

WHEAT QUARTER CYCLE HUB

FOR WELWYN GARDEN CITY

October 2020

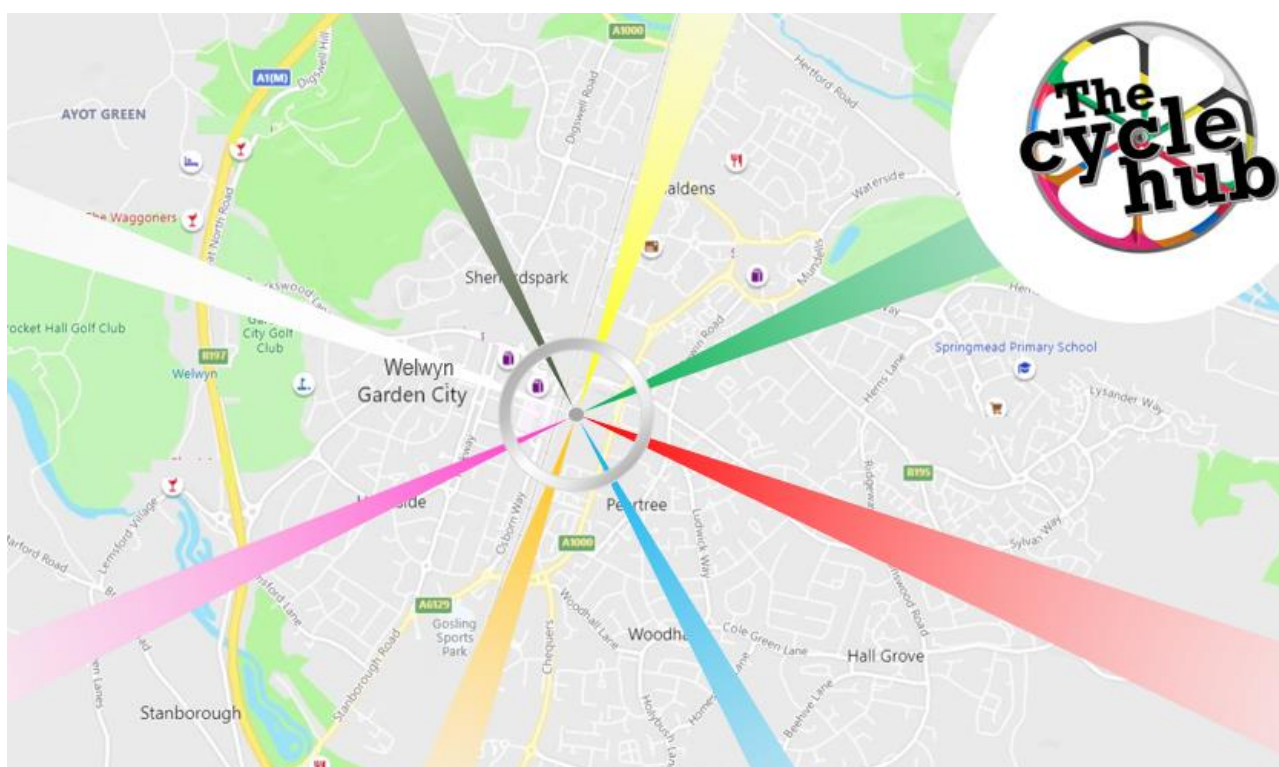


THE WHEAT QUARTER



A superb new Cycle Hub is proposed for Welwyn Garden City. This new, high-quality, comprehensive facility will serve as a focal point for cyclists and act as a catalyst for change.

The new facilities will be delivered by the Wheat Quarter development which offers a unique opportunity in Welwyn Garden City to introduce infrastructure, information and incentives to promote walking and cycling as a first choice of transport. The proposed development has sufficient mass to act as a positive catalyst for change and to influence travel behaviour.



This report has been prepared by Entran Ltd on behalf of Wheat Quarter Limited to explain the background to the new Wheat Quarter **Cycle Hub** for Welwyn Garden City. This report sets out the range of new facilities and explains who they are for and how they will be delivered.

The Wheat Quarter **Cycle Hub** for Welwyn Garden City has been developed following extensive research and collaboration with existing cycle hubs across the UK, with input from local Councils, cycle groups, rail operators and following advice from the Department for Transport.

