DfT Ref: TWA/25/APP/01

Document Ref: CD27-01 APP-W1-01

The Cambridge South East Transport Order

Cambridgeshire County Council

Transport and Works Act 1992

Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004

Inquiry into:

THE CAMBRIDGE SOUTH EAST TRANSPORT ORDER

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

of

Peter Freeman

of Greater Cambridge Development Corporation

Planning Inspectorate Reference: DPI/E0535/25/7

CONTENTS

Section **Page**

1. INTRODUCTION 3
1.1 Qualifications and Experience 3
1.2 Scope of Evidence 3
1.3 Context of My Evidence 3
2. MAIN ISSUES FOR THE INSPECTORS RELEVANT TO MY EVIDENCE 5
2.2 The Need for the Scheme 5
2.3 Alignment with the Development Corporation's Work 7
3. CONCLUSIONS 7
4. STATEMENT OF TRUTH 8

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Qualifications and Experience

1.1.1 I am Peter Freeman CBE. I was appointed by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning to chair the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) set up as the government's interim delivery body for Greater Cambridge and, following the establishment of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation (Development Corporation) in July 2026, I was appointed as Interim Chair of the Development Corporation which is a new statutory delivery body covering the administrative boundaries of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

1.1.2 Over my career, I have consistently championed mixed-use, infrastructure-led development and collaborative, inclusive approaches to creating vibrant, economically resilient places. After qualifying as a solicitor, I co-founded the Argent group of Companies in 1981 and remained on their Board until 2024. In that capacity I was also director of the Kings Cross Central Partnership from 2008 to 2024 which delivered the £8bn mixed use regeneration project behind Kings Cross and St. Pancras stations. I was instrumental in delivering the award-winning Brindley Place mixed use development in Birmingham from 1993, transforming it from derelict land to a vibrant part of the city.

1.1.3 From 2020 to 2025, I served as Chair of Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency, where I encouraged an increased focus on place and regeneration.

1.2 Scope of Evidence

1.2.1 My evidence will focus on Matter 1, addressing the aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed Cambridge South East Transport (CSET) Project.

1.2.2 This proof of evidence is provided in support of the application for CSET and its importance in supporting the growth of Cambridge, the broad reasons for which are explained in further detail in the proof.

1.3 Context of My Evidence

The Government's High Level Principles for Greater Cambridge growth

1.3.1 In my role as Chair of Homes England, I was initially asked in July 2023 by the government at the time, to review the potential for further growth in Cambridge and the obstacles to such growth.

1.3.2 Subsequently, in a letter dated 30 October 2024, the current Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook MP, reconfirmed my appointment **[CD11-39]** to chair the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC).

1.3.3 The CGC was established to advise on and drive forward the government's growth ambitions for the area.

1.3.4 In his letter, the Minister, set out High Level Principles to guide the work then being undertaken through CGC in developing proposals for the long-term growth of Greater Cambridge, noting:

> *When it comes to the growth strategy, development on a more dispersed geographical footprint is perfectly acceptable, but one or more contiguous urban extensions of the city must be core components of the vision the Growth Company brings forward, in order to maximise the benefits of agglomeration.*

It must also build on and go further than local plans, in terms of scale, ambition and timescale, and you should work closely with local partners to tackle the constraints that can be difficult to overcome at the local level alone

1.3.5 The success of Greater Cambridge and unlocking economic growth, productivity, housing delivery and infrastructure provision are key, national priorities for the government. Cambridge has untapped economic potential and is an area of national economic importance for the UK. It is a global centre of research and innovation, home to one of the world's most prestigious academic institutions and the largest biotechnology cluster in Europe.

1.3.6 However, the city and its surrounding towns and villages are facing critical constraints preventing them from reaching their full economic potential. The impact of above-national-average economic growth seen over the past few decades is affecting those who live and work in the area; including housing affordability and supply, transport congestion, and constraints on water and sewerage.

1.3.7 The challenge of tackling these impacts and barriers to growth, while protecting and enhancing the environment, is one that the government has committed to overcoming; seeking to realise the city's economic potential to the benefit of its residents and the UK as a whole.

1.3.8 The aspiration for an expanded Cambridge is based around well connected, sustainable, urban extensions with quicker, more reliable journey times, better digital and power connections, a safe and sustainable supply of water, improved access to green spaces, health and other public services, and better air quality.

1.3.9 As Chair of the CGC, and subsequently, as Interim Chair of the Development Corporation, I actively engage with local stakeholders to help fulfil the government's ambitions for the long-term economic success of Greater Cambridge, with a strong focus on supporting its communities and ensuring the area's continued sustainable and inclusive growth.

