC – erection of station building etc., land at Chesterton Sidings (Science Park Station) (September 2013);
 - d. the alignment of the Millennium Cycleway in the late 1990s
 - e. proposals to build a road bridge in the 1980s/90s
- 4) Whilst recognizing that, by staying close to the railway line, the proposed route across the Meadow and River Cam is less intrusive than alternatives crossing the more open areas, FDPC objects, in line with our policy, to the proposal since it will further reduce the rural aspect of the Meadows and there will be a reduction in the quality of the views across the Meadows.
- 5) FDPC notes that the original feasibility level study was scoped to exclude any new crossing or improvements in the river reach from the layby next to the former Pike and Eel Pub up to the Green Dragon Bridge. This is a significant omission of possibly viable options. We suggest that if an option such as this is feasible, possibly on a skew with a ramp into the layby area next to the former Pike and Eel it might allow for conjunctive use with Green Dragon and would be particularly useful to bank parties following rowing crews up and downstream during training and the city and university 'bumps' races. In contrast, a bridge site east of railway would be of limited use to bank parties due to the need to pass under the railway and then negotiate the access ramps. We acknowledge that a site east of the railway would be of use to spectators and others on the day of the Cambridge Regatta since this is end of the Long Reach course.;
- 6) We conclude that there is a risk that there is a greater need to develop a route that better serves the dominant north-south trend for journeys across the river west of the railway rather than imposing a link east of the railway assuming that Abbey, Fen Ditton and, eventually, Wing will themselves generate the extra journeys to

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justify the cost and environmental damage. We also consider that a link east of the railway is unlikely to attract any users from west of Green Dragon (see our detailed comments below on the usage modelling).

- 7) FDPC consider that, given the high overall scheme cost, it is important to get the alignment and siting right especially if there are funds and compulsory purchase powers available. This requires a thorough review so that the right site and the right sizing is identified and the project is not seen to be wasteful of public funds.
- 8) FDPC suggests the overall value of a new bridge to Fen Ditton residents is likely to be small since the incremental time saving is small for the probably few persons cycling to the new station, Science Park or Cambridge Regional College. We acknowledge that the time saving will be more significant for the, probably, even fewer pedestrians. There will be marginal gains for journeys by residents linking along or across Newmarket Road.
- 9) FDPC is concerned that there will be an increase in parking problems in the village as an in-combination effect from the new station under construction and this proposed bridge since we believe some users will choose to drive as close as possible to the Meadow before cycling or walking to the new station. Such an impact or effect has been omitted from the planning documents for either project. We therefore request an undertaking or assurance that the County Council will support Fen Ditton in mitigating such parking problems if they arise in future.
- 10) To summarise, FDPC objects in principle to this application since:
 - a. potential alternatives and their capacity to meet the dominant north-south demand have not been investigated and the more SE-NW, Abbey-Chesterton axis served by this proposal will be a minor component of overall demand for journeys across the river;
 - b. the expected cost of the scheme is such that review of the proposed route is needed to identify the right site and the right size so that the project is not seen to be wasteful of public funds;
 - c. the direct effect on Fen Ditton will be a reduction of the rural aspect of the Meadows; a reduction in the quality of the views across the Meadows due to the accesses and bridge and an increase in car parking problems .
 - d. the bridge application has been brought forwards separately from one for the Chisholm Trail and with little discussion of the interfaces. This is a major weakness since the two schemes cannot fulfill their potential independently. We suggest any permission for the bridge is deferred until there has been an opportunity to comment on an application for the relevant parts of the Chisholm Trail.

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Part 2 – FDPC detailed comments on the Planning Application

