

Objection to Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge as submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council on 12 November 2024

We, Dr Jennifer (Jenna) Bishop and Prof Christopher (Chris) Bishop, of [REDACTED], are writing to make a formal objection to the above Order.

Our professional backgrounds in the legal and policy aspects of conservation land management and in the hi-tech industry in Cambridge give us an informed and balanced view of the issues surrounding this TWAO application which goes beyond our interest as adjoining landowners and long-standing residents of the village of Coton.

The boundary of our property is one of the closest to the proposed busway route with several species of roosting bats, a large badger sett, and an occupied barn owl box (all documented with video/audio footage in 2024) barely more than 50 metres from the infrastructure's nearest edge. Habitual foraging routes and hunting grounds for all these species will become disturbed and dangerous on its construction and we personally will be adversely affected by any noise, light, or landscape destruction.

It is our view that the required decision-making hierarchy for the avoidance of these and other harms has not been followed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership. Mitigation and off-setting proposals should only be considered where it is impossible to avoid such impacts. Here, there are clear alternative solutions which could, in fact, be much cheaper, more effective in achieving the scheme's objectives, and cause significantly less damage to the beauty and biodiversity of the area. In this regard, we support the detailed responses of Cambridge Connect, CambridgePPF, Coton Parish Council and the Coton Busway Action Group and ask that their suggestions receive proper comparative assessment. In addition, we understand that the biodiversity impacts on Coton Orchard are being addressed by its owner and by the Wildlife Trust among others. We very much advocate its protection.

The published cost-benefit analysis and proclaimed benefits of this fragmented and only semi-off-road route are not at all persuasive, particularly since they use data and presumptions that have become obsolete since the Covid crisis and the approval of the East West Rail project. The minimal projected time-savings, and the termination of the scheme at a pinch-point on Grange Road, with the need for onward travel through city traffic, call into question its whole rationale. Ten years, and several million pounds (made available by a central government pro-growth fund, when existing local infrastructure is in dire need of maintenance) have already been wasted. We are not against growth per se, and support sustainable solutions, but this is an ill-conceived and small-thinking scheme. If Cambridge is to grow effectively, without losing the very qualities for which is so successful and well-loved, then its transport and utility provision should be integrated, visionary and of world-class engineering calibre.

A well-planned light rail solution, as suggested by Cambridge Connect, would be a good solution for Cambridge, and anything built now needs to be compatible with this, so that it is future-proofed as technology and demand evolve. We understand that the current busway plan (essentially a road) would not offer any utility or cost-saving for such a scheme – indeed would not be on an optimal route.

Similarly, the Greater Cambridge Partnership has made much of the active travel options offered by a proposed maintenance track alongside the busway route, but, as walkers and cyclists, we think that a lengthy route up a steep hill and fully exposed to the southwest winds would not be much used for commuting or recreation. There are already cycle and walking routes (and the GCP's own proposed Comberton Greenway) which run parallel to the proposed busway and provide better options.

In 1928, influential members of the University and the Town (including the renowned historian Trevelyan), founded the Cambridge Preservation Society (now Cambridge Past, Present and Future) specifically to protect Cambridge from ribbon development along the Madingley Road and the views to and from Cambridge from the summit of Madingley Hill. These were described in a 1929 brochure as the most beautiful of all the views of Cambridge. Shortly afterwards, the Society bought a substantial landholding in Coton in order to facilitate this protection, and in the 1950s, when the Society needed to sell some of this land to raise money to maintain another important hillside property at Wandlebury, the National Trust saw fit to accept the benefit of restrictive covenants over Coton Orchard and other prominent parts of the Hill so that the landscape would be protected in perpetuity. Separately, in 1956, the Governments of the USA and the UK dedicated a site on this hill, with protected views in all directions, for the American Cemetery. The destruction of this valuable piece of landscape by the infrastructure of the proposed busway could be completely avoided by improving the provision for buses and traffic management on the existing corridor of the A1303 or by improving the Girton junction of the A14 and M11.

Cambridge is not known for the beauty of its landscape, but this makes the few elevated and undeveloped areas that we have even more precious. Several landscape and green space reviews, for example the Quarter-To-Six Quadrant initiative and Cambridge Nature Network, have identified this area to the west of Cambridge to be of great significance in local and regional terms. It is not the Lake District and might not be of National Park or AONB standard, but it is the best we have. It has long been local planning policy to maintain the rural aspect of this Green Belt area with its attractive necklace villages of Grantchester, Coton and Madingley. It has the benefit of several elevated viewpoints in beneficial conservation ownership and the tourist attractions of Grantchester Meadows, the Orchard Tea Rooms, Coton Orchard, the American Cemetery and Madingley Hall. This landscape is vitally important to the setting of Cambridge and greatly enhances its appeal to its residents, visitors and business communities.

So, for environmental, economic and many common-sense reasons, we object to the making of the Transport and General Works Act Order for the Camborne to Cambridge Busway.

8th January 2025