

From: [REDACTED]
To: [TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE](#)
Subject: Objection to Transport and Work Act Order for new Cambourne to Cambridge busway
Date: 07 January 2025 23:50:01

Objection to Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge as submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council on 12 November 2024

We, Geoffrey and Jaqueline Gay Meeks, of [REDACTED], are writing to make a formal objection to the above Order. Our objection is based on a number of grounds, concerning both the substance of the busway proposal and procedural issues. Some of these coincide with objections well detailed by CPPF, so this objection focuses on the central thrust of the problem with the proposal, as we see it.

Infrastructure improvement will often entail some environmental damage and therefore involves a trade-off between these prospective gains and losses - taking into account significance of the improvement, its relative cost, alternative means of effecting improvement, and evaluation of measures to mitigate environmental detriment. In this case, our core objection is that the prospective gain from this extremely pricey scheme is not material in comparison with a vastly less expensive (and car-use deterring) on-road alternative from Madingley Hill onwards whereas the environmental damage is material and cannot well be compensated for. We agree with the general project of improving transport infrastructure servicing Cambridge City from the west and with the need to promote greener forms of travel than have previously prevailed. However, the business case for this particular scheme is strikingly weak because its mighty financial cost (driven in part by the construction of a new bridge over the M11) is set to deliver what seems surely a feeble three minute reduction in travel time to the West Cambridge site compared with alternatives with equally laudable aims that can offer similar journey improvement at greatly reduced cost - making this a poor investment of public money (we regret therefore that the University is not taking a stand against it). Set against this is prospective damage to the remarkable orchard in Coton, as testified to by a number of the UK's most respected naturalists, and to the serenity of the southern aspect of Madingley Hill, deplored by the American Cemetery, whose promised tranquil rural setting - under a WWII plane flight path - should be respected as a matter of British national honour. These environmental features are irreplaceable: they cannot well be mitigated or compensated for by new tree planting and the like, and in this respect biodiversity 'net gain' calculations are misleading. And the green advantages of Active Travel Route planned alongside the busway now seem vanishingly small in the light of the parallel existence of the Comberton Greenway.

Additionally, the development of the East-West rail line, with stations at Cambourne and the Biomedical Campus, is liable to make the busway even more of a white elephant. Key employment centres in Cambridge are located away from the city centre, and both the biomedical campus and the science park would be efficiently accessible by the new train line and stations (Cambridge North already in operation now) and by M11/A14 from the on-road alternative route. The end destination of the busway - Grange Road - is a peculiarly unsuitable place to direct traffic, with a lack of good ongoing routes to employment hotspots that will not add to current congestion problems in the centre and on the river crossings. With government eagerness to make Greater Cambridge lead national economic growth, it seems probable that other more substantial infrastructure changes will soon be instituted to overcome existing congestion in the medieval city - a speculative thought but one which underlines the need to ensure that the business case of the busway is indeed robust at the present time. And this was initially drawn up when usage of Madingley Road differed considerably from how it stands now - partly because of changes in working patterns but also because continual holdups on the A14 at that time led to many road users adopting the A1303

(Madingley Road) as a diversion, an influence on traffic flows subsequently dispelled through the A14's redevelopment.

The question over current applicability of traffic flow data leads on to our objection on procedural issues. We have attended a number of official meetings from an early stage in the development of this busway plan, have taken part in and studied the outcome of the various public consultations and have kept track of the how decisions were reached at each stage. As a result, we are objecting also about a seeming lack of sufficient democratic accountability in the planning process (if not in the very letter of it then at least in the spirit). So far as we are aware, public meetings and consultations have not convincingly exhibited support, let alone enthusiasm, for this project - one example from an early meeting was of Cambourne residents explaining that they would be unlikely to switch to using the new service due to inconvenience in getting to its starting point. Questions have been raised over resistance to putting decisions to full council meetings (a recent case being treatment of applications for TPOs on some of the orchard's most special trees where it seems that officials jumped the gun – if we are reading the government guidance on TPOs correctly - by taking the busway as a done deal, and when in any case if approval is in the end given TPOs on qualifying trees could be set aside). At the very beginning, the GCP had been told that a tranche of future funding was conditional on fairly rapidly demonstrating suitable spend of the funds already in place: one could not help feeling that the very high cost of the planned route with its M11 crossing was deemed an advantage in this context. Following the initial design, may there then have been an element of confirmation bias in the way the decision-makers have continued to view this project, perhaps further entrenched by the rather troubling scale of the sunk costs in developing it? We certainly feel there has been a reluctance to give due consideration to the on-road alternatives and we object to the on-road possibility being rejected by GCP when only a highly debatable design for it, not so appropriate as the CPPF suggestion, has been evaluated.

In conclusion we return to our central claim: the prospective gain from this scheme, rather than available alternatives, is dwarfed by the environmental losses and its unduly hefty financial cost.

Yours sincerely,

Prof G Meeks and Dr J G Meeks

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