1) Planning Statement

- a. Para 2.3 is misleading in that it shows “Coldhams Brook” running east of the embankment whereas this is now an artificial ditch. The main channel of the watercourse from Coldhams Common (named elsewhere in the submission as the Cherry Hinton Brook) actually flows through a culvert under the railway embankment then connects to the River Cam west of the railway. Clearly the 19th century railway engineers chose to build a short culvert under the railway and keep the Cherry Hinton Brook on its present course. Instead, the artificial drainage ditch fulfils a very local land drainage function for the Meadows and the railway embankment although it could carry overflows if the railway culvert were surcharged. This is an important distinction because it means there is no baseflow in the artificial ditch and the ecology and, possibly, the flood risk will be different from that of the continuously flowing Cherry Hinton Brook. The distinction is confirmed by the flow arrows shown on Sheet A8 (Agency and Hydrological) of the Envirocheck Report, Page 125 of 180, in the Land Contamination Desk Study. FDPC consider that the planning submission gives too much emphasis on treating the “Coldhams Brook” as a flowing watercourse rather than maximizing its visual and ecological potential as a seldom flowing local land drain. The various documents in the submission are somewhat inconsistent and, as a result, the cross drainage structures are oversized and too intrusive.
- b. Para 2.9 is misleading. The existing cycle path actually connects only to Abbey. The footpath and permitted access track along the river bank to Fen Ditton are not suitable for bicycles. This is an important distinction because of the greater numbers of cyclists with a desire line connecting with Ditton Walk and the south and south east rather than connecting along the towpath. The future Chisholm Trail is expected to further develop the connectivity to Ditton Walk and the south but would not affect the pedestrian access to Fen Ditton. Elsewhere in our submission, FDPC propose consideration of the bridge haul road for improving the connectivity to Ditton Walk within this scheme or the Chisholm Trail itself. This highlights the need to consider an application for some or all of the Chisholm Trail in parallel with the bridge.
- c. Para 3.7. FDPC welcomes the use of low level lighting (providing it does not impact on foraging bats) and requests that the avoidance of high level lighting is enforced through a condition if the planning permission is granted.
- d. Para 5.11 and following. FDPC considers that the proposal does not “successfully” integrate into existing networks in that the north abutment would provide a tortuous, poor connection to Fen Road and remains potentially dangerous by its design. Since this is the area of the new railway station and transport hub, this is an important connection.
- e. Para 5.35. FDPC requests that all construction traffic and driver awareness training should follow the emerging best practice for avoiding collisions with cyclists and that this is enforced through a Condition on the construction if the planning permission is granted.
- f. Para 5.89 refers to a WFD assessment naming a different watercourse. The Cherry Hinton Brook does not flow through the proposed bridge site but, as is made clear elsewhere, is in fact the watercourse joining the River Cam upstream (west) of the existing railway. The watercourse running through the site is named in this application as the Coldhams Brook but as

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noted by FDPC this does not carry flow from Coldhams Common unless the railway culvert is blocked or surcharged.

- g. Para 6.5 refers to the initial consultation of 2014 (we note the report is not available with the planning documents at <http://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/swift/apas/run/WPHAPPDETAIL.DisplayUrl?theApnID=C/5005/16/CC&theTabNo=3&backURL=%3Ca>) as stated. Furthermore FDPC has submitted previously that the original report ignored a petition in which a large number of people from Fen Ditton objected. The planning statement is thus biased, especially where numerical analyses are given, by excluding the opinion given by these people.
- h. Para. 3.5 – the consultation indicated dark green not Cambridge Blue; FDPC considers the latter to be a more intrusive colour FDPC acknowledge that the proposed Cambridge Blue is described as a recessive colour, however this colour is not conducive to the meadows' rural character and existing wooden gates, foot bridges etc and brings an urban quality to the bridge. Materials for the railings are not specified but current computer images indicate white which FDPC do not consider conducive to a rural character. FDPC recommend consideration of traditional colours eg tones of dark green in keeping with the public consultation about colour choices. Railings etc. should have black paint or other traditional colour more in keeping with the traditional and historical setting than a contemporary setting. The railings under Victoria Avenue bridge are an example.
- i. FDPC note that the ramp options in Appendix B are not discussed in the Planning Statement.

