Planning Inspectorate

THE CAMBRIDGE SOUTH EAST TRANSPORT ORDER ACT
REF DPI/E0535/25/7

Note of Pre-inquiry Meeting (PIM)
held at 10:00 on Tuesday 20 October 2026 at The Graduate by Hilton Cambridge Hotel at Granta Place, Cambridge CB2 1RT

Italics indicate post PIM updates
References in brackets [ ] are to core documents on the inquiry website

Introductions

1. The PIM was led by ourselves, Nancy Thomas and Luke Regan, as the appointed Panel of Inspectors. Joanna Vincent and Sue Power-Redman were introduced as the programme officers for the case, who are dealing with administrative arrangements. Contact details are given at the end of this note.

2. The programme officers are responsible to us as the Inspectors to assist in the smooth running of the event. The programme officers are completely impartial and independent and are the first point of contact if you have any questions or queries about the process or the inquiry or wish to send in documents.

3. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the ongoing management and arrangements for the inquiry, to ensure that it proceeds in an efficient and effective manner. There was no discussion of the merits of the case. The meeting was livestreamed and a recording is available to view on the inquiry website.

4. The purpose of the inquiry itself will be to allow us, as the Inspectors, to gather evidence to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport (SoS). The report will summarise the evidence and recommend either making the order, with or without modifications, or not making the order. The inquiry will be run in accordance with the Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004.

Participation in the inquiry

5. The purpose of the inquiry is to assist the Inspectors to gather evidence to make a recommendation to the SoS. The report will summarise and consider the evidence and recommend either making the order, with or without modifications, or not making the order.

6. Parties intending to give substantive evidence were encouraged to submit a proof of evidence in advance and were reminded that evidence presented at the inquiry may be subject to questioning. To

assist the efficient running of the inquiry, objectors were encouraged to nominate a spokesperson where possible and avoid repeating points already made in written submissions. The Inspectors confirmed that all written representations, statements of case and proofs of evidence would be fully considered, whether or not a party chose to speak at the inquiry. Objectors were also encouraged to familiarise themselves with points raised by the campaign group and focus on providing any additional detail or explanation not already submitted in writing.

7. The Inspectors advised that they are considering including a session following opening statements to allow interested parties who do not intend to participate in later inquiry sessions an opportunity to address the inquiry. The session would enable participants to expand upon points already raised in their written representations or objections, with the applicant responding during subsequent topic-specific sessions. The proposal is intended primarily for parties not wishing to give evidence in the formal inquiry process, and interested parties were invited to indicate whether such a session would be of interest. Attendees were asked to indicate if they were interested in contributing to such a session by emailing the programme officer by 23 October.

8. All parties were asked to introduce themselves and if they intend to give evidence at the inquiry, the topic area they will cover, and if they intend to submit a proof of evidence or rely on previous statements submitted. Participants in the PIM and intended inquiry appearances are appended to this note. Parties not submitting a proof of evidence were asked to provide a written copy of their speaking notes at the inquiry, by emailing the programme officer.

Scope of the proposals

9. The application for the Transport and Works Act (TWA) 1992 order is accompanied by a request for a direction concerning deemed planning permission. The proposed development which would be authorised by the order are set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the application letter [CD1-01] and includes a guided busway, travel hub, bridges over the River Granta and Hobson's Brook, access roads and highway works.

10. The request for a direction with respect to deemed planning permission relates to development for which provision is made in article 20(1) in the draft order [CD1-02] which are the authorised works. The works which would be granted authority (and therefore covered by the deemed planning permission direction referred to in article 20) are the works listed in schedule 1.

11. The applicant outlined three proposed change requests. Change 1 relates to National Gas Transmission (NGT) mitigation in the vicinity of the proposed travel hub. The changes arise from discussions with NGT regarding a high-pressure gas pipeline and include extension of the order limits to allow:

- a short diversion of the existing pipeline where the busway crosses the pipeline
- the installation of protective works over the existing pipeline running alongside the proposed travel hub,
- amendments to the layout of the proposed travel hub
- reconfiguration of the highway arrangements at the A1307 Cambridge Road to provide a signalised junction in place of a roundabout (within work nos 9, 10 and 11)

12. The applicant stated these changes had been agreed with NGT and affected landowners. We requested that the applicant provides illustrative plans showing the existing pipeline and the proposed pipeline diversion and the area for installation of the protective mesh.

