

REPORT OF THE MILTON ROAD HUSTINGS MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 28  
APRIL 2016  
AT 7 P.M. IN CHESTERTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NOTE This is a summary, not a verbatim record of the meeting. Anyone wishing full detail is referred to Richard Taylor's video recording (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDQaeuGkAw>)

Present: Charles Nisbet (Chairman of Milton Road Residents' Association  
Anne Cooper (Chair, Friends of Mitchams' Corner)  
John Beasley (representative of Hurst Park Estate Residents' Association)

Candidates for election for local wards

East Chesterton Peter Burkinshaw (UKIP)  
Margery Abbott (Labour)  
Jiameng Gao (Green)  
Shahida Rahman (Liberal Democrat)  
West Chesterton Nichola Harrison (Liberal Democrat)  
Mike Sargeant (Labour)  
Kings Hedges Angela Ditchfield (Green)

Apologies for absence were received from John Bachelor (Green, West Chesterton), Nigel Gawthrop (Labour, Kings Hedges - absent through illness) and Hugh Newsam (Liberal Democrat, Kings Hedges).

1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed the candidates and the audience to the Hustings Meeting, commenting that 15 candidates had been invited, of whom 5 did not respond at all, including all those representing the Conservative Party. The objective was to give voters the chance to hear the views of the different parties to enable them to make informed choices at the local elections scheduled for Thursday, 5 May 2016.

The meeting would consist of three parts. Each candidate would be given 90 seconds to speak, outlining their priorities if elected, then there would be prepared questions from the three residents' associations which had called the meeting. The questions would be based on the answers they had given to the questionnaire devised by HPERA (Hurst Park Estate Residents' Association). Members of the audience would then be invited to ask their own questions. The meeting was due to finish at 9 p.m.

2. Candidates' speeches

(Note: Candidates spoke in the order produced by drawing numbers out of a hat)

Nichola Harrison (Liberal Democrat, West Chesterton)

NH referred to her experience (14 years City Council and County Council, governor of Chesterton Community College) and listed her priorities as dealing with the problem of Mitchams' Corner gyratory, fighting the "appalling" plans for Milton Road proposed under the City Deal, and producing a strategy which was fair for local residents and commuters. She drew attention to the four goals for the City Deal set out by the Liberal Democrats in their literature. Public debate on the issues was important.

Mike Sargeant (Labour, West Chesterton)

The Labour Party wanted Cambridge to be a city which was "fair for all". He drew attention to the cost of housing which was squeezing out low earners. They intended to build more affordable housing and to encourage employers to pay £8.60 per hour as a realistic Living Wage. By investment they were avoiding cutting services and keeping on the lights. They guaranteed to keep in touch with residents, calling door to door at least once a year. Priorities were dealing with the Mitchams' Corner problem, segregated cycleways, better developments, buses serving the local areas, reduced parking and a review of the school catchment area.

Shahida Rahman (Liberal Democrat, East Chesterton)

SR remarked that she had been born in Cambridge and grew up in West Chesterton. She had been to Chesterton Community College, and two of her children attended there. She was a governor of the school. Of Bangladeshi origin, she was a member of a steering committee standing up against racism. Cambridge was a diverse city and she wished to see that reflected in the people who represented the citizens. Her priorities included tackling anti-social behaviour, provision of youth projects, and enhancing the local environment e.g greening. She wished to see the police enforcing speed limits across the area.

Margery Abbott (Labour, East Chesterton)

MA said she had also been born in Cambridge and both she and her children went to local schools. As she did not drive, she focused her attention on the bus service and the provision for pedestrians. Her main priority was housing. She anticipated parking problems in the wards as a result of the new North Cambridge station which was due to be built.

Peter Burkinshaw (UKIP, East Chesterton)

PB referred to his 14 years in Cambridge since retirement. He believed there was insufficient consultation with the public. His main interest was in transport. There seemed to be a view "two wheels good, four wheels bad". Cyclists, however, did not pay attention to the safety of pedestrians and bus lanes were not used by buses e.g. Victoria Avenue. There was "too much wasted road space".