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) granted planning permission for an exciting new mixed-use quarter on the site of the former Shredded Wheat factory in the heart of Welwyn Garden City, close to the railway station and bus station and with direct links to the town centre.

The new development will deliver much needed new homes as well as flexible employment space, health uses, community uses, retail and food and drink establishments. The development includes a new International Arts Centre and secures the restoration of the Grade II listed production hall and its iconic silos. The newly regenerated area will become the Wheat Quarter.



From the outset, the Wheat Quarter has been designed to capitalise on its highly accessible location and promote sustainable travel choices. The Wheat Quarter will deliver a wide array of new infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists in and around Broadwater Road, Bridge Road and the Peartree area and will refurbish the existing footbridge that links the site to the station and town centre.

The development will be supported by a comprehensive Travel Plan that will ensure an ongoing commitment to promoting sustainable travel behaviour, monitoring

people's travel choices, and implementing measures to enable healthy and sustainable choices.

The sustainable travel strategy for the Wheat Quarter includes the introduction of an electric Car Club so that people can choose to live here without owning a vehicle, but with access to an electric car whenever they may need one for essential journeys. Many of the residents' parking spaces will also be provided with electric vehicle charging points from the outset, and many more will have 'passive' provision to allow for future growth in electric and hybrid vehicle ownership.

At the heart of the sustainable travel strategy is a hierarchy of provision, putting pedestrians and cyclists first, then making provision for travel by public transport, and then providing for the residual, essential journeys by car. This hierarchy runs through the design of the Wheat Quarter and influences key decisions about the future aspirations for this new community.

The redevelopment of the former Shredded Wheat factory will deliver significant improvements to local pedestrian and cycle routes, but a new cycle hub will act as a focal point for new infrastructure, incentives and information, to promote walking and cycling as a first choice mode of travel.



WHAT IS A CYCLE HUB?

Principles

Many towns throughout the UK have cycle hubs, often centred around transport interchanges of one form or another.

The first Cycle Hubs in the UK were based on models found in the Netherlands and Denmark where the proportion of people travelling by bike is significantly higher than the UK.

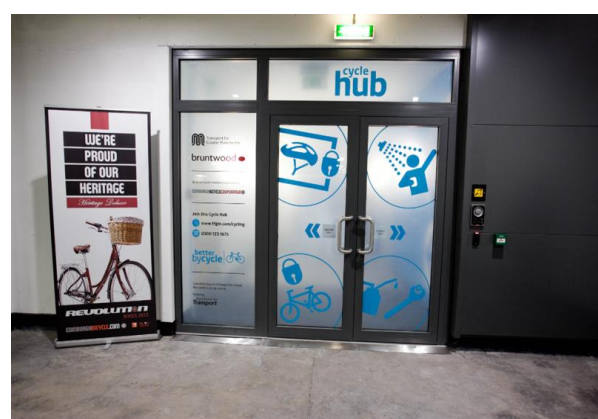
Cycle hubs range in size and ambition from simple bike stores with public toolkits, to the new £1.5m facility adjacent to Brighton rail station. The common thread is to provide a range of quality facilities for cyclists around a centralised location.



Scale

Many people may have encountered stand-alone cycle hubs at rail stations, or on university campuses. These are commonly a single structure that provides secure cycle parking, often with lockers to store 'kit' and a public tool station with a basic range of tools and bike pump. These provide peace of mind for those who choose to cycle as they ensure a safe place to leave their bike, somewhere to store their helmet and wet-weather gear, and allow the cyclists to make basic running repairs before the next leg of their journey.

At the other end of the scale, comprehensive cycle hubs like those in Brighton and Edinburgh bring together funding from Network Rail, rail operating companies and local authorities to deliver new premises with cycle storage, but also with toilet, shower and changing facilities, cycle cafés, repair and maintenance workshops and even office space for local cycle groups.



The previously approved development at the Wheat Quarter already provided a range of secure cycle parking linked to new and improved cycle routes. A study was therefore undertaken to explore the most effective and popular facilities at existing cycle hubs around the UK, with particular reference to Brighton, Bristol and Newcastle, as well as existing and proposed cycle initiatives in Hatfield and across Hertfordshire.

Welwyn Garden City has its rail station and bus station in close proximity with a well used footbridge across the rail line. This offers an excellent opportunity to provide a high quality Cycle Hub as part of the multi-modal travel strategy for the Wheat Quarter.