13. Change 2 relates to the Nine Wells/ Hobson's Conduit area and the changes include:

    - reduction in the order limits
    - reduction in the size of the works compound,
    - realignment of the cycle track and private means of access
    - amendments to the ecology ponds near Hobsons Conduit (within work no 3)

14. The changes were described as responding to concerns raised by Hobson's Conduit Trust and local landowners.

15. Change 3 comprises land acquisition reductions affecting land owned by Corpus Christi College and Deal Land LLP in the Stapleford area. The applicant stated reductions amount to approximately 10,000 m² at plot 82 and 40,000 m² at plot 90. The applicant confirmed that biodiversity net gain objectives would still be achieved despite the reduced land take.

16. The applicant outlined the consultation it has carried out with respect to the proposed changes. Direct engagement has occurred with affected landowners and statutory parties. Change documentation was circulated to all parties that had submitted statements of case. No wider consultation was proposed. The applicant was asked to update the note on compliance to include their approach with respect to consultation and publicity for the change request.

17. The applicant has confirmed in its post PIM letter of 23 October that Better Ways for Busways (BW4B) have no comment on the change proposals application procedure.

18. We conclude that the proposed changes submitted by the applicant have been subject to appropriate consultation and publicity. Interested parties have been afforded a reasonable opportunity to comment on the amendments. Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed changes, we are satisfied that no party has been prejudiced and that the changes do not materially alter the fundamental characteristics or objectives of the proposed development. We therefore conclude that the proposed changes are

acceptable and may be incorporated into the application and associated plans. The applicant should therefore update and provide a full set of plans which include the changes summarised above.

Main considerations

19. The SoS issued a Statement of Matters (SoM) on 7 September 2026 and a revised version was issued on 19 October. They are available to view on the inquiry website.

20. The SoM comprises the matters about which the SoS wishes to be informed for the purposes of considering the application. This will therefore form the main issues around which the inquiry will be structured. We have reviewed the application documentation, including the objections and other representations. It appears to us that the SoM covers the main issues that have been raised by all parties, if not explicitly, then on the basis of the main environmental and other topics.

21. Our current understanding of the main issues is as follows:

    i. The aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed guided busway.
    ii. The main alternative options considered by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and the reasons for choosing the preferred option set out in the Order.
    iii. The cost of the scheme and overall benefits.
    iv. The effect of the implementation, operation and maintenance of the scheme on the environment including drainage, green belt land, air pollution, material use, biodiversity, habitats and wildlife, with particular reference to the Granta chalk stream, Hobson's Conduit chalk stream, Gog Magog Hills landscape and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserve.
    v. Any matters relating to the Habitats Regulations assessment (HRA) for the proposed Cambridge South East Transport scheme, including the effects of the scheme on relevant protected habitats and species.
    vi. The potential disruption to, and effects on the safety and wellbeing of users of, non-motorised routes such as cycleways, footpaths and bridleways.
    vii. The impact of the proposal on areas of historical or cultural significance.
    viii. The implications of the development on agricultural land.
    ix. Whether the scheme could result in the allocation of adjacent agricultural land for future development through the severance of fields by the busway.
    x. The potential visual and noise pollution caused by the scheme.
    xi. The effects of the scheme on statutory undertakers, statutory utilities and other utility providers
    xii. Whether the scheme is consistent with guidance on the compulsory purchase process
    xiii. Any other matters which may be raised at the inquiry which may be important and relevant to the SoS's decision.

22. Mr Booth KC on behalf of the applicant suggested that a separate matter of 'whether the development is inappropriate development in the green belt' could be added, in view of the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework. However, it was acknowledged that this consideration could be covered under item 4(a) of the SoM which includes green belt and would be addressed in evidence at the inquiry.

Format of the inquiry

23. We propose that the TWA order application and the application for a direction for deemed planning permission are all dealt with at the same inquiry event.

24. The proposal is to hold the inquiry as a face-to-face event. At this stage, there has been no indication that anyone would wish to participate online. If the need for online participation arises, this will be accommodated, subject to technical feasibility. The inquiry will be livestreamed and a recording will be available to view through the inquiry website.

25. There were no responses to the applicant's suggestion that matters relating to aquatic ecology, hydrogeology, flood risk, water quality, heritage and noise and vibration could be dealt with through the submission of written statements in the interests of saving inquiry time. The applicant also suggested that round table sessions can be held to discuss possible conditions and if necessary any proposed amendments to the draft order.