Angela Ditchfield (Green, Kings Hedges)

AD said she believed in working for the common good, although accepting there were limits. She fought for global justice. She had been to Cambridge University, was a single mother and had experienced mental health problems. She believed there were a number of vulnerable people in Kings Hedges and, if elected, would give them a voice on the City Council. Her priorities were building affordable housing, supporting

mental health provision and helping the vulnerable in general. It was important to preserve the green space in Kings Hedges and she was committed to public consultation.

Jiameng Gao (Green, East Chesterton)

JG had lived in Cambridge for 5 years. The City Deal plans seemed to be simply moving congestion elsewhere. There needed to be a holistic approach to solving the problem. A priority for the Green Party was to improve air quality, not only for the city, but for the benefit of the planet.

3. Answers to questions prepared by Residents' Associations

Q1. What configuration of bus lanes do you envisage for Milton Road?

AD - tidal bus lane - supports views of Cambridge Cycling Campaign. However might not need it if other measures implemented.

MS - against City Deal proposals. No need for more than one bus lane. Should give priority to buses at junctions. Could look at tidal flow.

JG - Smart traffic systems to be implemented. Can be problems currently for cyclists. Avoid shifting traffic elsewhere. Supports provision of trees and verges.

MA - no need for two bus lanes. One is fine - possibly tidal (though not sure how this would work down the middle of the road).

PB - no need for bus lane from Kings Hedges down to Mitchams' Corner, though OK further out. Bus lanes in the middle of the road are problematic. Good to see cyclists segregated from traffic, but not possible without widening the road.

NH - Can't envisage two bus lanes. Maybe right to keep the current arrangement for bus lanes. Other measures might be implemented to reduce the number of bus lanes.

SR - Reject City Deal proposals. Have to reduce traffic in Milton Road and provide efficient bus service. Supports points made by NH.

Q2. What is your favoured lay-out for cycle lanes along Milton Road?

SR - Shared bus lanes and cycle lanes can be dangerous. Must consider needs of pedestrians. (Also made same points as in answer to Q1.)

PB - Cycle paths are currently on half the pavement where there is space. Impossible to reduce traffic - not everyone can cycle and people need cars to go to supermarkets etc.

JG - Buses get stuck in the city centre. Need for more cycle lanes. Some of grass may need to be removed to allow for them.

AD - Agrees with JG, though hopes reduction of grass and trees could be minimized and other, better trees planted elsewhere. Follow Danish/Dutch models for junctions for safer cycling. Need to compromise i.e. have two directional cycle path along section of Milton Road so parents and children do not have to cross and re-cross the road en route to school.

MS - spearheaded cycle lane for Gilbert Road, which, though controversial, worked. Refers to death of cyclist on Milton Road -

clear safer cycling priority i.e. segregation from traffic. Junctions should give priority to cyclists and perhaps pedestrians as they cross roads.

NH – agrees with a lot of MS’s points. Should meet needs of cyclists and pedestrians. Some cyclists want speed, others want to feel safer. Need to have mix and match solutions – semi on road and off road. Should be clear demarcation between cyclists and pedestrians. If only one bus lane down Milton Road there is room for this.

MA – need separate lanes on pavements. Milton Road is a residential road – grass and trees should not be sacrificed.

Q3 One stated objective in the City Deal is to enhance the environment, how would you ensure good urban design?

MS – City Council is looking at re-designing Mitchams’ Corner under the Local Plan. Need a better road system. Problem is way to move traffic through area swiftly. Developers working on possible scheme which will be put out for public consultation.

AD – City Deal proposals should be sent back and have proper public consultation, involving local people. Use smart traffic management to tackle congestion (see Green Party manifesto.)

MA – agrees with MS. Consultation very important. Would like to see more businesses in the area (as in the past).

PB – traffic movement needs re-organisation – e.g. funnelled round Staples where traffic lights cause delays. Cut through, even if at expense of current “green triangle”.

JG – wants to keep trees and grass. Local people should have a chance to give their views.

SR – need residents’ views. Important to limit environmental damage. Trees matter.

NH – City Deal presents opportunity. Money is on offer and know-how should be tapped into. At her instigation the City Deal Board has been encouraged to incorporate a Design Guide which sets out minimal guarantees.

At this point, the Chairman intervened and indicated that to save time where there were two candidates representing one party, only one should respond.

Q4 Do you support the removal of trees? If not, how do you envisage them being incorporated in a future development?

AD – May have to move some and plant others elsewhere.

