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Subject: Objection to Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a new busway, linking Cambourne to Cambridge
Date: 07 January 2025 17:00:37

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
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By email: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

6 January 2025

Objection to Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a new busway, linking Cambourne to Cambridge, as submitted by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) on 12 November 2024.

We, Alistair and Susan Burford, of [REDACTED] are writing to make a formal objection to the above order.

My wife and I reside on [REDACTED] near the site of the potential off road busway between Madingley Mulch (Waterworks) and the village of Coton. We have been involved in discussions with the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) since 2016 in regards to the route of the bus road from Cambourne to Cambridge. Whilst we wholeheartedly support the need for a transport link between Cambourne and Cambridge, we object on the basis that there is no need for the route to go off road for the short distance between Madingley Mulch and Grange Road, a residential road in Cambridge.

Waste of Tax Payers money

The proposed bus route from Cambourne to Cambridge runs mainly on the road but for a short distance between Cambourne and Bourn and Madingley Mulch to Grange Road, a residential road in Cambridge. The majority of the route is on the road. Going off road from Madingley Mulch for the length of less than 1.5 miles via the Green Belt and an area that has previously been described by the Council as an 'Area of Outstanding Beauty' not only destroys the landscape of Cambridge that is protected by restrictive covenants but also is a gross waste of tax payers money for the time savings that the GCP has stated which will be 2-5 minutes.

Flawed Consultation and Pre-Determined Outcome

The GCP created their outline business case in 2018 on the basis that they needed a transport route from Cambourne to Cambridge allowing development on the site of the Bourn airfield. The initial consultation put forward 3 routes, one north of Madingley Road, one South of Madingley Road and one on the Madingley Road. The consultation resulted in public rejection of the southern route. However, the GCP ignored this result and at the GCP Executive Meeting, the Northern route was quickly dismissed on the basis of an observation from one councillor on the Executive Board and the route along Madingley Road was dismissed as not being a viable option. Therefore, the southern route via the green belt was selected on the basis of it being the only option left. The consultations have therefore been flawed and pre-determined and served no purpose other than to demonstrate that the GCP had consulted.

Failure to consider alternative on road solution

The GCP has dismissed an on road alternative solution put forward by Cambridge Past, Present and Future (CPPF) without proper assessment despite the fact that a bus lane would suffice for the 1.5 mile of Madingley Road and making substantial savings on the cost of the off road bus route. There is no just reason for the GCP to reject the alternative solution or at least to complete an assessment on the proposal.

Route leads to nowhere

The GCP has failed to explain where the buses would go once they arrive at the residential road, Grange Road in Cambridge. They have just stated that buses will join normal traffic in Cambridge with no plan as to what will happen when 10 buses an hour will arrive in Grange Road, a busy road where a number of private schools and university colleges are located. The road is gridlocked each morning with school drop offs so the 2-5 minute saving of taking the route off road along the Green Belt, destroying an ancient Orchard, would be lost when the buses join normal traffic in Cambridge. Furthermore, the route to Grange Road does not take commuters to any of the main employment sites or further education colleges e.g. Biomedical Centre, Addenbrookes and Papworth Hospitals, Hills Road Sixth Form College or Long Road Sixth Form College. The buses will merely end up in a residential road in Cambridge to join gridlocked traffic.

Very Poor Benefit Cost Ratio

The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of less than 0.5 is extremely poor value for money. A recent Freedom of Information Request also uncovered emails where the Officers discussed that the BCR, in real terms, is a negative value of -0.5. In the same emails Officers discussed how the figures might be massaged to bring the BCR up to a positive value. This is very concerning to read that the BCR might be lower than 0.50. The emails can be provided.

Relied on historic and outdated data

The GCP is relying on historic and outdated data. The initial data was based on traffic information taken from 2015, when the need for a transport route was discussed. No specific traffic surveys have been carried on the Madingley Road since despite the fact that traffic patterns have changed with the change in working patterns. Specifically, the pandemic has substantially changed working patterns with many workers working from home for some of the week and the traffic on Madingley Road is now greatly reduced. This has been raised with the GCP but there has been a refusal to conduct a Madingley Road specific traffic survey, we can only assume this is because a traffic survey would not support their business case.

Destruction of Landscape

The off road route via the Green Belt between Madingley Mulch and the village of Coton has been previously described as one of the most important and prominent landscapes overlooking historic Cambridge. That along with the ancient Coton Orchard should be preserved at all costs. In a South Cambs Green Belt study the land is described as 'High quality landscape merging with soft green edge of Cambridge;; Close proximity to distinctive university buildings to the countryside; Views from very long distances'. We would also draw your attention to the Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Protection and Enhancement of landscape character where the direction is to respect, retain or enhance local landscape character; protect and enhance the setting of Cambridge including the green corridors extending into the City; Protect and enhance the setting of the villages in South Cambridgeshire and continue to protect identified important countryside frontages. The area between Madingley Mulch to Grange Road is one of those frontages and running a road for buses through it would destroy the landscape forever.