26. We intend to produce an initial list of questions for the applicant at the start of the inquiry to seek to reduce inquiry time.

Timetable

27. We will be running the event to be as fair as possible to all parties. However, it is also important to recognise that we all have a duty to the inquiry, to ensure that it is run well and effectively. We would therefore ask that participants are as flexible as possible in timetabling, bearing in mind that while it is possible to express preferences, it is unlikely that all preferences can be accommodated.

28. The dates currently earmarked for the inquiry to sit were set out in our advance note and in the applicant's letter of 8 October 2026.

29. The inquiry will normally sit from Tuesday to Friday each, finishing at lunchtime on Friday if possible to allow for travel time. To make the best use of the time available, we will be opening at 10am on the Tuesdays but seeking to resume at 9.30am on the subsequent days.

30. We have provisionally set aside the weeks commencing 22 February and 1 March if additional inquiry time is needed. The need for additional inquiry time will be reassessed once we have a clearer idea of time estimates from participants.

31. The applicant has offered to submit a schedule containing availability of their leading and junior counsel as well as their expert witnesses to the programme officers. This will assist in setting out a programme for the inquiry. If any other parties wish to submit something similar to the programme officers to assist with timetabling that would be appreciated.

32. The applicant's team included a suggested timetable for the inquiry in their letter of 8 October. They propose to divide the timetable into three blocks as follows:

Session	Dates	Suggested Programme
Block 1	Tuesday 8 December to Friday 18 December 2026	Openings Applicant's case and cross-examination of Applicant's witnesses Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service's case and cross-examination
	Monday 21 December to Friday 8 January 2026	Non-sitting weeks (to account for the Christmas period)
Block 2	Tuesday 12 January to Friday 22 January 2027	Third parties raising scheme wide objections Third parties raising site specific objections
	Monday 25 January to Friday 29 January 2027	Non-sitting week
Block 3	Tuesday 2 February to Friday 12 February 2027	Applicant's case continued, dealing with planning policy and compulsory purchase matters, including cross examination of those witnesses Conditions Closings

33. Mr Booth KC for the applicant explained that their suggested timetable would allow the bulk of the applicant's case to be presented in block 1, as well as Greater Cambridgeshire Shared Planning Services' (GCSP) case. Third parties would then have an opportunity to present scheme wide objections, followed by site specific objections in block 2.

34. Mr Parker for BW4B expressed a preference for calling witnesses in a single session in block 2, rather than having to appear at individual topic sessions. Mr Cutmore for Cambridge Ramblers' Association and Mark Weston for the British Horse Society indicated that they would prefer a single topic on public rights of way and would be content with a specific time slot. Mr Harman on behalf of GCSP expressed a preference for a 'cast list' approach to give certainty and assist with resourcing.

35. Mr Booth KC for the applicant stated that the request in terms of public rights of way could be accommodated.

36. It was agreed that the applicant will work up a provisional timetable structure based on the blocks suggested above, indicating how block 1 would be divided into topics which are aligned with the items in the SoM. For example, this should include time allocated for 'the aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed guided busway' and 'the main alternative options considered by CCC and the reasons for choosing the preferred option'.

37. This would include an allowance for interested parties who do not wish to take part in a later inquiry session to speak after we have heard opening statements.

38. Although not discussed at the meeting, we would welcome the inclusion of roundtable sessions on the draft order and draft planning conditions within block 1 and block 3.

39. Following receipt of the applicant's updated provisional timetable, we will produce a skeleton inquiry timetable that we will issue as soon as possible.

40. Once proofs have been exchanged, please contact the programme officer with an updated position with regard to your witnesses and estimated timings. Please provide these as soon as possible.

41. The final form of the inquiry will largely depend on the details set out in the proofs of evidence and the position of parties at the start of the inquiry.

42. The inquiry will generally take the form of:

- the formal presentation of evidence, in the first instance led by the applicant's advocates through evidence in chief. Unrepresented parties who wish to speak may make a brief statement of their main points.

- Evidence may either be subject to cross-examination, or questions from us as the Inspectors or from other parties. The same applies to other parties formally presenting evidence.

- If objectors wish to question witnesses on specific points, this is not an opportunity to make your own statement.