NH – oppose City Deal in its entirety. Protect trees and verges and enhance air quality. Would personally like to see forest tree avenue.

PB – current trees and verges satisfactory – possibly trim back at Union Lane.

MS – challenges NH, saying Liberal Democrats were involved in meetings which approved sending City Deal proposals out to public consultation.\* Milton Road, being residential, should be tree-lined. Must have increased use by cyclists and be safer for pedestrians. May have to take some trees out. Put back mature trees, not saplings.

\*(NH responds to the challenge by saying Labour as well as the Liberal Democrats have now recognised that intrusive engineering schemes are not right.)

Q5 As there is considerable local support for the removal of the gyratory at Mitchams corner, how would you bring your experience to bear to ensure this?

NH – clear challenge is funding. The objectives for the City Deal have to be met.

MS – money will be required from developers, so have to have a design they will support. One idea from the FMC was to remove Barclays Bank, thus giving access to the river.

PB – not in favour of concept of removing a business serving local people! Solution is to separate traffic earlier.

AD – refers to the usefulness of walking along Milton Road with local representatives from MRRRA, HPERA and FMC, and hearing their views. Agrees with PB's suggestion. Emphasizes requirement for a solution safer for cyclists and pedestrians than current situation.

Q6. Is it time to introduce congestion charging? If so, how can it be made fair for those with mobility issues and those trying to drive out of the city?

PB – “congestion is here to stay”. It is a result of having high employment which is welcome. Not in favour of congestion charging. Should have more central carparks.

NH – In favour of congestion charging, though requires public support (City Deal should instigate consultation now.) Exemption for Blue Badge holders, also those going out of the city. Although cautious about exemptions/discounts, recognises that public transport alternatives are not always available. Money raised from charge should be ring-fenced, being ploughed back into public transport, repairing roads etc.

JG – agrees with congestion charging – would help to reduce commuter parking in local streets. Should be some exemptions. Motorists should be encouraged to drive cars with low emissions. Park and Ride should be free.

MS – not keen on congestion charging. People on low incomes squeezed out of Cambridge. Congestion charge is not equitable. University of Cambridge looking at making possible parking charges on their premises related to employee salaries. Refers to parents taking children to school. Does not support gating. Wants smart traffic management, and breaks in the inner ring road. Should look at orbital roads so people do not need to go through the city centre.

Q7. What is your position on parking controls in Cambridge? Do you support the concept of trialling first? (Smarter Cambridge Transport suggestion refers.)

MA – evidence of people parking inconsiderately. Supports trialling.

MS – support residents parking schemes, but need to be aware of domino effect. Not in favour of city wide trial – would be very expensive.

NH – agrees with MS. City-wide trial draconian, impractical and expensive. Should look at individual schemes local residents want, but warns that views often differ, even from those living on same street.

AD – likes trials and evidence-based solutions. Suggests 7 a.m. – 9 a.m. restrictions as option e.g. in Ascham Road. Prefers congestion charge to parking controls across city.

PB – roads are public utility. Those parking on roads should pay. Residents should consider allocating space in front gardens to parking their cars.

Q8. The replacement of the Highworth Avenue roundabout with traffic lights has been proposed, involving the closure of the southern end of Highworth Avenue, opening up the north end. The majority of residents are against this, although the Cambridge Cycling Campaign supports it on the grounds of cycle safety. What is your position on these measures?

MS – personal experience of being knocked off his bicycle at the roundabout so in favour of replacement with smartly controlled traffic lights which would give cyclists priority. Might consider installation of traffic lights while retaining roundabout. Not in favour of closing off Highworth Avenue.

JG – against closing off Highworth Avenue. Concern that buses sometimes do not consider cyclists sufficiently at roundabouts.

SR – whole City Deal proposal needs to be re-considered. Junctions work together.

PB – closing roads simply shunts traffic elsewhere involving driving further

Q9. Given that roads and highways are the responsibility of the County Council, how do you see yourselves influencing these issues if elected to the City Council?

MA – agrees that is a problem. However, the City Deal is tri-partite, thus crossing party lines.

NH – this is an opportunity not a problem. The City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and the County Council will be working together cross party on the City Deal. People need to come into the city from outside for jobs and education.

PB – believes number of pedestrian crossings need to be reduced as they hold up traffic – zebra crossings more appropriate in places.

