

Cambridge Station, Time for an Eastern Entrance?

Summary

Railfuture argues for urgently drawing up a Master Plan for the area to the eastern side of Cambridge Railway station to secure a second entrance to the station. It recognises the traffic congestion and air pollution problems arising from the total reliance on the Western entrance, which despite recent steps to improve passenger facilities and flows, is becoming overwhelmed by the continuing growth in passenger numbers.

Further planned enhancements to local and regional rail services will attract greater numbers of rail users. This will really exacerbate the problems arising from relying on the single western entrance.

Clifton Road is a non-residential area and plans for a station entrance should be advanced ahead of new housing developments to protect the opportunity to improve access to Cambridge Station.

Developing a new station entrance in conjunction with provision of a second southern footbridge will provide the following benefits:

- Improved access to Cambridge Station for people living in the eastern suburbs
- Quicker and more reliable journeys to the station
- Reduced pressure from traffic growth and congestion in using Hills Road and Mill Road bridges
- Reduced air and noise pollution for residents living in the western approaches area
- Improved access and safer circulation of passengers around the station

The Local Plan should encourage active travel by provision of additional cycling and walking access to the east side of the station.

Railfuture wants to see a new entrance for the benefit of local residents, rail users and visitors to Cambridge by helping the railway to cope with its continued success.

Time for an Eastern Entrance?

Cambridge railway station has been operating at the same site since it opened in 1845 on the south eastern edge of the town with a single road linking town with station, mainly via the existing Colchester to Cambridge main highway and the new "Station Road". Quickly the town grew out to the station and then out beyond it to the east, eventually incorporating distant Cherry Hinton, and now continues out to Fulbourn. But those now huge eastern suburbs are linked to the station mainly by that original road link (via Hills Road Bridge) and awkwardly via Mill Road Bridge and the later Tenison and Devonshire Roads

Nowadays the railway station is more or less central to the continuously built up area of Cambridge and it is operating at unprecedented levels of passenger throughput. The station concourse, the platforms and footbridge have become intensely used with surges of people as trains prepare to depart and just after they arrive. Moving around the station can be difficult and indeed, on occasion very stressful.

In recent years there have been strenuous attempts at mitigation of this overcrowding. The ticket office, entrance hall and ticket gate-line have been enlarged. Within the station an additional wide island platform has been built, linked to the original station by a wide footbridge and lifts.

