

To: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

Objection to Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge

I, Mr J Chisholm of [REDACTED], am writing to make a formal objection to the "Application for a Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge", as submitted by the Cambridge Greater Partnership on 12 November 2024.

I strongly object to this scheme. {1,000 words}

This scheme makes no sense on either economic or environmental grounds, especially as the East West rail scheme will provide a far better local and national solution for both transport and carbon reduction in the Greater Cambridge area within a few short years of any possible completion of the proposed busway.

The current road network could, with very little investment, provide 'capacity', and with far fewer 'delays' for many more people until East West rail arrives. The Cambourne railway station will then offer better 'car free' choices for the growing communities in that area. All needed until then, are better bus services provided on existing, but better managed roads.

Just reducing private car travel by 15% on the A1303 down Madingley Hill would reduce delays by some 80%. This is equivalent to a 'half term' peak hour reduction in flow when delays, are normally drastically reduced, with flows reduced only slightly. To achieve this, you don't need to force essential users out of their cars, just provide a reliable public transport service for those who would use it if it existed. This does NOT need a busway that will stop well short of most intended destinations, requiring many more buses to use unsuitable local streets in West Cambridge to penetrate the urban core.

Basically, all this needs, is better bus services, on existing roads, from the Cambourne area to and from Cambridge and its fringes. Simple measures will be needed to prevent the progress of such buses being, as at present, seriously hindered by long queues of cars, the majority of which hold only one adult. A bus can easily carry over 50 people. Cars carrying that number of adults occupy over a quarter of a mile in a queue!

'Smarter Cambridge Transport' proposed, some TEN years ago (2016), a series of measures that could be trialled to achieve the above improvements. Such 'carrots', could still be provided within the timescale for the sitting of this enquiry! These 'Smarter Cambridge Transport' proposals were updated in 2021.

See: <https://www.smartertransport.uk/cambourne-cambridge-busway-2/>
<https://www.smartertransport.uk/cambourne-cambridge-busway/>
<https://www.smartertransport.uk/the-right-way-to-reduce-delays-to-cambourne-buses/>

Crucially, since that time, Cambridge Road, Madingley has had a 'modal filter' installed stopping through traffic from Madingley, so preventing 'rat-running' of private cars that avoided those long queues on Madingley Hill. Diverting service buses from Cambourne through Madingley and onto Cambridge Road, Madingley, would add some half mile to the distance, or around two minutes to the travel time. That service could be trialled at a minimum cost.

What users need is reliable trip times. Adding two minutes to the travel time is of little disbenefit if the all too frequent delays of 30 minutes are eliminated, especially if bus service frequency can then also be doubled using little extra resources. Traffic lights would be needed at the junction with the A1303, to ration by 'inbound flow control' of traffic on Madingley Hill, such that buses have better priority onwards towards the City through the M11 junctions.

Having peak hour buses at twice the frequency, with journey times 'on average' better than current private car times to many city destinations, gives a good alternative to the car for those from the Cambourne area. In addition, such changes would also provide a regular bus service to both the residents of Madingley, and for those at the University of Cambridge facilities at Madingley Hall.

Additionally, within months, the Cambridge South railway station will be open. There will be a roughly 15 minute service (more at peak times?) to and from Cambridge North with a journey time of 10 minutes. A bus from Cambourne to Cambridge North, via the A428 and A14, should take around 20 mins. There is currently no public bus service on this corridor with bus times via the City centre of over an hour. Such a direct bus would also be very valuable for those going to both the Cambridge Regional College and the Science Park as well as those from Cambourne wanting Rail access to Ely, Norwich, King's Lynn etc. That alone would reduce the need for many car trips from Cambourne. For many of those in Cambourne, without car access, or wishing to reduce car use, and whose destination is the Cambridge Biomedical Campus with its twenty thousand plus employees, this would be a valuable stop gap until the arrival of East West Rail.

Providing, improving and making reliable both the above bus routes can be done quickly and cheaply, and success would enable growth of bus frequencies, so supporting the growing of population in the Cambourne area, whilst reducing the need to drive.

Finally, unlike schemes involving 'Park and Ride', those targeting additional public transport that utilise existing infrastructure (roads) bring both early and continuing benefits through 'Active Travel'. That much benefits the old, young and poor without access to a car. Conversely huge 'Park & Ride' sites, such as included in this scheme, incentivise people to get in their cars, not leave them at home! With reliable and frequent public transport people will commonly walk, say 10-15 minutes to a public transport route and then say 10-15 minutes to their destination. That brings benefits of reduced non-essential motor traffic, with reduced congestion and pollution, but more importantly the long-term benefits to our society of improved physical and mental health. Such schemes which encourage walking (& cycling) for 30 minutes each day generally have BCR's many times that of road and P&R schemes.

There are crucial reasons for the extra economic and environmental benefits by these proposals for early improvement of public transport. That is the incentive for modal shift from car with the improved public transport NOW. Those moving house and/or to new employment are much more likely to choose improved public transport if available, when they make their move, than existing residents. If public transport is not viable, they will drive. But those already in residence/jobs who already drive, are far less likely to mode switch when the public transport becomes available.

Once East West rail arrives, any Cambourne to Cambridge Busway would be of much less value, as trips to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and much of Cambridge will be faster and more reliable by that new rail route.

Without proper evaluation of both 'Economic' and 'Environmental' benefits of these easy to achieve alternatives, any current BCR for the Cambridge to Cambourne scheme is very clearly flawed.

Mr J Chisholm

6 January 2025