



Coton Parish Council

**TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992 (“TWA”): THE PROPOSED CAMBRIDGE
COUNTY COUNCIL AND GREATER CAMBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP CAMBOURNE TO
CAMBRIDGE ORDER**

**Summary of Proof of Evidence
on**

Planning Matters

James Littlewood, Chief Executive of Cambridge Past, Present & Future

On behalf of

Cambridge Past, Present & Future and Coton Parish Council

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Wandlebury Country Park
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1. This evidence is presented by James Littlewood, CEO of Cambridge Past Present & Future, representing CPPF and Coton Parish Council.
2. CPPF is a civic, environmental and heritage charity with over 200 members and owns and manages over 500 acres of land around Cambridge. Coton Parish Council is the local administrative body for the area within the TWA Order Limit to which our concerns relate.
3. In the 1930s, CPPF bought over 400 acres near Madingley Hill to shield the countryside west of Cambridge from development. Covenants with the National Trust ensured this land was protected from development in perpetuity. Today, CPPF still owns over 300 acres of this covenanted land, managing it for the benefit of the community and nature, with plans to create a new nature reserve. CPPF and Coton PC oppose the compulsory purchase of its land for the TWAO busway scheme, arguing the proposed plan lacks justification and that a less harmful, more cost-effective alternative exists.
4. For over eight years, CPPF and Coton PC have been actively engaged with the applicant on the proposed scheme, consistently advocating for an alternative "in-highway" plan to reduce the environmental impact of delivering a busway. We have argued that the applicant's assessment of on-road options was flawed, citing misinterpretations of comments from Natural England and Historic England.
5. CPPF and the Coton PC have presented an alternative in-highway busway scheme along Madingley Road designed to minimize environmental and heritage impacts, reduce costs, and still provide effective transport and active travel routes. Despite a petition with over 23,800 signatories supporting the in-highway option, and public consultation showing majority support for it, the applicant has refused to fully evaluate this alternative. This has forced CPPF to fund its own engineering and environmental studies to demonstrate the viability and benefits of its proposed scheme as presented in the evidence of Mr Steve Johnstone.
6. The applicant claims its off-road busway is justified by local planning policies of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, specifically citing policies SS/7 and SS/8. However, we consider that this is a misinterpretation. Policy SS/7 for Bourn Airfield states that bus priority measures can be "on or parallel" to the A1303, not necessarily a segregated busway. Similarly, Policy SS/8 for Cambourne West specifies "on" the A1303. This means that a scheme within the existing highway, like the alternative proposed by CPPF, would satisfy these policy requirements.
7. Furthermore, my evidence points out that housing and employment developments in both Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield have already received planning permission. Delivery of the Cambourne West development is not dependent on the delivery of any busway scheme. Delivery of the Bourn Airfield development does require a busway scheme between Cambourne and Cambridge to be completed but this requirement would equally be delivered by way of an alternative scheme such as is proposed by CPPF. We consider that the applicant has overstated the economic and social benefits of the busway, as these benefits would also be realised by a less costly and less environmentally harmful alternative, such as the one proposed by CPPF.
8. The applicant's busway scheme is said to align with the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. However, this plan is still in early consultation stages and carries limited weight.

Notwithstanding this, the alternative proposed by CPPF would also meet the plan's future strategies.

9. Regarding agricultural land, the applicant's plan would use "Best and Most Versatile" land, which conflicts with local policy and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that prioritizes protecting high-quality land. Since the CPPF alternative avoids agricultural land altogether, it is a preferable option according to these policies.
10. The applicant acknowledges its scheme is "inappropriate development" in the Green Belt and claims "very special circumstances" justify it. However, we argue these circumstances do not hold up. The need for a transport link can be met by our proposed in-highway alternative or the East West Railway. Our alternative provides similar economic, social, environmental, and transport benefits without the significant negative environmental effects of the applicant's plan.
11. We also refute the applicant's claim that the scheme preserves the Green Belt's "openness." We consider that the busway's straight design and removal of hedgerows will expose new road infrastructure, and that introducing buses and urban-style bus stops into the countryside will fundamentally alter the character of the Green Belt, leading to urban sprawl and increased pressure for future development.
12. Our evidence criticises the busway's straight alignment. Introducing curves into the design would not only help maintain the viability of important farmland but also lessen the visual impact and protect more orchard trees. These curves would not slow down buses, as they are needed at locations where buses would already be traveling slowly. The applicant's refusal to consider this design modification is seen as a major flaw.
13. Our evidence argues that the proposed development would harm the heritage setting of Coton Conservation Area, a designated site that includes a 12th-century church and other historic assets, through visual and noise impacts. The CPPF alternative avoids this harm by using the existing highway.
14. Our evidence demonstrates that the CPPF plan also has a minimal impact on the nearby American Cemetery, a Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden, as it stays within the current road boundary and maintains access to the Cemetery by public transport. This contrasts with the applicant's scheme, which would divert buses, making the cemetery less accessible.

Additionally, I argue that the applicant's landscape assessment underestimates the sensitivity of the Coton area. The landscape west of Cambridge is characterized by a subtle, understated beauty shaped by its gentle hills and centuries of farming. This area is crucial to Cambridge's identity as a compact city with a clear rural edge, offering unique views of its historic skyline. The landscape includes the rolling Western Claylands, which provide long, open views, especially from Coton Countryside Reserve.

15. A key part of this landscape is the area between Cambridge Road and the M11, which features an intimate mix of traditional orchards, woodlands, and small businesses that are well-integrated into the countryside.

16. The proposed CtoC scheme would significantly harm this landscape. It would introduce major transport infrastructure, bisecting the Coton orchard and woodlands, and creating a highly visible, linear feature with bus stops and moving vehicles. We are critical of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for underestimating these impacts, by not adequately addressing the value of mature trees and the visual disruption of the busway on Madingley Hill and nearby footpaths. The alternative CPPF scheme, running within the existing highway, would avoid this harm, preserving the landscape's unique character and visual amenity.
17. Our evidence argues that the proposal for a maintenance and access track alongside the new busway is unnecessary and would cause significant harm. Because the busway will use optical guidance, not a physical system, maintenance and emergency vehicles will be able to use the busway removing the need for a separate maintenance track.
18. Neither is a maintenance track required to create a commuter cycle route, as a superior, existing alternative is the Comberton Greenway. The Greenway is a more direct, attractive, and less strenuous route for cyclists, avoiding the steep Madingley Hill and the noise of the main road. The applicant's plan to use a maintenance track for active travel would necessitate the compulsory purchase of approximately 7,200 square meters of land from multiple owners, including CPPF, and cause ecological damage to the Coton Orchard County Wildlife Site.
19. The CPPF in-highway alternative is a superior plan that better aligns with planning policies. It avoids compulsory land acquisition, protects the Green Belt and valuable ecology like the Coton Orchard Wildlife Site, and spares high-quality agricultural land. This alternative also provides greater value for public money. The applicant's scheme, in contrast, would cause significant, avoidable harm to the landscape and environment, failing to meet the standards required by the NPPF. For these reasons, the applicant's plan should be rejected.