The role, function and purpose of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation

1.3.10 Following the establishment of the Development Corporation in July 2026, I was appointed as its Interim Chair. As a statutory delivery body, the Development Corporation will bring together a suite of powers and capabilities to achieve the objectives it has been set:

(a) **Land:** Assemble land to unlock complex strategic sites;

(b) **Planning:** Coordinate planning and provide greater certainty for strategic development. (Subject to further parliamentary process, Development Management to come into effect in 2027 and spatial planning expected to come into effect once the draft Local Plan goes through public examination and is adopted);

(c) **Financial:** Invest in enabling infrastructure and leverage of public and private investment;

(d) **Commercial:** Masterplan and coordinate delivery across multiple strategic sites.

1.4 The Legal Status and Function of the Development Corporation

1.4.1 The Development Corporation is an Urban Development Corporation established under Part XVI of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 **[CD4-50.1].** Its statutory objective is to secure the regeneration of the Urban Development Area. The Development Corporation has statutory powers relating to land acquisition, land assembly, development and infrastructure and wider powers available to it in

furtherance of that object. The Development Corporation is governed by a Board appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

1.4.2 The Secretary of State has appointed the Development Corporation Board, bringing together relevant expertise and local democratic representation. The Board is responsible for setting and overseeing the strategic direction and control of the corporation, in line with the objectives the government has set. The Board includes all four elected local leaders (the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the leaders of County, City and South Cambridgeshire) as well as other relevant experts from the innovation, health, finance and transport sectors.

1.5 The Development Corporation's Six Core Objectives:

1.5.1 The Development Corporation is guided by six core objectives:

- achieving transformational economic growth;
- delivering infrastructure-led development;
- enabling innovative investment;
- enhancing the environment and climate resilient communities;
- furthering inclusion and opportunity; and,
- all enabled through local representation, participation and transparency.

2. MAIN ISSUES FOR THE INSPECTORS RELEVANT TO MY EVIDENCE

2.1 The Development Corporation's developing strategy for Greater Cambridge

2.1.1 The work undertaken through CGC included developing an evidence base to underpin the long-term growth of Greater Cambridge, working with local leaders and other stakeholders to develop the evidence base and help address barriers to delivery. Following the Development Corporation's establishment in July 2026, that work now forms part of the wider context within which the Development Corporation is developing and implementing its approach to growth and infrastructure delivery.

2.1.2 The Development Corporation is taking an infrastructure first approach to growth and will activate its powers in a phased approach. The first phase is to accelerate delivery of the development sites identified in the local plan and support the emerging local plan through to adoption.

2.1.3 Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service's Regulation 19 Local Plan (consultation closed on 25 September 2026) **[CD8-34]** assessed Greater Cambridge's development needs for the period 2024 – 2045 and stated that 73,300 additional jobs and a minimum of 48,069 new homes are required. The Corporation submitted a representation to this consultation which supported the Plan's strategy and expressed a willingness to collaborate with GCSP to unlock key infrastructure constraints **[CD8-33].**

2.1.4 The Development Corporation will build on the growth identified in the Local Plan and over a longer time frame through to 2050 – 2060.

2.2 The Need for the Scheme

2.2.1 Greater Cambridge is formed of the administrative areas of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. The area has a rapidly growing economy and population fuelled by a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation-led growth.

2.2.2 Greater Cambridge has become the economic powerhouse of the East of England. As of 2023, a total of 23 businesses founded in Cambridge have reached the $1 billion 'unicorn' status, while knowledge-intensive firms in the area generate an annual turnover of £21 billion **[CD3-20, page 7](**. As a result, Greater Cambridge is a key contributor to the UK's international influence and soft power. For example, Cambridge is ranked as the third most significant science ecosystem in the world, behind the Bay Area and Boston in the USA.

2.2.3 While Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest growing and most productive areas in the UK, critical infrastructure challenges, particularly in transport, threaten its competitive advantage in the global high-tech market.

2.2.4 The rapid population and economic growth in Greater Cambridge have placed substantial pressure on existing infrastructure. This growth has created an imbalance between supply and demand for infrastructure and housing, leading to increased congestion and a sharp rise in housing and rental prices that now far exceed national averages.

2.2.5 Research undertaken by Cambridge Ahead **[CD21-18]** states that if no significant new policy interventions are implemented to address housing and transport gaps in the next decade, employment growth in Greater Cambridge is likely to reverse and decline from 2031 onwards.