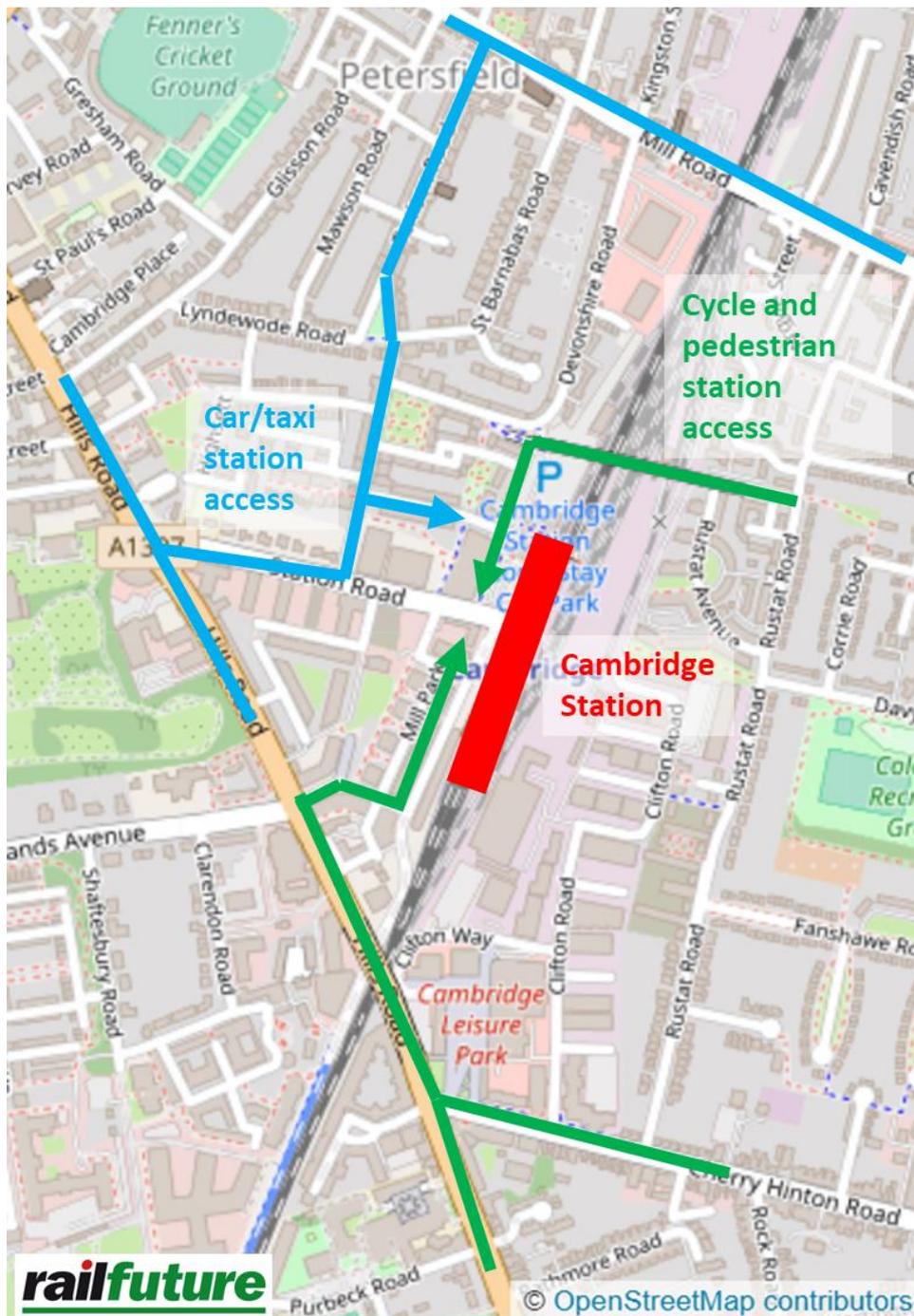


Figure 1: Station access routes.



Picture 1a: The recently enlarged ticket hall and gate-line.



Picture 1b: The recently created Station Square.

The station approaches recently have been considerably improved. This has been linked to commercial development of mainly disused railway land to provide large office blocks. The large number of jobs that these have introduced into the station area has meant even more use of the station as workers can conveniently access their place of work daily by train, bus, cycle and foot.



Picture 2: The pedestrian area leading into Station Road and the historic City Centre. This broad pavement leading from the station entrance provides a traffic free walk for a considerable distance into town.



Picture 3: Hi-tech way finding with new bus interchange behind on both sides of the road. The Station Square will be extended to the south to the temporary grey building. On the left is the gable-end of the refurbished original Great Northern Railway building.

Key to the growth of railway usage has been the construction of large modal transfer facilities; a bus station; a currently partially completed station 'square' with separated taxi drop off/ pick-up areas, short-stay drop off / pick-up area and a huge 3000 space multi-storey cycle park. Around the perimeter of the 'square' are broad pavements for pedestrian circulation and a number of cafés, pubs and a hotel. The increasing number of train users and workers in the immediate area will eventually fuel the creation of a new retail and leisure area for the city. A park and ride railway car park is also available currently using otherwise undeveloped railway lands. Eventually a multi-storey car park will replace this facility. Cambridge is increasingly becoming polycentric.

Apart from the public spaces within the station itself being under pressure for much of the day, access to the station from the rest of the city is under stress too. Although nothing new, traffic jams around the station western entrance are becoming acute. This is leading to air pollution concerns, unpleasant traffic noise and prolonged and unreliable journeys to catch trains. Access to the station is via the north-south Tenison Road with all other access via Hills Road/ Station Road. Pedestrian and cycle access is more porous but is still more constrained than it should be.

Access from the extensive eastern parts of the city (that is, everywhere east of the railway line) is channelled across just two bridges over the railway. A later addition is the pedestrian and cycle Carter Bridge. Useful as this is, it does nothing to help those wishing to access the station by taxi and is a little too far north to be useful to those pedestrians and cyclists whose best route is currently via Hills Road Bridge.

Overall, access to the railway station from east and southeast Cambridge is poor.

Planning for a Cambridge Station Eastern Entrance: the need for a Masterplan

The need for a Station Eastern Entrance has been long recognised as there have sporadic calls for such over the last 120 years. The need for planning a new entrance is acute as planned and proposed land use changes on both sides of the railway may mean current opportunities for it may well be lost.

The Eastern Station Entrance and associated developments will mitigate some of the problems the single Western Entrance and its surrounds are now facing:

- Overcrowding in the ticket hall and on station's current platforms;
- Congestion on all roads caused by leading to the taxi and private car drop-offs;
- Traffic created air quality issues for local residents;
- Traffic noise pollution in certain areas

Long stay railway park and ride car park may not be needed where currently proposed.

Residents in much east Cambridge will have easier access to the station.

