

Objection for the Secretary of State for Transport
to the Cambourne to Cambridge busway proposal by the
Greater Cambridge Partnership
(Version 1.3)

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January 1, 2025

Contents

1 Introduction	1
2 Grange Road is not a suitable destination	2
3 Cost	3
4 Environmental damage	3
5 East-West rail makes the Cambourne to Cambridge busway redundant	3
6 Alternative busway routes are better	3
7 Misguided planning policy for industry around Cambridge	4
8 Democratic deficit	4
9 Conclusion	4

1 Introduction

I hereby wish to communicate my objections to the Secretary of State for Transport to the Transport and Work Act Order requested by the Greater Cambridge Partnership to build a busway from Cambourne to Cambridge.

I write in my capacity as an individual member of the public living less than 100 metres from Grange Road, into which the busway is proposing to discharge bus traffic.

The remainder of this document details the reasons for my objection to the proposed Order.

2 Grange Road is not a suitable destination

Grange Road is a one mile long relatively quiet backwater running between Barton Road and Madingley Road. There is relatively little employment actually on Grange Road, the main sites being St John's College School and King's College School. The majority of the other building on Grange Road consists of parts of Cambridge colleges where students reside (Robinson, Trinity, Selwyn, Clare Hall, Newnham), other student accommodation, and Trinity and St Johns' sports fields.

The main traffic on Grange Road currently consists of parents delivering and collecting their children from the two schools, and the U1 university bus, plus an occasional highly-polluting tourist bus; there is also some traffic arising from the availability of parking on the no-through-roads to the West of Grange Road.

Grange Road is currently covered in traffic calming measures, specifically chicanes, traffic bumps, and raised brick tables at around 20-30 metre intervals. These already cause severe increases in road wear either side of them with the limited traffic that currently exists. Moreover, even away from traffic calming installations, the road is continuously caving in despite frequent repairs by the council, probably due to a combination of gas and water mains under the roadway and inadequate foundations.

There are only four means of egress for motorised traffic from Grange Road: out of the two ends onto the main thoroughfares of Barton Road and Madingley Road (the latter being a much more desirable route than Grange Road for any incoming traffic from Cambourne), and West Road and Sidgwick Avenue which run perpendicular to Grange Road and connect it respectively to Queens' Road at the back of King's College and to the traffic lights at the intersection of Sidgwick Avenue and Queens' Road. Both these latter streets are in even worse state of repair than Grange Road. In the case of Sidgwick Avenue this will probably always be the case, as much of the damage is caused by the eponymous avenue of plane trees either side of the carriageway. In the case of West Road the reason is unclear, but the poor state of repair persists and is steadily worsening despite various efforts by the council to repair it.

There are no facilities or space on Grange Road for a bus station, bus terminus, or indeed even for a bus to turn round and return whence it came. If buses were intended to continue out of Grange Road via either end, they would end up on Madingley Road or Barton Road, and would more appropriately then have entered the city by those roads in the first place.

If buses are intended to travel further into town from Grange Road but not via the ends, then they will encounter congestion either at the West Road/Queens' Road junction, Silver Street traffic lights, on Silver Street itself, or on any of the other routes available into town from Queens' Road, which will negate any possible benefit they could have obtained by coming in to Grange Road rather than Madingley Road in the first place.

If the buses are not intended to proceed further than Grange Road, then there is nowhere for them to turn round, no desired destination for employment, and no facility to change to any alternative means of transport into town. If it is believed that parents will use the busway to deliver children to the two schools, one should note that such parents currently make no use of the bus transport that is available, and would be unlikely to make use of the busway either, probably because they believe their children will be safer if hand-delivered by themselves.

3 Cost

Of the options for a busway route into Cambridge, the one coming through Coton Orchard and ending on Grange Road has always been by far the most expensive. This public money would be much better spent on properly reconstructing the many deteriorating highways that already exist. Further, to ensure that steadily increased traffic wouldn't again destroy such new roadway, a congestion charge should be introduced in Cambridge City. The income from a congestion charge, together with the saved cost resulting from not constructing the busway, would result in a huge reduction in Council expenditure and reduce the likely need for the Council to be bailed out by central government in the near- or medium-term future.

4 Environmental damage

The proposed route of the busway through Coton Orchard would destroy one of the few nearby areas of mature woodland and productive fruit trees, which are valuable wildlife habitats. In consequence there would be a net decrease in biodiversity. Before reaching Coton Orchard it runs across the visible side of Madingley Hill, causing urbanisation of Cambridge's Green Belt and destroying beautiful views.

After Coton Orchard the proposed busway route then continues across the West Fields, where it again damages the Green Belt and spreads urban influence into the surrounding countryside, not to mention crossing the flood plain of Bin Brook.

The Green Belt is one of the Labour government's two crowning achievements of the 20th century (the other being the NHS) – it would be an appalling legacy of the current Labour government were they to destroy it.

One of the reasons for Cambridge's current prosperity is precisely the small, confined, nature of the city and the ready access, within walking distance, to green fields and quiet footpaths. The damage caused by running many buses every hour through this beautiful countryside would be significant.

5 East-West rail makes the Cambourne to Cambridge busway redundant

The government, we understand, is now planning to run a railway from Oxford, via Bedford, to Cambourne and onwards from there into Cambridge rail station. Given that, which actually takes people into the heart of the city with many possible onward connections, rather than to a place (Grange Road) where there is little employment and for which there is little demand as a destination, the busway becomes completely redundant.

6 Alternative busway routes are better

The route proposed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership is far from the only possible route for a busway, if a busway is indeed needed. Cambridge Past Present and Future (CPPF) <https://www.cambridgeppf.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=1706db7b-845f-45a3-831d-ccd858a4c62c> have very carefully considered other possible, much less destructive, routings, which would result in the busway ending in places in Cambridge with greater demand by commuters.

In addition there are other large benefits to inbound commuters from Cambourne possible by adding an extra roadway to the Girton interchange that would take Eastbound traffic from the A428 to the Southbound M11, thus avoiding the main morning commute delay past the American Cemetery and down Madingley Hill.

7 Misguided planning policy for industry around Cambridge

The current government seeks growth, and growth in industry around Cambridge in particular. Ignoring the fact that endless exponential growth will for obvious reasons eventually have to stop, the idea that it is a good idea to continuously increase the number of jobs located in Cambridge city is misguided. History shows that when each industry has boomed, the city in which that industry was located has been allowed to grow – consider Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and even London. Eventually the march of history means that that industry eventually collapses due to obsolescence or globalisation, at which point the massively expanded city turns into a derelict inner city slum with rampant unemployment, crime, and a collapsing housing market.

We need to learn from history and avoid the same fate for Cambridge. Increasing the number of jobs in Cambridge inevitably will lead to either increased housing in Cambridge (expanding the city as for Manchester etc), or increased transport need for commuters between the city and surrounding dormitory towns. Instead we need to grow employment in those surrounding towns – and in order to achieve that, we need to ensure that it is infeasible for more jobs to be created in Cambridge itself (since that is otherwise all industry's common preference).

8 Democratic deficit

The busway proposal comes from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP). This body has only three voting members, namely the leaders of Cambridge City, South Cambridge District, and Cambridgeshire County Councils. There is no representation of the minority parties from the Councils on this board. This causes a democratic deficit; such an unrepresentative body should not have the power to make major decisions affecting the environmental heritage of the area for generations to come.

9 Conclusion

In view of the above points I urge the Secretary of State to refuse the request for the Transport and Work Act Order for the Cambourne busway.