AD – Influence can be brought to bear on all the councils involved. Creative campaigning required.

At this point the Chairman curtailed the prepared questions in order to open the meeting to the floor.

#### 4. Answers to questions from the floor

- Q1 Are the candidates happy that only three people have the power to make decisions with regard to the City Deal?  
MS - believes in democracy, but has to be effective. Democracy is catered for at Board level and Assembly level. Risk of delays if issues are referred back and "too many hoops to go through".  
AD - yes, concerned about this.  
PB - need a unitary authority  
NH - would be best to have a unitary authority. Meanwhile, joint projects can work. The three are elected and accountable. The public can ask questions at meetings and write to the three to raise issues.
- Q2 With reference to parking in Hurst Park Avenue, there were different opinions. The questioner was both a resident and a commuter, and parking helped to reduce the speed of cars along the road. She asked if anyone else thought the questions which had been put were biased. (Note - it was considered this was a statement rather than a question.)
- Q3 What was the position of the candidates on the proposed road closures, given the detours which would be involved?  
PB - against road closures  
SR - in favour of trialling road closures. Spoken to residents of Union Lane and no general agreement on proposal - access to medical centre a concern but also problems exiting Pakenham Close, and cycling on the pavement as road perceived to be unsafe.  
AD - trialling for one or two of the proposed closures if residents agreed, but it was important not to make life difficult for those for whom a bus was not an alternative.  
MS - against ban on turns which would simply push traffic onto Mitchams' Corner and Victoria Avenue, for instance. Not against trialling Union Lane, however, so impact on other roads in East Chesterton could be measured.
- Q4 Traffic is being funnelled across a single bridge. What was the view of the candidates about constructing another bridge across the river?  
NH - must reduce traffic, especially during peak hour. Should not build another bridge because it would simply fill up. People were dying from air pollution. A congestion charge should be introduced and bus services subsidised.  
AD - more roads equals more cars. Subsidise buses.  
MS - no to second bridge - global warming - must get people out of cars.  
PB - the people in the congestion are causing the problem they are suffering from, so why are others worrying about it?

Q5 Air pollution is acknowledged to be a major killer. What plans would the candidates have to deal with the problem?

PB – worst polluters are buses running on diesel. Cars which were well maintained contributed little in comparison.

JG – stationary traffic resulting from congestion is bad for air quality. Taxis, buses and other vehicles should be electric. That was the future.

MS – looking to make Cambridge a carbon neutral city. In discussion with Stagecoach re bus emissions and encouraging taxi drivers to go electric. Elizabeth Way has the worst record in the city for air pollution.

SR – Climate change. Essential to reduce emissions and encourage cycling and walking.

Q6 After raising a number of issues regarding buses (Park and Ride does not stop on Milton Road) and cyclists (flouting rules, wearing dark clothing) and restrictions on roads (bollards, 20 mph, floating bus stops) which bottled up traffic and caused congestion,

the questioner asked for the views of the candidates on floating bus stops and the way to improve cyclists' behaviour.

MS – not convinced about floating bus stops. Best to try and keep cycles off the roads and then the question of floating bus stops would not arise. As for cyclists infringing rules of the road, that was a matter to be raised with local police.

AD – Priority should be given to the elderly and disabled. In favour of P&R buses stopping on Milton Road. Floating bus stop would not apply in Milton Road (tidal bus lane or road width) but in favour of them in principle. Cheaper training courses should be arranged for cyclists. 20mph limits made crossing roads safer for children.

PB – wished the Cambridge Cycling Campaign would visit Union Lane and persuade cyclists not to ride along the pavement. This was also a problem where the No 2 bus stopped (Chesterton High Street). He had protested and was simply abused by the cyclists he spoke to, so it was clear more policing was required.

SR – Had spoken to the PCSO in Chesterton about this and been told that it was hard to enforce as there was a 20mph limit on the road. Agreed a fair solution should be sought, given the ageing population, and the needs of the disabled and of children.

The Chairman drew the meeting to a close at 9 p.m., thanking the candidates and the audience.

At the back of the hall there were two petitions people might like to sign – one to Save the Trees on Milton Road (Milton Road Residents' Association) and the other relating to parking controls (Smarter Cambridge Transport).

The MRRA had incurred various costs e.g. printing and would be grateful for any financial contributions.