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Transport and Works Act Order for the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Cambridge South East Transport (CSET)

TWA/25/APP/01 Obj cd2-469
PUBLIC INQUIRY STATEMENT

1. The proposal is for a busway between a park & ride terminal near the A11 / A1307 junction, in Babraham Parish, and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. The principal services using it would be of buses from the P&R to Cambridge City Centre via the Addenbrookes Hospital and Biomedical Campus. The buses would use part of the existing busway that runs to Trumpington Park & Ride to Cambridge main railway station, and then existing streets in the city.

2. The P&R at the A11/A1307 interchange would generate significant road traffic on roads to the east and southeast of the A11, which is an open rural area. A large percentage of the trips to and from Cambridge using the busway would involve car journeys on these roads, many of which are country lanes. The CSET could increase vehicle-miles over the whole area, not reduce them.

3. The speeds and journey times on the busway would be attractive to users between the A11/A1307 P&R and just south of Cambridge station. The buses would then be caught in traffic and journey times within the city inner area would depend on traffic levels. This is the same as is experienced by users of the services that use the existing sections of busway – Cambridge to St Ives, and the route to Trumpington P&R.

4. The CSET busway plan was conceived and developed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership in the context of there being a Congestion Charge in place in Cambridge city centre. The Congestion Zone was proposed to have proposed a £5 daily charge for car users (07.00-19.00) who used roads within the inner city area (**Appx 1**).

5. The Sustainable Travel Zone (Congestion Charge area) as proposed covered the whole of the City of Cambridge. The Park & Ride sites around Cambridge, at or beyond the edge of the built-up area, were outside it. All of the city residential area, with small exceptions, was to be covered by the congestion charge. “Driving a private vehicle within this outer boundary during operational hours (weekdays, 7am–7pm) would attract a **£5 daily road user charge** aimed at reducing inner-city traffic by 50%.” (**Appx 2**). See the map of the proposed Zone at **Appx 3**.

6. The Congestion Charge was expected to lower car traffic by 50% and create more road space for buses, improve their speeds and punctuality, and reduce journey times on their routes. Due to public opposition, the proposed Cambridge Congestion Charge / Sustainable Travel Zone was dropped in September 2023.

7. The surprising feature of the plan was that the whole of the City was to be within the Zone, including residential areas where there was no congestion and no bus route, and in which residents used cars without contributing to volumes on main roads. All who drove a car in the city during the planned hours (0700-1900) would be charged £5 for that day. (The Plan was modified in 2023 to cover only the hours 0700-1000 and 1500-1800 (weekdays) with 50 'free days' per locally registered vehicle, but the general principle of a charge covering the whole city area remained.)

8. Some congestion charging schemes have allowed residents within the Zone exemptions as long as they only drove locally and did not cross the boundary line. Notably this is the policy in the Congestion Relief regime for New York City, introduced in 2025. This applies to Lower Manhattan (60th Street and below), south of Central Park. Lower Manhattan residents can use their cars within the Zone without charge, only being charged if they cross into it. The rules are clearly set out. See **Appx 4** and **Appx 5**. It is generally reported to be successful, achieving its aims.

9. A Cambridge Congestion charge zone which covered only the inner city area, west of the north-south railway, notably the historic core, and colleges area could have succeeded, and removed much traffic from the city, increasing bus speeds and reducing bus journey times. making movement for buses in that inner part of the city freer and increasing their speeds substantially.

10. The CSET plan was designed with the expectation of congestion charging being in place. Its bus services would have operated into and out of the city centre with low levels of delay. Without the Sustainable Travel Zone, the bus services using the CSET busway will be subject to delay and slow journeys in the urban area, notably in the peak periods.

11. Alternatives to a bus-based transport strategy for Cambridge need to be examined and evaluated.

Alternatives to reliance on bus services

12. A strategy to move the modal split away from private car, in the absence of the Congestion Charge, is to make bicycle use much more attractive in the built-up area of Cambridge. Means of doing this include: cycle priority at signals, more cycle lanes on city roads, and expanding facilities for safe parking. Cambridge sees 49% of journeys to work in the city now made by cycle or on foot. A bus service from the A11/A1307 P&R will not be able to attract many cycle users to switch to bus because of the poor

quality of service offered within inner Cambridge. The most efficient way to move within inner Cambridge is by cycle.