2.2.6 There is an existing transport strategy in place through the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan **[CD8-09]** that needs to be delivered to promote safe, integrated and efficient transport provision which will help deliver the growth proposed in the existing Local Plan. CSET is part of that existing transport strategy and has been developed and promoted by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) since 2015.

2.2.7 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is preparing the Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy (GCTS) which will respond to the transport requirements for the emerging Local Plan. The final GCTS is expected to go to the CPCA Board for approval in November 2026 **[CD9-26].**

2.2.8 The Development Corporation is now progressing a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) in partnership with the CPCA, which is considering potential longer term MRT solutions for Greater Cambridge, with recommendations expected in early 2027.

2.2.9 The CSET (mainly) segregated busway will provide linkage to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and via the existing Guided Busway into Cambridge for the thousands of homes and jobs planned in the future. The new route would provide much needed corridor capacity to support existing and new communities. Longer term proposals developed through subsequent stages of the MRT Study will consider further enhancement and integration opportunities to create a comprehensive public transport network.

2.2.10 As part of ongoing MRT work at Outline Business Case phase, the Development Corporation, working in partnership with the Combined Authority, will consider whether there is benefit in re-purposing busways to alternative modes of transport in the longer term. If proven beneficial, such proposals could be implemented in a significantly reduced timeframe if the necessary route has already been secured through CSET.

2.2.11 CSET would enable growth along this corridor which is consistent with Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and consistent with the achievement of sustainable development. It is also consistent with a number of emerging national planning policy and government statements of intent surrounding the delivery of homes, including:

(a) The Deputy Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons of 30th July 2024 entitled 'Building the Homes We Need' **[CD11-41]**

(b) The Deputy Prime Minister's letter to all local authorities in England dated 30th July 2024 entitled 'Playing your part in building the homes we need' **[CD11-42]**

(c) The National Planning Policy Framework (published in August 2026) **[CD11-01.01]**

2.2.12 National government support for busways and wider services as sustainable transport has recently been demonstrated in the spending review which included support via funding and policy measures.

2.3 Alignment with the Development Corporation's Work

2.3.1 The detailed transport work commenced through CGC is now being taken forward by the Development Corporation. This work supports a coordinated approach across transport, housing and employment and will help to align infrastructure and policy decisions with the long-term growth of Greater Cambridge. The work will define the objectives and success factors for transport in Greater Cambridge and inform the development of integrated spatial and transport strategies, supported by a programme-level Strategic Outline Case (SOC). Together, this work will provide a basis for the Development Corporation to work with its partners to develop individual schemes through more detailed business cases and, where appropriate, towards procurement and delivery.

2.3.2 As noted above, transport work has started on the strategic case for a MRT solution to serve the growth of Greater Cambridge and develop the most appropriate long term transport solutions. This will be informed by evidence and options analysis and by the transport strategies and growth plans being developed by the Development Corporation and its partners, including the GCTS being developed by the CPCA.

2.3.3 While the emerging Local Plan and the Development Corporation's longer-term growth strategy continue to develop, it remains important to maintain momentum on schemes and growth corridors identified through the existing planning and transport framework. This includes delivery of CSET in support of expected growth in the south-east Cambridge corridor, including development at the Biomedical Campus. In the future CSET may form part of a future wider MRT system, designed to help to unlock additional growth potential, across the region.

2.3.4 Delivery of development allocated under the adopted Local Plan should continue while the emerging Local Plan and the Development Corporation's longer-term strategy are progressed. Delivery of planned transport infrastructure, including CSET, is important to maintaining that momentum and enabling the housing and employment growth expected in the corridor.

2.3.5 The Development Corporation is considering the potential for busway infrastructure to support alternative forms of enhanced public transport provision over the longer term. As such, therefore, CSET may also complement and/or form part of a wider MRT solution for Greater Cambridge in the future. But without delivery of CSET, new growth in this corridor will be restricted and may not proceed.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1.1 In presenting my evidence I have addressed Matter 1, the need for the scheme, by outlining the following:

- The role, function and purpose of the Development Corporation, including the context provided by the earlier work of CGC.
- The Development Corporation's developing strategy for Cambridge.
- The role of, and need for, CSET in supporting the growth ambitions for Greater Cambridge.
- Work is underway on establishing the strategic case for a MRT solution to serve the growth of Greater Cambridge and develop the most appropriate long term transport solutions. In due course the CSET corridor may play a part in delivery of this, and in any event, delivery of CSET does not compromise the wider aspiration.

4. STATEMENT OF TRUTH

The evidence which I have prepared and provided in this Proof of Evidence is true and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.