2) GA Plan (referenced Drawing KA082/TPA/102)

- a. FDPC notes that a site visit by one of our councillors confirms the indication from historic air photography (see Google earth and others) that there appears to have been some poaching of the margins of the River Cam in the area of the proposed bridge. The GA Plan suggests there is no attempt to restore the river bank to its former alignment. Restoration would allow the bridge to be shortened (thus reducing the cost and mass of the structure) and the dogleg in the Cycleway to be largely removed.
- b. The GA does not extend far enough south to show how the cycle way ties into the bridge approach. However, drawing KA082/TPA/101 does extend further south, and working from this, FDPC suggests the existing land drainage ditch along the railway embankment toe should be resited east of the Chisholm Trail and cycle way to join the towpath since it would deter cattle from straying onto the path (see for example Drawing KA082/TPA/501) ; facilitate a straightened alignment between Chisholm and the approach ramp which will be the dominant desire line and allow vegetation in the ditch to form a screen and be maintained from the field. Our proposed change might also facilitate the translocation of water voles (refer to Ecological Impact Assessment para 4.4.1) and allow the possibility of a new pond area to be included if this is a suitable enhancement. Continuing further south, a second culvert at the head of the drainage ditch might be avoidable since, as stated in our Para 1 a) above, the ditch does not normally connect to the watercourse draining Coldhams Common .
- c. FDPC suggest that a paved width of around 2 or possibly 2.5 m on the section linking the tow path to the approach ramp should be the upper limit since there will be grass berms at grade on both edges acting as a buffer strip and this link will not be the main approach to the bridge. The

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2m wide Millennium Cycleway on Ditton Meadow is a good example of how this is a practical measure. We object to wider paths since there is an increased tendency for them to be used by motor vehicles, motor cycles and quad bikes. We think the deterrence effect of smaller widths is required since enforcement is ineffective.

3) Design and Access Statement

- a. Para 4.1. FDPC consider that the evolution of the alignment and design was carried out within too narrow a range and with too little justification in view of the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists likely to use this choice. This application appears to merely reinforce the previous solution and so the question of alignment or alternatives has still not been addressed.
- b. Para 4.3. FDPC considers the section of the proposed route north of the River Cam to be an obstacle to use of the Chisholm Trail on an alignment east of the main railway since it involves a 270 degree loop to link to the northern towpath, a short journey along the towpath and a further 90 degree turn to complete the 360 degree loop to link to the roads leading to the planned Chesterton station. Since the desire line is parallel to the railway, the design seems badly compromised since there is no direct link to Fen Road with a safe means for crossing the railway to access the proposed station and busway.
- c. Para 5.2. FDPC considers that the colour of the surfacing of the cycle and pedestrian areas should be more sympathetic than the grey and black shown on Figure 4. These colours give an urban look whereas, for example, the sandy brown used on the Riverside Bridge is preferable.
- d. Para 5.7. FDPC welcomes the reduction in the impact on the meadow and views from Fen Ditton resulting from the alignment of the route between the proposed bridge and Newmarket Road running close and parallel to the railway south of the River Cam.
- e. Para 5.8. Whilst recognizing the desire for a concrete abutment to support the bridge deck, FDPC objects to the use of fair faced concrete on the wing walls (see also KA082/TPA/201) and the shallow retaining walls providing 'offline seating' since these are likely to become sites for **graffiti** and thus continued periodic maintenance. We suggest that reinforced earth, as shown on Figure 8 in Section 6, or some other finish is considered although this might increase the area of vegetation to be managed. The combination of reinforced earth slopes and near level berms as a seating area would probably drain better than the proposed design and may also deter antisocial behavior. FDPC considers that the landscaping and planting needs to soften the impact of the scheme by inclusion of medium sized shrubs in the planters and more generally.
- f. Para 6. FDPC suggest the 50mm kerb is a hazard to cyclists and pedestrians unless the height difference is tapered and painted as in at least one other combined path (along the newly built Huntingdon Road towards Storey's Way?) in Cambridge.
- g. Section 8. See our para 2.c) above with regard to lighting. In addition, FDPC suggest the use of ground level coloured lighting studs to mark the edge of the towpath opposite the bottom of the steps, the run out of the access ramps and through the underside of both bridges.
- h. Para 9.1. FDPC notes the statement that the existing timber jetty structure will be removed and replaced. We assume that, rather than under this Planning Application, a Chisholm application will cover the redesign and installation of an enhanced jetty and so we reserve any comments other than to note that we consider that this walkway will remain a dangerous, especially when slippery, bottleneck unless improvements are made.

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However, FDPC suggest that a Condition is imposed to offer an alternative to a like for like replacement in the event that Chisholm is delayed.