A cycle hub located in the Wheat Quarter would not only serve the new residents, employees and visitors, but would be a new community facility for Welwyn Garden City.

CASE STUDIES

Introduction

In order to inform the design of the new cycle hub, a study was undertaken to explore the most effective and popular facilities at existing cycle hubs around the UK. The study involved desktop research, discussions with key stakeholders in those facilities and a limited (due to Covid-19) element of site-visit work. Three existing cycle hubs were examined in Brighton, Bristol and Newcastle. These, case studies are summarised below.

Brighton

Brighton station's £1.5m three-storey cycle hub was opened in 2015. It includes 500 cycle parking spaces, a bike repair shop and coffee shop as well as toilets and changing facilities. The Brighton cycle hub has additional facilities upstairs including yoga and spinning facilities as well as short-term rental office space.



The Brighton cycle hub has 24-hour access to cyclists using Southern Rail's free smartcard. The hub brought Brighton station's cycle parking provision up to 800 spaces.

The not for profit scheme was supported by the Department for Transport (£650k), Southern Rail (£450k), and Brighton and Hove Council (£100k through LTP funding).

The Brighton cycle hub is managed by Southern rail.

Bristol

Back in 2008, Bristol was named England's first 'cycling city' in a £100m government scheme aimed at encouraging cycling. Among the features were the UK's first major bicycle rental network (ahead of London), modelled on the scheme in Paris.

Over the last decade a number of cycle hubs have been developed across the city in partnership with the University of the West of England (UWE) Centre for Transport and Society (CTS). Rather than a single, large cycle hub like Brighton, Bristol has a numerous smaller cycle hubs across the city at key locations. All university campuses across the site have cycle hubs that provide bike storage, lockers and tools.



The facilities at Bristol Temple Meads rail station and Bristol Parkway station include Brompton Bike Hire docks. These were launched in partnership with First Great Western. The Brompton docks provide folding bike hire from £3.50 a day. Once you have your Brompton you can take it to work, take it home, even take it on trains or buses.

None of the Bristol cycle hubs include a café or bike shop, but it was noted that Bristol has a wide range of cycle cafes already, including the award winning Mud Dock Café which is equally popular with cyclists and diners alike.



Newcastle

The Newcastle cycle hub is a slightly different model, offering a privately owned cycle café, bike hire facility and bike workshop, based on the Quayside in Newcastle upon Tyne. The workshop offers a range of courses from beginners, covering the very basics of bike maintenance, up to advanced servicing of high-tech components.



The cycle hub café is open 7-days a week and is popular with local cycle clubs.

The Newcastle cycle hub is privately owned and run, and is even available as a venue to hire for evening functions and parties.

Findings

Entran contacted key stakeholders for each of the case study cycle hubs, including owners, operators and local cycle groups. The purpose of the study was first to establish the range of facilities on offer, and then to establish which facilities proved to be most popular or effective. The study demonstrated that a range of different forms of secure cycle parking was the most sought-after facility, followed by direct links to quality cycle routes. Lockers, toilets, changing facilities and showers were also shown to be important components in the popular cycle hubs



These findings are entirely consistent with WHBC and HCC policies on appropriate provision for cyclists in new developments. However, in the Wheat Quarter Cycle Hub these facilities would all be in the public domain, and provided as part of the community use facilities. In addition to the above, the study showed that cyclist cafés are very popular and form a vibrant focal point which increases the use of the more utilitarian facilities. The cycle cafés are often both café and bike shop, and provide bike maintenance and repair.

In addition to the physical provision, the study showed that the successful cycle hubs form a focal point for local cycle groups, thereby encouraging community cohesion and enabling new initiatives. In two of the three case studies, the local authority used the cycle hub as a central point for offering training. This ranged from basic cycle maintenance to full Bikeability training for adults and children.



In those locations with a cycle café, the cycle hub also served as a meeting place for cycle clubs and groups as well as recreational cyclists and commuters.

PROPOSED CYCLE HUB

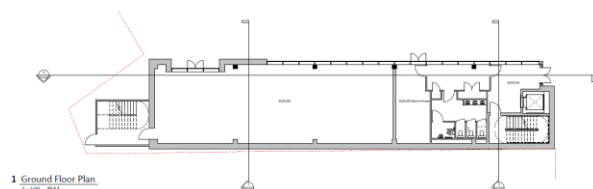
Wheat Quarter

The redevelopment of the former Shredded Wheat factory site provides an exciting opportunity to provide new community facilities alongside the much needed homes, employment, arts, health and leisure facilities proposed on the Wheat Quarter.

