

Edward Leigh

Senior Transport Policy Officer
North Herts Council
Council Offices,
Gernon Rd,
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

Dear Edward

Re: LCWIP Consultation – Ashwell Village to Ashwell Station route

We are writing in support of the sustainable travel initiative you are leading in conjunction with HCC.

You will be aware that there have been requests for an extension of the current footpath from Ashwell towards the Station, but which ends at the Hertfordshire / Cambridgeshire border, for many years. Not only is there no footpath on the Cambridgeshire side from Ashwell, but pedestrians and cyclists can only progress towards the Station on the road which is unlit, and contains a sharp, blind bend. It is patently unsafe.

Since this issue was raised historically there has been a significant increase in the number of daily Station users (temporarily reduced during Covid pandemic) including commuters to London and schoolchildren travelling to Cambridge. Such use involves daily return travel, often outside classical 'peak time' requiring flexible and safe transport. The steady, but equally significant, increase in house building has contributed to the increase in rail usage.

Public transport to the Station has helped historically, notably the Taxibus service, but that service has now been terminated, and it was never frequent enough, especially in the evenings, to fully meet public needs. So rail users have increasingly used cars, either parking them on the verges near the Station, or being ferried twice a day by family members. These options have an environmentally negative impact, and are clearly not consistent with a policy of encouraging sustainability. To pretend that future housebuilding in Ashwell has 'sustainable rail provision' via what is currently an unsafe link is inaccurate for the above reasons, and will not stand scrutiny against Planning Policies at National, County, District and Parish levels.

It should also be recognised that the lack of a complete pedestrian / cycle route to Ashwell & Morden Station, and the inadequate car parking provision, has resulted

in some Ashwell residents using Baldock station as their default rail link to the South. This is equally, if not more, unsustainable. Overcoming that can only be helped by improving access to Ashwell & Morden station.

In the years since the lack of footpath / cycleway to the Station was first raised the issue of land provision for the route extension into Cambridgeshire has been researched. The two landowners who could provide land for route options have both publicly agreed to co-operate. This is a major step forward although the fine detail of an agreement will still need to be negotiated with the Councils.

The increased popularity of cycling, and the development of e-bikes and e-scooters, plus the Government & Medical encouragement to take more exercise, including walking, risks being thwarted in Ashwell by the lack of safe access to the most widely used public transport service. As one of only two villages in Hertfordshire with its own Rail Station, and a major village with some 2000 residents, Ashwell will only justify 'Sustainable Village' status by the construction of a complete and safe route to the Station.

Please preserve and progress the Ashwell Station route as a priority.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee - Chairman