- i. Para 9.2. FDPC suggests that the proposed sheet piling is used to restore the poached margins of the River Cam. See our para 1 above.
- j. Para 9.8. FDPC suggest that a Condition is imposed to include a permanent cycle access along the haul road from the Ditton Walk worksite in the event that Chisholm is delayed. This could follow the red line area shown on Drawing 5040126/HWY/LP001.
- k. Section 9 –general. FDPC consider there is an important omission in that there is no discussion of the duration of the blockade of the Millenium Cycleway or whether any mitigation measures would be incorporated to reduce the impact. We suggest this is dealt with through a Condition.

4) Arboricultural Impact Assessment

- a. This does not appear to cover all of the red line area shown on Drawing 5040126/HWY/LP001. FDPC suggest that a Condition is imposed to cover this omission in the event that Chisholm is delayed.

5) Ecological Impact Assessment

- a. Para 1.1. FDPC notes that the temporary works haul roads have been partially excluded and suggests that, at the least, a Condition is imposed to remedy this omission.
- b. Table 3.1 FDPC disagrees that “Coldham's Brook” can be considered to qualify ‘as an unmodified chalk stream’ since this is merely a local land drain on the floodplain. If in fact the table was intended to refer to the Cherry Hinton Brook it is still inaccurate since this carries considerable runoff from the built environment and areas of superficial gravels and former gravel workings.
- c. Table 3.4. FDPC notes that there does not appear to have been any investigation of the conchology present nor explanation of what ‘Coldams Ditch East’ refers to. FDPC also considers that a wider spatial scope needs to be considered for otters since they have been reported in the general area and we, elsewhere, propose that consideration is given to developing a pond on the realigned ditch named as Coldhams Brook which might then enhance the habitat for otters.
- d. FDPC has been informed that there are invasive plant species in the area in contradiction to the EIA findings. Himalayan Balsam is flowering in the area of railway embankment. FDPC recommends a Condition that management of constructions works shall prevent the spread of Himalayan Balsam from the railway embankment to other areas of the Meadows.
- e. FDPC considers that the whole issue of cattle grazing is not given sufficient weight in the design and the EIA. We suggest that the proposed realignment of the ditch labelled Coldham's Brook is continued further south nearer to its existing termination point so that cattle are kept off the main north-south cycle path and approach ramps and any poaching of the margins of the ditch will tend to be on the side away from the cycle path. The west bank of the ditch could then develop a riparian vegetation since it would be ungrazed. Our proposal would avoid the need for a fence to keep cattle off the cycle path although the application omits consideration of whether or not one will be needed.
- f. FDPC suggests the EIA should give greater consideration to the wider context of the River Cam corridor. Our policy recognizes the importance of the corridor and we consider that the EIA does not give sufficient weight to the fragmentation resulting from this proposal.

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- 6) Landscape Character Area – Figure 1. This map omits the Fen Ditton Conservation Area which extends across around 1/3 of Ditton Meadows. In contrast the Chesterton Conservation Area is shown although it is further and lacks a direct sight line to the proposed bridge. FDPC considers it a significant omission that the conservation area of Fen Ditton has been omitted from the Landscape Character Areas and that no assessment has been undertaken of the impact of the proposed development on the character of this conservation area and setting of this historical village and graded buildings, including St Mary's (Grade II) in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This omission is despite the quotation in the LVIA that "Policy 4/11 – Conservation Areas "Developments within, or which affect the setting of or impact on views into and out of Conservation Areas, will only be permitted if:
- a. They retain buildings, spaces, gardens, trees, hedges, boundaries and other site features which contribute positively to the character or appearance of the area; and
 - b. A new or intensified use will not lead to traffic generation or other impacts which would adversely affect the Area's character."
- It is of note a statement in the report follows this planning policy "There are no Listed Buildings within close proximity to the scheme."

FDPC consider that the relationship of the whole of Ditton Meadows to the setting of Fen Ditton Village and conservation area is such that this Policy statement has not been upheld and the impact on the Village and setting within Ditton Meadows should have been fully considered and in turn be shown to have informed the design.