13. For those travelling into and out of Cambridge for work, education, and use of the city centre's services, availability of a bicycle in the city centre is desirable. The bus service using the CSET busway will not carry cycles. (Buses are not constructed to carry cycles, unlike trains which can be.) By contrast, cycle and rail use is very compatible. For rail users, at Cambridge (main) station there is a new cycle storage building, CyclePoint, which has capacity for 3,000 cycles. This serves both inner city residents travelling out of Cambridge by rail, and residents of the surrounding area who arrive by rail and keep a cycle in the storage building to be able to reach places of work or education.

14. Cambridge's likely future is as a city where there is no congestion charge, and re-allocating road space towards cycle and pedestrians. Bus speeds in the inner part of Cambridge (west of the north-south railway) will remain low and may slow further. The CSET busway proposal will not fit this future pattern of movement within the inner areas of the city.

15. A superior form of transport infrastructure for this future in place of CSET is to expand rail service, by reopening the Haverhill to Shelford (for Cambridge) railway line, generally on its original alignment. Haverhill has a population approaching 30,000 and could reach 40,000 by 2045. The population of the villages east of Cambridge, into Suffolk, add another 10,000 people for whom the city is the main place of work, services and shopping.

16. This alternative would provide a frequent rail service between:

- Haverhill (both town centre and a P&R station at the A1307/A143 roundabout recently completed at OS TL 661465
- Linton (orginal station restored to rail use)
- The science and technology parks in Little Abington and Babraham Parishes
- Sawston
- Shelford
- Cambridge South, opened 2026, serving Cambridge Biomedical Campus and Addenbrookes Hospital
- Cambridge (main station)
- Cambridge North
- and on to Waterbeach

17. Such a rail service would attract substantial patronage. This would be higher, and modal shift greater, if users could take cycles on the trains without charge; or alternatively could leave cycles at the stations on the new line, and collect their second cycle at Cambridge (centre) to access destinations in the city.

18. This would follow widespread practice in the Netherlands, where 'cycle-train-cycle' journeys to and back from main urban centres are widely adopted. Travellers use cycles from home to local rail station where there are good covered cycle parks, the train, and then pick up a second cycle at the city station, and complete journey to destination (work, study, shopping) by cycle, without delay duew to traffic congestion in the inner city area.

19. The former Cambridgeshire Structure Plan and the Local Transport Plan proposed reopening the Shelford to Haverhill railway. The reasons for this proposal being removed from sub-regional planning and local transport planning, and replaced by the CSET busway, are unclear. There should be a reversion to that previous transport policy.

20. The CSET busway should be replaced by reopening the railway from Shelford to Haverhill, generally along its original alignment. Stations should be at the locations listed at para 16 above.

21. The location of growth in jobs and facilities to be accessed in Cambridge is the railway corridor, while the scope for growth in floorspace in the historic core of the city is limited by its high degree of protection from new development. The high number of listed buildings and conservation policies prevent such growth. Instead, the focus on new development (areas of major change) is the north-south railway corridor. This is seeing two main locations of growth.

22. The very large increase in office and similar floorspace (Use Class E(g)) in the area of Cambridge (main) station since 2000 is striking. With the planned new entrance to the station from the east, redevelopment of the industrial estate east of the line and north of Hills Road into office and research uses is expected.

23. Secondly, the very large Biomedical Campus and the extensions to Addenbrookes Hospital have led to construction of Cambridge South station, opened in 2026, the largest new station opened in Britain for some years.

24. These recent and continuing changes to the pattern of land use and focus of economic development in the city make local rail service development increasingly viable, and more justified than the policy of developing P&R bus services and sections of busway.

25. For the corridor from Haverhill to Cambridge, the Railfuture East Anglia evidence to the Inquiry already submitted shows how this could be implemented and what the likely usage would be. See the JRC report 'A Bigger Role for a Haverhill Railway', submitted by Railfuture East Anglia. This is in the Inquiry Documents List as **cd3-082-obj-256**.

26. The high cost of rail reopening appears to be the GCP's main reason for opposing putting this rail reopening in its programme and dropping the CSET busway. The costing of reopening the Shelford – Haverhill Line was underaken several years ago and used the costing principles in nuse then. Those were as used by Network Rail.

27. The Department for Transport has now set up a full review of rail infrastructure costs, because it sees the current cost of rail works as too high. It is thus government policy to review these methods and to seek to lower real costs of rail works. That could bring the costs down by one-third to one-half. See **Appx 6** for the DfT's Terms of Reference of this Review, issued 28 October 2026. It is due to report in about 6 months' time.

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