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In the matter of the Cambourne to Cambridge Transport and Works Act Order application made by Cambridgeshire County Council (and Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership)

Clare Hall, Cambridge

Summary of Proof of Evidence on behalf of Clare Hall in relation to heritage matters

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Objector Number (OBJ213)
Inquiry reference (TWA/24/APP/03)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. My name is Fiona Lamb. I am a registered architect and accredited conservation architect with over 25 years of experience in heritage and conservation architecture. I am a Director at Avanti Architects and have extensive experience working on nationally significant post-war and modernist buildings.

1.2. I have acted as Lead Heritage Consultant for Clare Hall since 2023, overseeing the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan and ongoing conservation and improvement projects at the College.

1.3. I am instructed by Clare Hall to assess the heritage implications of the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) Busway where it passes directly along the southern boundary of the Grade II* listed Clare Hall.

2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1. My evidence addresses the significance of Clare Hall as a designated heritage asset, the contribution of its setting, and the impact of the proposed C2C scheme on both. I also respond to the applicant's heritage assessments and associated documentation including revised information and drawings received from the applicants Engineers, WSP on 16/07/2025.

2.2. The legal and policy context includes the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), and Historic England guidance.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF CLARE HALL

3.1. Clare Hall is a Grade II* listed post-war academic complex, designed by Ralph Erskine (1966–1969) to foster an inclusive, permeable, and integrated academic community. It is of exceptional architectural and historic interest.

3.2. The architectural significance of Clare Hall lies in its:

- Human-focused design, reflecting Erskine's Scandinavian modernist principles and social ideals.
- Integration of living, study, and social functions within a single coherent campus.
- Deliberate layout of three stepped accommodation blocks along two principal pedestrian routes (Family Walk' and 'Scholars' Walk'), facilitating permeability, connection, and privacy.
- Purposeful topography, stepping down towards the southern boundary, allowing daylight access, views, and spatial openness.

- Articulated architectural details such as exposed waterspouts, a linear rainwater channel along the south boundary, and original bridges spanning to Rifle Range Road.
- Landscaped setbacks to the north and south, designed to provide visual and acoustic buffers and reinforce the open, green context of the site.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME IN RELATION TO CLARE HALL

4.1. The proposed C2C busway is proposed to travel along the southern boundary of Clare Hall. The submitted proposed red line site boundary of the scheme stretches across Rifle Range Road, from the boundary of the Rugby club to the south elevation of Clare Hall. This could potentially lead to the loss of original features, including 3no. paths, rainwater chutes that discharge into an open rainwater channel running along the south elevation and bridges over the channel at the pedestrian access points. Revised scheme drawings were provided on 16/07/2025 that include more detail and indicate the need to reduce the width of the existing landscaped zone along the southern boundary and cut the paths leading out from the south side of Clare Hall down by a third of their current width, from 5.2m to 3.5m. This reduction is to accommodate the emergency and maintenance access strip proposed to sit between the new bus roadway, and Clare Hall.

4.2. Existing study rooms, Clare Hall's main meeting room, a courtyard house and a family maisonette sit directly on this boundary. The recently received revised information provided by the applicant proposes the addition of new screening/planting within this zone, with short term screening shown at 1.2-1.8m high directly outside the windows along the south elevation. This proposal is presumably to mitigate the impact of the bus passing very close to these rooms that are currently used for academic study and residential uses.

4.3. The proposals also require the removal of existing trees that sit within this existing landscaped zone. The revised drawings indicate new semi-mature trees 700mm back from the maintenance strip.

4.4. The applicant's documentation previously contained inaccuracies relating to the glazing and layout of Clare Hall. Revised drawings now show the correct boundary relationship and acknowledge the existing original features including the drainage channel, water spouts, bridges and pathways leading out from the pedestrian routes that run across Clare Hall and out from the courtyard house towards Rifle Range Road.

5. REVIEW OF THE APPLICANT'S HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

5.1. The applicant identifies that the proposed scheme will result in 'less than substantial harm' to the Grade II* Clare Hall. However, the applicant's heritage assessment fails to demonstrate a proper understanding of the building's architectural significance or its spatial and visual

relationships. No internal inspection of Clare Hall was undertaken until after the formal submission of the applicant's scheme.

5.2. The applicant's heritage assessment is inadequate in the following ways:

- Relied on inaccurate information (e.g., frosted/obscured glazing to windows).
- Lack of a proper internal site inspection, resulting in a lack of understanding of the impact of the proposed busway on the internal and external spaces within Clare Hall.
- Under-assesses the contribution of setting and landscape features that act as boundary threshold devices originally designed by Erskine and that are all integral to the heritage significance of Clare Hall.
- The rainwater channels, bridges, and paths were missed and not assessed as important features that functionally relate and form part of the original listed buildings.

5.3. A more accurate assessment of the harm is outlined below:

- Reduction of the original landscaped buffer and removal of the existing semi mature trees.
- Physical intrusion into curtilage features (i.e. paths) that formed part of the original listed building which will require listed building consent.
- Erosion of daylight, views, and privacy to rooms designed for academic study and residential use from the passing buses.
- Erosion of designed permeability from the pedestrian routes crossing Clare Hall from Herschel Road through to Rifle Range Road.
- Impact of overlooking and noise from the passing buses on the use of the amenity spaces, gardens and courtyards along the south boundary of Clare Hall.
- The proposed screening directly in front of study room and meeting room windows would significantly reduce daylight and outlook, undermining their intended academic function.

6. PLANNING POLICY COMPLIANCE

6.1. Taking into consideration all the above points, a more accurate assessment of the proposal would result in a 'moderate degree' of less than substantial harm to this highly significant designated asset. Under paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits. In this case, the heritage harm is not clearly or convincingly outweighed by the benefits of the scheme in this location.

6.2. The proposed works also do not preserve the setting of a listed building as required under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. In my professional opinion, the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) busway, in its current form, will cause less than substantial harm at the higher end of that spectrum to the setting and architectural integrity of Clare Hall, a Grade II* listed building of very high significance.

7.2. This harm would arise from both physical alterations—including intrusion into original curtilage features such as the rainwater channel, pedestrian bridges, and connecting paths, all integral to Ralph Erskine's original design and part of the listed building—and experiential impacts, including loss of daylight, privacy, and outlook to study rooms, meeting rooms, and residences; erosion of designed permeability across the site; and introduction of noise and visual intrusion into areas intended for quiet academic use. Any alteration to the identified curtilage features would also require listed building consent.

7.3. The proposed mitigation, including screening directly outside principal room windows, would itself cause harm by further reducing daylight and outlook.

7.4. Under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, special regard must be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting, and features of special architectural or historic interest. In my view, the proposals fail to meet this statutory duty and conflicts with relevant heritage policies, including paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

7.5. The public benefits put forward do not clearly or convincingly outweigh the identified heritage harm. Given the high level of significance of Clare Hall, its sensitive academic function, and the designed relationship between buildings and setting, the scheme should not proceed in this location without substantial revision to avoid or meaningfully mitigate these harms.

8. WITNESS DECLARATION

8.1. I declare that the evidence presented in this summary is a true reflection of my professional opinion and that I have complied with my duty to the Inquiry to assist on matters within my expertise.

Fiona Lamb
MA(Hons), Dip Arch(Edin), AABC, RIBA **11 August 2025**