- 7) Bridge Demand Forecast Report of May 2016
- a. FDPC is very concerned about the analysis and reporting of the forecast demand since this is used to underpin the justification and cost of the scheme. Since one of the main conclusions defies logic, we are concerned that some of the assumptions and the review process must be flawed. We suggest that the model study is updated to reflect concerns raised by FDPC and others.
 - b. The principle evidence that something is almost certainly wrong appears first in Table 2.4 which shows the predicted shift from the Base Case due to building the bridge and later adding the Chisholm Trail. We understand from the way the report is written that the shift from 'Base Case' also assumes Chesterton Station becomes operational since the station is not listed in the Future Developments and is obviously not included in the observed data used for calibration. The model then predicts that the new bridge will abstract 221 cycle trips from Elizabeth Way Bridge and a net 409 trips from Riverside. However, it is highly improbable that anyone now crossing these bridges would choose to cycle to a new bridge to access the new station given the lack of direct access from Newmarket Road, the presence of Green Dragon Bridge and its link to Fen Road and the need to do a 270 degree loop to get on the new bridge, a 360 degree loop to get off it to then travel along Fen Road to get the Station and connecting cycleway to the Science Park. The report appears to uncritically accept the model result and does not offer any explanation as to why the model predicts such an unlikely outcome or what origins and destinations are involved.
 - c. The results in Table 2.4 also shows that the model predicts the new bridge will abstract a net 409 trips from Green Dragon Bridge. It is again unlikely that users originating west or south of Green Dragon would be abstracted

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so the implication is that these are residents of areas east of the railway such as Fen Ditton, Barnwell etc. who are either abstracted from Cambridge Station or travelling to the Science Park. The latter group could include cyclists from south of Coldhams Common or Cherry Hinton. However, even this explanation may overestimate the potential use since FDPC has noted previously that our observations suggest very few cyclists using Green Dragon Bridge connect to the eastbound Millennium Cycleway.

- d. FDPC is concerned that the dis-utility of the proposed bridge's southern and northern approaches and the wooden walkway under the railway has not been explicitly included in the model as a time penalty and suggests this may be one source of error.
- e. FDPC is concerned that the various travel to work surveys conducted in 2014 and 2015 are not mentioned in Section 2.2 which refers to 2011 census data. The 2014 Travel to Work Survey concluded that 2189 respondents (35% of workforce) across 19 organisations in the Science Park Area (the TP+ Area) made 21.57% of weekday journeys by bicycle. The daily number of round trips by bicycle was therefore 1130. Assuming, in the absence of other data, the same modal split across non-respondents and that there are 25% from households north of the river, there would be 2422 bicycle round trips crossing the River Cam. It is extraordinary that there is no discussion of these data or use to verify the model inputs.
- f. FDPC also notes that a review of survey data for Green Dragon Bridge for the period 18 Mar 2012 to 4 Mar 2013 concludes that there around 1000 bicycle trips per day were counted at Green Dragon bridge in both directions. Table 2.2 gives a figure of 2500 trips and it is again notable that there is no discussion of these data to verify the model inputs nor discussion of the **seasonality of cycle usage**.
- g. Table 2.4 results show an increase of 540 cycle trips due to including the Chisholm Trail and the proposed bridge. These balance additional abstractions of 35, 76 (net) and 408 (net) at Elizabeth Way, Riverside and Green Dragon respectively. FDPC concur that an increase in abstraction from Green Dragon is plausible due to the improved north-south connectivity across Newmarket Road. However, we question the predicted usage figures since the case presented for the bridge alone is unrealistic.
- h. FDPC is also concerned that the future model case does not reflect the 2014 and 2015 cycle usage but uses higher percentages for travel to work simply because they have been quoted in previous predictions. In addition, the future cases may assume that bridge users will choose the nearest station whereas the timetables may give more choices at the existing Station and thus draw in more cyclists than predicted on distance alone. The Figure in Appendix H does not appear to show the planned development of the Chisholm Trail west of the Railway and north of the existing station nor a good, proposed connection between Chisholm and Ditton Walk. If these links were also absent in the "with Chisholm Trail" case, the overall predictions of future use of the Bridge will be affected.
- i. FDPC does not offer any comments on the sensitivity tests since we think the basic model is flawed as we have described above.