- There will then be an opportunity for re-examination by their advocate. This is not an opportunity to introduce new points.

- The expectation is that we will run some round-table sessions led by the Inspectors. These could cover for example conditions, the wording of the order and any specific technical matters.

- Closing statements

43. The applicant suggested that matters relating to aquatic ecology, hydrogeology, flood risk, water quality, heritage and noise and vibration could be dealt with through the submission of written

statements in the interests of saving inquiry time. No parties raised any concerns with this approach at the meeting. The deadline for the submission of written statements/ proofs of evidence in relation to these matters is **10 November**. We may nonetheless have questions for the witnesses in relation to these matters.

44. The applicant confirmed that the ecology witness will be covering the HRA.

Inquiry Venues

45. The venue for the inquiry will be The Graduate by Hilton Cambridge Hotel at Granta Place, Cambridge, CB2 1RT for all scheduled dates except 8-11 December 2026. On those dates, the venue will be Homerton College, University of Cambridge, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 8PH.

46. It is understood that retiring rooms will be available for the Inspectors and applicant and that WiFi will be available and the event will be recorded and streamed. The applicant confirmed that the facilities available at the venues were appropriate.

47. The applicant has confirmed that it will be possible to store documents overnight and over the weekend.

Documentation

48. The programme officers have prepared an inquiry website which includes a core document library which can be accessed using this link: Core Documents.

49. Suggestions for core documents should be discussed between the parties. The parties are encouraged to co-operate in the preparation of statements of common ground.

50. Documents should not include links to websites or on-line resources. Rather, PDF copies of the material should be provided in an appendix. All documents should be available digitally and should be submitted to the Programme Officers for inclusion on the website.

51. Proofs of evidence should be submitted by **10 November 2026**. In the interests of fairness to all parties and the efficient running of the inquiry, we will not accept late submissions of proofs. However, parties that do not provide a proof of evidence in accordance with the timetable may still appear at the inquiry and rely on their statement of case. Proofs should be submitted electronically to the Programme Officers, and to other parties in accordance with Rule 16(4) of The Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004.

52. It would be helpful if two hard copies of proofs of evidence could be provided at the inquiry for the Inspectors.

53. Rebuttal proofs are not required but may be submitted up to two weeks prior to the opening of the inquiry, which is **24 November**.

Please only submit these if necessary, for example to narrow down the areas of disagreement, but not to either repeat material or introduce new evidence. Late rebuttal proofs will not be accepted.

54. There may be circumstances where it is inevitable that information that is material to our consideration of the application becomes available for the first time at a date which prevents compliance with the normal rules. While we have discretion to accept late evidence, this will only be in exceptional circumstances, as it may result in an adjournment to allow the parties adequate time to consider it to avoid injustice. It may also result in an application for costs against the party that has submitted it. Therefore please do not submit late evidence unless it is unavoidable and material to the consideration of the application, or we have requested it.

55. Statements of common ground should be submitted by **10 November 2026**. They should be reviewed and updated to represent any updated positions as appropriate during the inquiry. The statement of common ground with GCSP should include a list of agreed conditions.

56. The applicant is requested to provide an A3 size plan which indicates the location of the photomontage photography viewpoints. This should be on an Ordnance Survey map base so that we can identify the numbered viewpoints and the order limits in relation to existing physical features.

57. The applicant agreed to prepare and maintain a land and rights negotiation tracker to record negotiations with landowners/rights holders affected by the proposed development. This needs to include the plot number, the land interest, the power or interest sought, the works number that would apply, and summary of the negotiation status. The tracker should be provided before the start of the inquiry, and if there is progress, one at the close of the inquiry providing the final position at that point.

58. The applicant confirmed their intention to submit updated versions of various documents including:

- Planning statement
- Draft order
- Book of reference
- Deemed planning permission documents
- Design and access statement
- Flood risk assessment
- Environmental statement addendum
- Code of construction practice addendum
- Heritage mitigation strategy
- Business case technical note
- Updated environmental survey information

59. Updated documents should be submitted as clean documents and also a 'tracked changes' version so that all parties can readily understand what has changed.

Site visits

60. We have already visited the general area so have some knowledge of the site and its surroundings. We will carry out further unaccompanied site visits as we deem necessary, using public land or public rights of way. Please be aware that if you happen to see us on site we will not be able to engage in conversation with you so please do not approach us or attempt to discuss the proposal with us.