A key component of the new community facilities will now be the Wheat Quarter **Cycle Hub** for Welwyn Garden City. This will include a comprehensive range of new facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, centred around Goodman Square.



The proposed development includes a new five storey building adjacent to the refurbished footbridge. This is known as the Bridge Community Building.



The Bridge Community Building will provide flexible space for employment, community and leisure uses. It will be ideally located for access to Goodman Square, the station and the town centre.

Facilities

At ground floor level, 165m² will be dedicated to the Cycle Hub to provide toilets, changing and shower facilities along with lockers for cyclists.

Access to the changing facilities is intended to be free for Cycle Hub members, and accessed using a smart card.



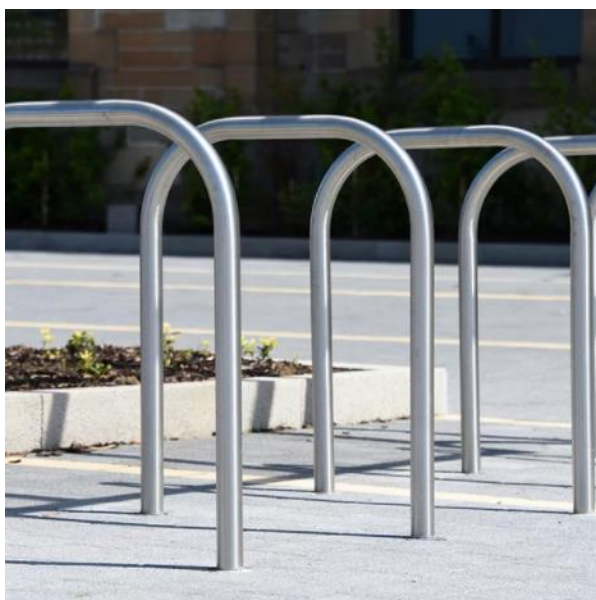
The Cycle Hub facilities within the Bridge Community will have a public maintenance stand incorporating a bike pump and a range of tools. The maintenance stand will be available to Cycle Hub members and the general public.



A new set of steps will be provided leading up to the footbridge from Goodman square. A range of cycle parking facilities will be provided in a sheltered area beneath the steps, including bike lockers and stands.



The Wheat Quarter will deliver 180 public cycle parking spaces across the site (in addition to those provided for the new residential and commercial uses). Of these 100 spaces will be to serve the function of the existing Hydeaway cycle parking. Around 20 of these will be provided on Hydeaway as Sheffield loop stands and a further 80 will be provided beneath or close to the steps.



A further 80 short-stay visitor spaces will be provided across the development, close to the entrances to the non-residential uses. These will be standard Sheffield loop stands, located in well-lit, well-supervised areas.

Brompton Bike Hire have expressed an interest to include a dock on the Site, close to the footbridge. The inclusion of a Brompton Dock, similar to the one at Bristol Temple Meads station, as part of the

Cycle Hub would provide an innovative and cost-effective automated bike hire scheme utilising the iconic Brompton folding bicycle. This would allow the local community to hire a folding bike for local journeys, or as part of a long trip on a train or bus.



The Wheat Quarter development includes a wide range of flexible non-residential uses across the site, including at ground floor level surrounding Goodman Square.



The Louis de Soissons building on the south side of the square is one of the locations where a café could be located at ground floor. This could be an excellent location for a cycle café



