

30 July 2024

Dr J T Green
By Email: jtg11@cam.ac.uk>

Dear Dr Green

Thank you for your email of 21 July addressed to members of the Council and others, raising concerns about the publication of remarks made at the 9 July Discussion on a proposed disposal of land at West Cambridge for the Cambourne to Cambridge busway. I am replying because I am the editor of the Reporter, with the discretion to omit or amend Discussion remarks. I am also replying in my capacity as Secretary to the Council, given that you have written to some of its members. I will share this reply with those you copied into your email.

You raise two concerns. The first relates to the publication of certain remarks made by Ms Flood and Dr O'Brien. Your concern is that they provide no evidence to support their claims that matters are now beyond the University's control and therefore there is no other avenue open to the University other than to discuss the terms of an agreement to sell the land to Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). It is not clear to which points in your remarks you are referring when you say they provide evidence showing this to be false. However, the Council's Notice published on 5 June confirms that the negotiations with CCC are already at the stage where a Transport and Works Act order has been drafted. This could lead to a compulsory purchase order to obtain the required land if no agreement is reached. The publicly available documentation on compulsory purchase confirms the position, noting that it is "intended as a last resort and acquiring authorities are expected to try to acquire land by agreement before resorting to compulsory purchase."

Your second concern relates to the editing of your own remarks. The Reporter team reviews Discussion remarks to check for various matters, including factual accuracy and whether any comments might be considered defamatory or unlawful. Where the latter is considered a risk, the team contacts the contributor to see whether a revised wording can be agreed. The team also points out factual errors and shows how it plans to correct them. These checks protect the person making the remarks and the University from the risk of legal challenge.

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I have seen the correspondence between you and a member of the Reporter team. You received a tracked changes version of your remarks with comments and suggesting amendments, to which you (at least prior to publication) agreed. Most of the amendments suggested were factual corrections to quotations from two meetings when compared with the transcripts of those meetings. You also received one further tracked amendment, which you were not able to see before publication, but the emails made clear that it would be possible to publish a correction if appropriate. Although you contacted the Reporter team on 19 July to say you were not happy with the later amendment, you did not explain why. However, your email of 21 July provides further details of two changes (referred to as A and B) with which you have concerns.

Change A omits the sentences of concern, and, further, you agreed to these changes prior to publication. As is permitted under Regulation 7 of the Ordinance for Discussions, I will therefore leave the omission as it stands.

Regarding change B, the contents of the two reports do not appear to support the conclusions drawn in this paragraph of your remarks. Again, as permitted under Regulation 7, I have asked the team to publish a correction omitting the following text and related footnotes from the Discussion report as published on 17 July, with a note to explain the omission:

“This claim has been made by the GCP and its Chair. However, both the 2019 MM and the 2021 CPPF reports note that moving the route to the south to avoid taking land from the SSSI and the American Cemetery.”

Yours sincerely



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Registrary

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