

To. The Secretary of State for Transport
From John Hall, 22 Haverhill Road, Stapleford, Cambridge, CB225BX
Date 5th March 2025

Objections to the Cambridge South East Transport Scheme from The Greatern Cambridge Partnership. (GCP)

Introduction

The ultimate purpose of this and similar projects is to enable Cambridge to grow and overcome the constraints of transport, housing and water.

This specific project aims to fulfil the growth needs of the Employers on the Biomedical Campus by building a radial busway to relieve congestion along the existing radial route from Haverhill, the A1307. Congestion along this route is significant, mostly during rush hours in term time. Cambridge is growing and this congestion will get worse. This is acknowledged.

The particular features of the project from the GCP are its significant infrastructure (e.g. bridges, stations etc) and its route, which touches the periphery of three villages, where stations will be built.

My objections to this particular proposal is that:-

1. It is partially self defeating the overall aim of improving transport around Cambridge

There are delays introduced to traffic going around Cambridge e.g. From residential areas around villages to the west of the proposed route going to business parks in Fulbourn and the east of Cambridge.

Firstly, because of busway barriers and level crossings along the rotary routes to allow the busway busses to pass.

Secondly, given the stations have very limited parking, cars will be forced to park on the rotary roads, leading up to the stations. In Stapleford, this will be Haverhill Road and Gog Magog way. In Shelford, this will be Hinton Way.

Extra cars are likely as those living in the heart, or west sides of the villages, and perhaps other villages to the South and West may want to take the service

These roads are not wide enough for there to be both a row of parked cars and regular vehicles being able to pass them in both directions at the same time. This means vehicles have to wait until it is their turn to use available road space. There will thus be further delays to those cars.

This is happening to a certain extent now for other reasons, both along the upper reaches of Haverhill Road, and by the Post Office in Hinton Way. Limited parking at stations will significantly increase these type of delays as will traffic arising from the pure growth of Cambridge.

2. *The busways potentially destroys other forms of public transport*

The Busway will take away passengers who might otherwise use existing buses e.g. the 31 bus.

The 31 bus goes around the west, central and east sides of the villages of Stapleford, Great Shelford and Little Shelford. It passes two proposed station locations (Haverhill Road and Hinton Way) before going to Addenbrookes which is adjacent to (and part of the Biomedical campus). It can join the Babraham Park and Ride route after leaving the proposed site of the Shelford Station. The park and ride site is heavily used and has a peak time route avoiding considerable congestion. The 31 runs one bus during congestion times in term time, otherwise running off peak times. If there was a commercial case to run more frequently in rush hours, it would undoubtedly be doing so.

It has, observably, at Haverhill Road, less than three passengers per bus.

The new retirement home on Haverhill might save this bus route, but if the residents use the guided busway in preference, the future of the 31 bus is further at risk for other residents or users along its route. The 31 bus then goes up Hinton Way, to where another station will be built

The 31 bus is mentioned in the GCP report, along with other routes but the impact on these routes is not mentioned.

This might appear to be a mere detail but it illustrates two major points.

Firstly, there seems to be a lack of an integrated approach and no obvious investigation (unless buried in bureaucracy) of integration with existing buses and new trains.

Secondly, more importantly, if the 31 bus which passes the two proposed station locations and goes within easy walking distance of the Biomedical campus, is hardly used, what does that say about the demand for stations? If running more frequently is not commercial (the 31 would undoubtedly do it if it was) and the journey duration is not much longer than the heavily used Park and Ride site then public money spent on stations would not appear to be justified.

3. *The new station at South Cambridge reduces the need for a busway station at the periphery of the villages.*

Villagers who live in Shelford and Stapleford can use the train to reach the new South Cambridge station, beside the Biomedical campus. The location of Great Shelford station is central to the villages of Shelford and Stapleford

The need for a busway station to serve further outside these villages would seem unwarranted

4. *The proposed active path alongside the busway does not contribute to any Commuting purpose*

The path is unlikely to appeal to any walkers as the distances are too far. The distance for cycling commuters is reasonable but they are unlikely to use it as there is a problem with this route and a far better alternative.

The problem is that the route along the busway around the new Retirement Village means cyclists will have to ***go up a significant hill and a longer distance.***

There is a ***much better existing*** level alternative for (which could be made better still) making use of NCN11 and bridleways, or existing cycle paths covering all villages along the route. There is a further alternative up the route along the A1307 for the slightly fitter.

5. The proposal is a “high risk” use of public money

This is an “all or nothing” proposal based on the premise of “Build it and they will come”. It is a digital approach. A large amount or nothing. It might also link to unproven bus technology. The GCP will not do tests to determine whether the concept will work even though it has been put to the GCP they could do a small scale test of using a small car park at Babraham and send busses down the A1307 to validate there will be enough commuter demand to justify the project.

There are better ways to spend public money and still achieve a good result

The alternative proposal suggested by the Better ways than Busways group deserves serious consideration.

It can overcome several of the issues of validating traffic by using a series of lower cost steps, with a significant overall lower cost. The resultant surplus could be deployed back into Cambridge to overcome other growth constraints e.g. Water, and grow Cambridge quicker.

6. We have arrived at this point because of a consultation voting flaw

Just say there were two candidates for an election, and you wanted one of them to win. You could sponsor a third candidate with a near identical approach to the one you disliked to split the opposition vote to make sure your candidate won. Is this similar to giving a choice of three where two choices are similar and one is different. The one that is different might win on a first past the post system if the vote is split between the two similar ones and this can occur when the two similar ones gain more votes than the different one.

The GCP provided two strategies for developing the A1307, and one for going through the countryside on the proposed route. They announced the public voted for the existing proposal even though the vote was marginally above each of the two alternatives. The GCP itself has assured its board the proposal before you is what the public voted for. Challenges in the consultations were dealt with brusquely

Had they set out a simpler vote of two alternatives, - have a busway or improve the A1307 this way or that way. The result could have been different.

The Secretary of State will hear a lot about the amount of consultation conducted by the GCP. The Secretary of State should bear in mind that quantity may tick boxes. Quality will bring the local population along with you. Protests to the GCP approach and attitude remain strong.

In summary, the case for having busway stations on the periphery of villages is marginal and will slow traffic and increase congestion, going around the southern villages of Cambridge. Traffic from Haverhill to the Biomedical campus can be improved by an alternative scheme contributed by Better ways than Busways at a much lower cost which can be introduced step by step and might be much more in accord with the wishes of local voters and the overall purpose of increasing the growth of Cambridge. I am informed "Better ways than busways" have sent their proposal in separately..