61. Any suggested locations for us to visit should be provided by the start of the inquiry. We will give consideration to whether it would be beneficial for us to visit them. If they are accessible from public land we will visit unaccompanied. If they require access to private land and we consider that it would be helpful to us to visit them, we may need to arrange accompanied site visit(s) to take place during the inquiry. Please be aware that if we enter private land we will need to be accompanied by a representative of the applicant as well as a representative of objectors. If you have any queries please contact the programme officer.

62. Once the inquiry has opened we would ask the parties to collaborate on producing a draft site visit itinerary to visit any locations that are not publicly accessible.

Costs

63. You should all be aware that whilst those who take part in an inquiry are normally expected to meet their own costs, there are limited exceptions to this general rule. Details are set out in relevant guidance, details of which we will provide in the post-meeting note. We understand that there are no applications for an award of costs at this point.

Summary of key dates

64. The key dates for submission of documents are set out below:

By close of business Friday 23 October:

- Details of advocate/representative, witnesses, estimates of time for evidence in chief and cross examination
- Any updated documents from the applicant
- Applicant to confirm venue details
- All parties who wish to participate in the inquiry to confirm with programme officer

By 10 November 2026:

- Proofs due (relevant parties)
- Statements of common ground
- Those who wish to speak at a session following the opening statements to have registered with the programme officers

By 24 November 2026:

- Any rebuttal proofs due
- Any updates to comments on provisional inquiry timetable

By 8 December – inquiry start date:

- Hard copies of documents to be deposited at the inquiry venue
- Suggested site visit locations/points
- Updated statements of common ground
- Any draft legal agreement(s)

Programme officers' contact details

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Please contact one of the Programme Officers in advance to arrange the submission of any hard copy documents.

Nancy Thomas and Luke Regan

INSPECTORS
27 October 2026

Annex – Participants in the pre-inquiry meeting (PIM) and intended inquiry appearances (Inq)

Name	**Organisation/Representation**
The applicant:	
Alexander Booth KC	Lead advocate (PIM, Inq), assisted by
Michael Fry	(PIM, Inq)
Vicky Redmond	Womble Bond Dickinson (PIM)
Witnesses:	
Peter Freeman CBE	Need for the scheme (Inq)
Jo Baker	Scheme history and development (Inq)
Tali Diament	(AtkinsRéalis) - Business case (Inq)
Mark Connelly	(AtkinsRéalis) - Design and construction (Inq)
Craig Shipley	(AtkinsRéalis) - Transport modelling (Inq)
Neil Watson	(AtkinsRéalis) - Landscape and visual effects (Inq)
Dan Parsons	(AtkinsRéalis) - Environmental matters (Inq)
Alex Watson	(AtkinsRéalis) – Ecology (Inq)
Caroline McDade	(Lichfields) - Planning matters (Inq)
James Franklin	(CBRE) - Compulsory purchase (Inq)
Victoria Sykes	(AtkinsRéalis) - Carbon matters (Inq)
GCSP:	
Michael Harman	Advocate (PIM, Inq)
Witness:	
Steven Kelly	Joint Director of GCSP – Need, alternatives and implementation (Inq)
BW4B:	
Jack Parker	Advocate (PIM, Inq)
Witnesses:	
Peter Leaver	Landscape and visual effects (Inq)
Neil Rowe	Transport matters (Inq)
Steven Stroud	Planning matters (Inq)
British Horse Society:	
Mark Weston (PIM)	
Lynda Warth Inq)	
Miranda Fyfe	**Stapleford resident (PIM, Inq)**
Rebecca Cook	**Birketts LLP for Pemberton landowners (PIM, Inq)**

Henry Wilson	**One Haverhill Partnership (PIM, Inq)**
Colin Poole	**Haverhill Town Council and One Haverhill Partnership (PIM, Inq)**
Steven Partridge-Hicks	**BW4B and affected landowner (PIM, Inq)**
Ian Couzens	**Railfuture East Anglia (PIM, Inq)**
Paul Cutmore	**Cambridge Ramblers (PIM, Inq)**
Brian Reeve	**Individual objector (PIM, Inq)**
John Latham	**Hobson's Conduit Trust (PIM, Inq)**
Mike Hakata	**Cambridge Past, Present & Future (PIM, Inq)**