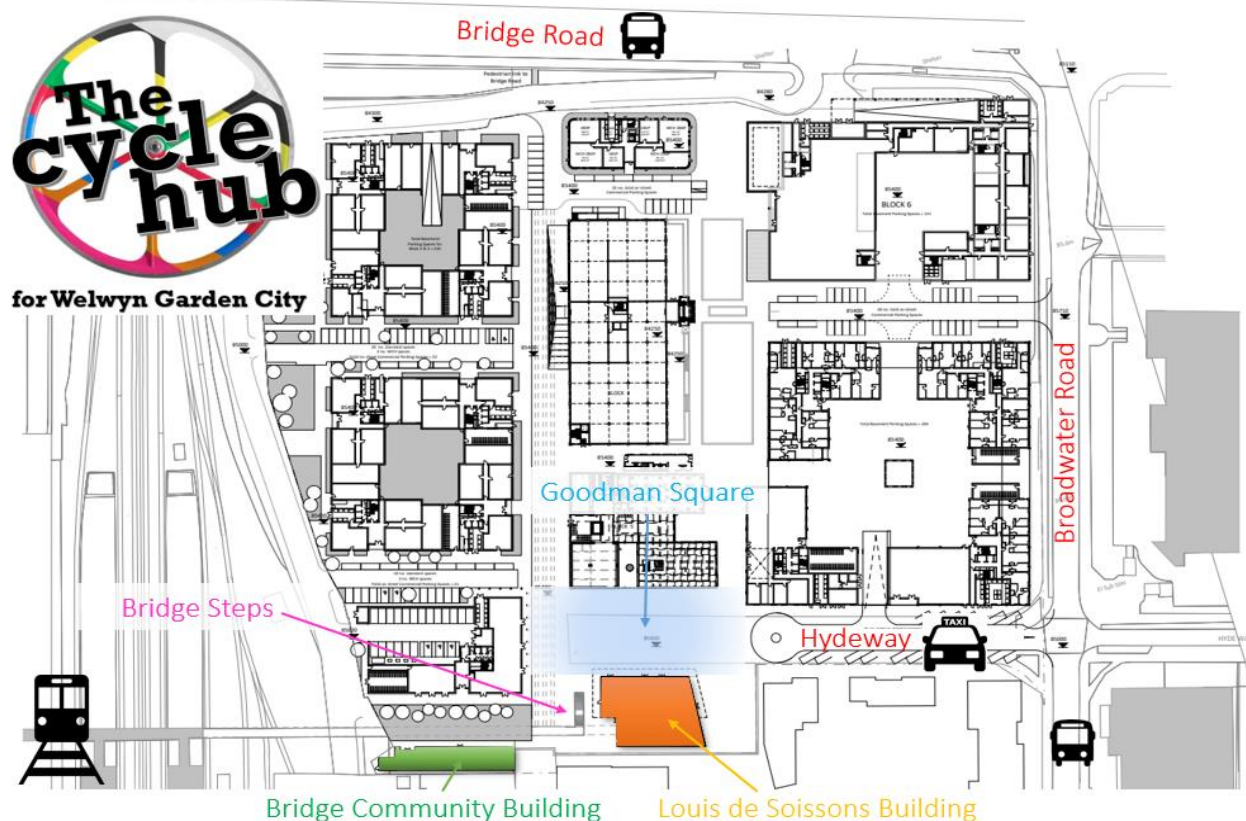
Operation

The Wheat Quarter **Cycle Hub** for Welwyn Garden City will be a true community facility. Planning permission for the new proposals on the Wheat Quarter will be subject to a range of planning conditions and obligations secured by legal agreement. That includes the operation and maintenance of privately maintained public realm. The Cycle Hub will be a privately maintained public facility, the same way that Goodman Square itself will be. The management company will be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Cycle Hub facilities with the exception of the Brompton Dock which would be maintained directly by Brompton Bike Hire.

Future success

As a community facility, the future success of the Wheat Quarter **Cycle Hub** for Welwyn Garden City will depend very much on a collaborative approach with key local stakeholders. This will include Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Network Rail. Importantly, it will also include the local community and local cycle groups.

If planning permission is granted, Wheat Quarter Limited will engage in a series of workshops the local community to refine the design and content of the Wheat Quarter **Cycle Hub** for Welwyn Garden City.



DATE: October 2020





THE WHEAT QUARTER



Entran is an independent environmental and transportation consultancy with specific abilities in transport planning and environmental impact assessment. We were formed in 2005 by a group of directors, all of whom had held management positions with leading consultancy firms in the UK and overseas. Over the last 15 years we have developed innovative solutions for hundreds of developments across all development sectors, including major town centre regeneration projects.

We have a great deal of experience in developing effective Travel Plans to promote and maintain sustainable travel choices. We were delighted to receive a Gold Award in the West of England's Travel Plan Awards for our own company Travel Plan. Our staff and directors include a number of very keen cyclists with links to Sustrans and British Cycling.