Railway Traffic Growth will continue

Currently Cambridge station is handling around 35,000 rail users a day, about 12,000,000 a year. That's about a 30% increase since 2012.

As the economy of Cambridge continues to grow there is every reason to believe that the footfall will continue to increase over the next 10 years, notwithstanding the construction of Cambridge North and Cambridge South stations.

Last year's 4.3% increase, if continued year on year, will bring the footfall up to nigh on 20,000,000 per annum in 10 years' time. That will be 55,000 footfall per day.

The city's predicted economic growth together with already planned improvements to local train services will see that happen. Added to which East West Rail will see at least four additional trains an hour travelling in from the Bedford direction. It is worth remembering that the railway towards Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds is the eastern section of East West Rail. It will have its double track restored and the enhanced train service this will allow, will bring several thousand rail users each day just off that route.

Station Concourse

This has been recently sensitively enlarged but is already full on many occasions.

The overcrowding on the platforms and footbridge will require safety mitigation before long. A south end footbridge will be required to help manage passenger movements about the station.

Improving Connectivity from the East of the City

A new Eastern Entrance to the railway station will hugely improve access to it from a wide area of the eastern suburbs. Many more residents would be within walking distance and nearly all within cycling distance. More "active travel" will encouraged.

Vehicles

It is road vehicles that cause pollution, congestion and other negative issues.

a) Taxis:

Taxis will be able to approach the station from all areas of the eastern city without using Hills Road and Mill Road bridges over the railway. These are two of the most congested areas of the city and there would be considerable easing of road congestion west of the station.

Taxi fares will be cheaper for a large number of eastern suburb residents.

b) Private Cars:

Private drop car drop off will also be possible by way of Clifton Road /Cherry Hinton Road.

Parking restrictions should be "residents only" and otherwise stringent in the areas close to the station.

The main spine road of East Cambridge is Davy Road. It heads tantalisingly close to the railway before being intersected by Rustat Road. A footpath continues the direction of Davy Road to the railway fence. This will be ideal for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Eastern Entrance to the station could be located at one of two points along this almost abandoned stretch of road:

Opposite the existing station footbridge, which should be extended across the railway lands to Clifton Road

or:

Opposite a new footbridge at the south end of the railway station. This should stretch across the railway lands to Clifton Road, with lifts and steps up from the south end of platforms 1/2, platforms 7/8 and any new 9/10. On balance we believe this new bridge would be the best option as it would also help provide a safe walking route to the Leisure Park. There is space to land a footbridge together with lifts at the end of platform 2. On the assumption that only eight car trains will use that platform, there is space to shorten the platform by about 30 metres.



Picture 4: Looking from Clifton Road to the existing north end footbridge. This will be extended eastward to new platform 9/10 when it is built.



Picture 5a: Looking from Clifton Road toward the site of a possible south end footbridge.

At Clifton Road there is railway (and other) land available for a small ticket hall, gateline etc. There is space for ample formal cycle parking as well as a drop off / pickup for taxis, “kiss ‘n’ ride” drop offs and meets, all mentioned above.

Cyclists and pedestrians could use the cut through extension of Davy Road to reach Davy Road itself and Coleridge as well Rustat Road to access Mill and Cherry Hinton Roads.

Enforced parking restrictions (for “residents only” over a wide area) would deter street parking. A large new and secure cycle point should be provided.



Picture 5b: This area at end of platform could be used to “land” the south end footbridge. Platform 2 would have to be shortened by 30 metres. This will not affect the train operating into it which will be no more than eight cars long in future.



Picture 5c: Looking towards south end of Platform 7/8 and site of possible Eastern Station Entrance beyond. In this view is the Royal Mail parking area. A solution to station park and ride parking would be for Greater Anglia, Network Rail, Royal Mail and Brookgate to work together to build a multi-storey car park on this land. Royal Mail use ground level and rail users the floors above.



Picture 6: view along Clifton Road parallel to and east of the railway lands. This area should be zoned to enable a sustainable Eastern Station Entrance together with cycle parking.

Currently there are plans for a multi-storey car park north of the Ibis Hotel for rail users. This will do nothing to help ease congestion leading to Station Road/ Tenison Road. Railfuture suggests that this car park plan be abandoned, and in its place a new car park built off Clifton Road and accessed by it. There may be some railway land available but if the Royal Mail moves to Peterborough, its large flat car park could be used. (This Royal Mail move seems to be off currently.)

