Jan 2016  Cross City Cycling consultation launched

Illustration from the consultation brochure shows the existing footpath adjacent to the Play Area as a new shared-use foot/cycleway (orange broken line). No other details are shown.

By zooming in to a drawing on the website it was possible to see that the path would be widened to 2.5m. Residents interpreted the text as meaning that the hedge would be replaced with new hedge planting. It also states that lighting is to be improved and barriers removed. No other landscaping or planting details were available.
June 2018  Detailed Landscape Drawing CCC/AR/LARCH/ver001 dated 07/06/18

This drawing clearly shows that the hedge is NOT to be replaced by new hedge planting, but it was not published for examination by councillors or the public until 14 December – after the hedge was removed – too late! It shows that the area is to be laid to grass up to the cycle-path with no form of barrier or protection for the play area which it formerly had by means of a low chain-link fence supported by concrete posts as well as the adjacent hedge. It also shows that five trees are to be removed and replaced by ten new trees of various species – see https://bit.ly/2GtD4rg

The fact that this drawing was not consulted on with members of the public or local councillors and not published on the GCP website was a grave and costly oversight. The removal of a protective barrier along the south-eastern edge of the play area could have serious consequences for the safety of young children. Parents and local residents should have had an opportunity to express their views.

An early consultation based on this drawing could also have addressed other safety concerns about the practicality of a shared-use path, markings on the surface and other signage – in particular the major concern of opening up another rat-run option for some motorcyclists who have plagued the Leys Road / Highworth Avenue pedestrian and cycle access point.

6 Dec 2018  Letter announcing commencement of works for Mon 10 Dec

Many residents did not have a chance to receive or read the letter until Sat 8th. It invited people to contact the Project Manager if they had any comments or questions.

10 Dec 2018  Arrival of Contractors’ Plant and Equipment on site

Local resident Alan Tait stages a sit-down protest in front of the hedge to prevent work from proceeding and insisting on a meeting with a representative from the County Council. He complains about lack of information on the works to be carried out, lack of consultation and lack of consideration of the safety issues. See news article: https://bit.ly/2BlCCWt. The officer states that the hedge will not be replaced.

11 Dec 2018  Trees cut down – work starts on removing the hedge and fence

12 Dec 2018  HPERA questions sent to Project Mgr and North Area Committee
13 Dec 2018  North Area Committee Meeting

Questions about lack of drawings, evidence of safety audit and consultation about hedge removal were raised in this meeting. Councillor Manning undertook to speak with the Executive Director at the County Council to seek a halt to the works.

14 Dec 2018  Landscape Drawing CCC/AR/LARCH/version 001 dated 07/06/18
The North Area Committee meeting prompts publication of this drawing the next day on the County Cycling Team’s website for the first time.

Highway/Path Drawing 5020087/PH2/HW/GA/104 dated 14/12/18
also appears on the website for the first time. It shows some sort of barrier at the southern end of the path - see https://bit.ly/2Fd1Slo

In response to questions from HPERA the Project Manager states that there are no plans to increase lighting along the path (despite the consultation drawing) and no plans for CCTV. His full responses are in Appendix A.

Cllr Manning obtains a commitment that work will not be completed until the design has been reviewed with councillors, officers and residents. He and Councillors Sargeant and Scutt will work to arrange a meeting as soon as practicable.

19 Dec 2018  Site meeting with councillors

08 Jan 2019  Site meeting with councillors and officers – a new landscape drawing (version 002 dated 04/01/19) was shown which included replanting of the missing hedge – see https://bit.ly/2DTHwMK. This was a good outcome and we wrote to officers and councillors the following day welcoming this development. Officers did not agree that the lighting on the new path is inadequate despite the statement on the original consultation drawings.
04 Feb 2019  HPERA is informed that there now has to be a public consultation before the hedge can be replanted.

11 Feb 2019  HPERA requests that any consultation letter should be reviewed by local councillors before it is sent out so that any concerns about bias can be avoided. This was agreed by officers but, for various reasons, only one councillor responded when the draft letter was sent on 14th Feb.

22 Feb - 08 Mar 2019  Consultation period. Many residents regarded the photos in the letter https://hpera.co.uk/documents/18-02-19-hedge-letter.jpg to be biased in favour of a ‘no-hedge’ outcome. A letter of complaint was sent to the GCP Chair, directors, officers and councillors on 6th March.

09 Apr 2019  GCP denies bias in the consultation but confirms a decision that the hedge will be replanted.

Appendix A

Thank you for your email of the 12th December 2018.

My response to your questions is detailed below -

1. The latest ‘up to date’ plans can be seen on the Greater Cambridge Partnership website. This includes the landscape details for the footpath and the cycleway scheme for this section of Arbury Road.

2. The original consultation which highlighted a new 2.5m ‘Shared Use’ path between Arbury Road and Leys Avenue was undertaken in 2016. At this point the detailed design had not been undertaken. The proposals were formulated in conjunction with Cambridge City Council’s landscape officers throughout 2018.

3. It is not our intention to segregate the path by using a solid white line. Our experience has shown that in doing so, this often creates more issues when either a cyclist or pedestrian isn’t using their side of the path. A more suitable compromise is to put cycle or pedestrian symbols on one side to indicate where individual users should be.

4. Following discussions with a number of local residents we are now actively looking at the redesign of the Leys Road end of the shared use path. As I mentioned in my email to Alan Tait on Monday of this week, we take safety very seriously and will incorporate any additional measures such as signage, white lining or tweaks to the railings that are currently in place to ensure this area is as safe as possible for all users.

5. Those cyclists using Arbury Road wishing to turn right and continue along the Shared use path will leave the cycle lane and use the crossing point shown on the plan mentioned above.

6. Appropriate signage prohibiting motorcyclists will be erected.

7. As far as I’m aware the barriers between the service road and the park are not being removed.

8. There are no proposals to install CCTV.

9. These are comments from the City Councils ecologist regarding the hedge removal and the mitigation measures for its removal -
The hedgerow has not been managed particularly well for wildlife to date. It has been kept cut short due to its proximity to the path and the need to retain views across the open space for natural surveillance. This has limited its potential as a nesting habitat and foraging opportunities in the form of winter berry crops. However, the hedge line does contain cover and linear connectivity along the boundary and some dead wood invertebrate opportunities within failed stumps. In addition, the grass along the park side is cut short which limits the base of hedge value for species such as hedgehogs. I understand direct replacement is not favoured due to the need to retain the natural surveillance of the widened route.

Works are being undertaken outside of the bird nesting season to avoid disturbance.

A careful search at the base of the hedge is being undertaken prior to clearance as there is a low potential for hibernating hedgehogs with the ivy covered base. If discovered they would be professionally assessed for condition and either taken to a hedgehog hospital or moved to an already identified adjacent piece of City Council owned land which has sufficient cover, connectivity and hibernating opportunities.

Proposed Mitigation:

- A deadwood feature using site won and additional hardwood. Opportunities for invertebrates as well as small mammals and amphibian.
- Long grass area to be left along the Arbury Road hedge line
- Additional planting of non-thorny native shrubs including hazel, dogwood, field maple. To help mitigate loss of nesting and foraging habitats
- Additional seeding or planting of wildflower turf beds to increase the range of opportunities for pollinating insects
- High quality bird boxes placed in existing trees for species such as Great Tit and Blue Tit
- Replacement tree planting to include native species such as the Wild Service Tree, Sorbus Tormentalis

10. As mentioned above, the plan is on the GCP website.
11. The current proposals do not include a new lighting layout.

I hope this answers your queries but don’t hesitate to contact me again should you wish too.

Kind regards

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