By using an Eastern Entrance, residents who cycle and walk to the station from east and southeast Cambridge will have much better access; those who use taxis will have quicker and cheaper journeys; fewer taxis would need to access the western entrance leading to fewer vehicles on Hills Road; access to the station by private cars for set

down / pick up will be easier, again fewer vehicles bound for the station on Hills Road and Mill Road.

Note that all vehicle movement would be via Hills Road and Clifton Road. This road has no residential areas lining it yet, although proposals are in the pipeline. Before new housing is allowed in this area, a master plan of land use around the railway station must be drawn up.

The removal of the station car park, should it be possible to relocate it, could hugely improve conditions leading to the western entrance.

Finally, a station south-end footbridge, would greatly ease the movement about the station for rail users, Cambridge residents or Cambridge visitors.

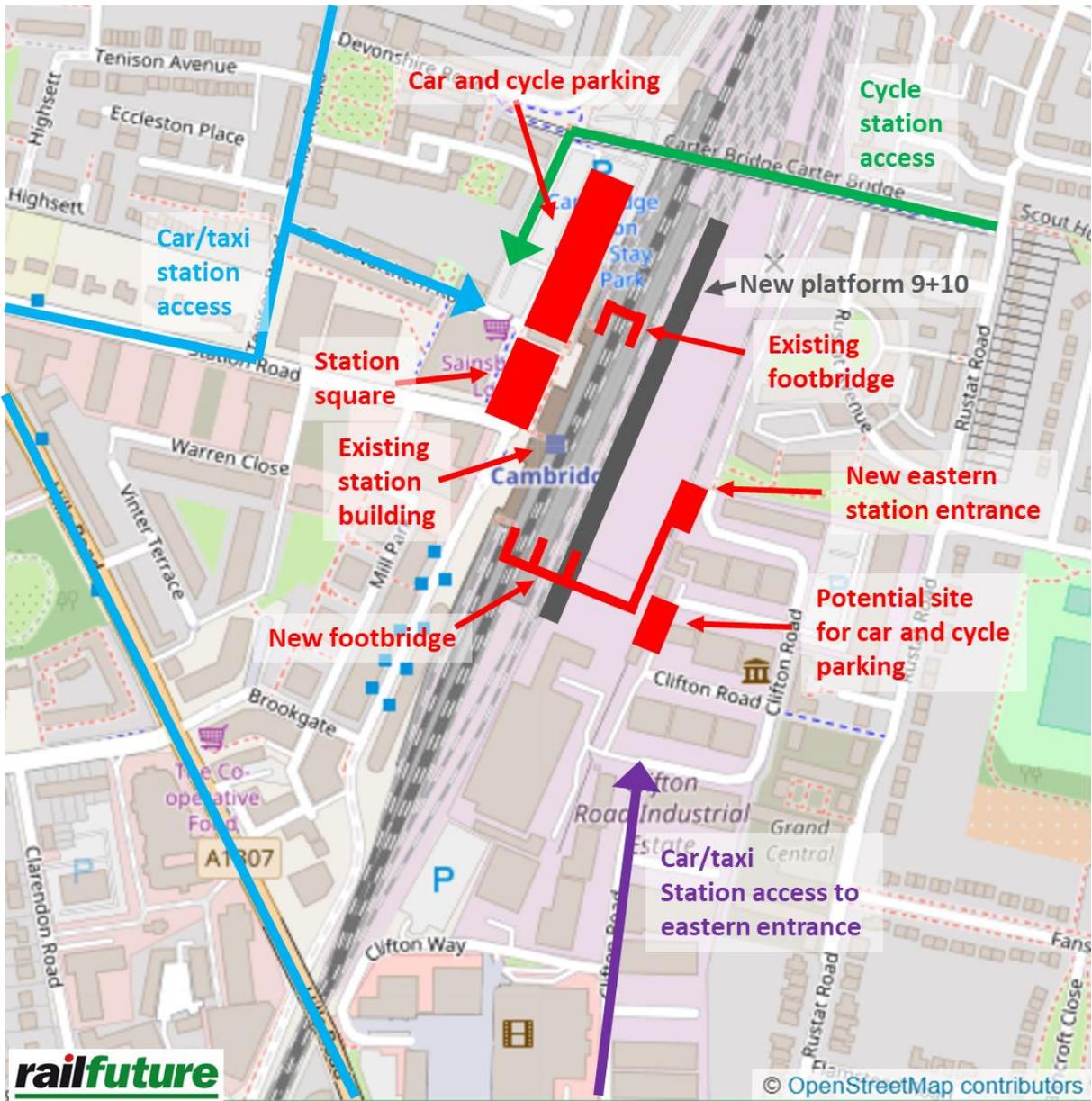


Figure 2: Map of the area showing indicative proposals.

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