

[REDACTED]

By email to:
[REDACTED]

Friday 6th December 2024

Dear Lindsay,

Response to Cambridge South East Transport Scheme

Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo) – Draft Order Documents

This letter outlines Great Shelford Parish Council's objection to the proposed guided busway under the Draft Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo) procedure. While recognising the urgent need for improved infrastructure to address congestion on the A1307 Babraham Road and provide sustainable travel solutions, we assert that the proposed busway route is environmentally damaging, economically inefficient, and fails to adequately serve the needs of the community. Instead, we propose an on-road solution along the A1307 that is cost-effective, less disruptive, and aligns better with local and national planning policies.

1. Overview of the Legal Framework

The proposal is governed by the **Transport and Works Act 1992** and the **Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006**. Under these frameworks, projects must demonstrate significant public benefit, comply with local and national planning policies, and justify any environmental impacts or encroachments on protected areas such as green belts. Great Shelford Parish Council contends that the proposed guided busway fails to meet these standards.

2. Key Objections to the Proposed Route

2.1 Environmental Impact

- **Irreversible Damage to Protected Areas:** The proposed route through Gog Magog Down and Hobson's Brook valley would result in irreversible environmental degradation to Nine Wells, White Hill, and adjacent areas, which include a Scheduled Monument. These areas are vital ecological and historical assets.
- **Conflict with Green Belt Protections:** The route primarily traverses green belt land. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 152 dictates that development on green belts is permissible only in "very special circumstances", which the current proposal fails to evidence.

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2.2 Policy Non-Compliance

- **Contradiction with Planning Policy:** The proposal conflicts with policies in the current South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018, the emerging Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Local Plan, the NPPF, and the emerging Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan. These policies prioritise sustainable development, environmental preservation, and enhancing the unique characters of our rural communities.
- **Urbanisation of the Green Belt:** The proposal parcels up land along the length of the busway, opening the door to further ad hoc development, threatening erosion of Great Shelford's independent rural identity, and effectively subsuming the village into a further expanded Cambridge.

2.3 Flawed Justification and Decision-Making Process

- **Legacy of Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM):** The route selection was initially tailored to meet the defunct Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM) criteria, first proposed in 2017 and scrapped in 2021. This outdated rationale undermines the validity of the current proposal.
- **Flawed Consultation Process:**
 - The results of a 2016 consultation conducted by the GCP favoured on-road solutions, yet these preferences were disregarded in subsequent development and consultation phases.
 - In a 2018 consultation conducted by the GCP, the division of votes for on-road options misrepresented public opinion, suggesting higher support for the off-road route than actually existed. The structure of this consultation meant that it was impossible to draw substantive conclusions as on-road proposals were split to divide the vote, but in aggregate they exceeded the popularity of the single off-road option by a substantial margin.
 - The Local Liaison Forum (LLF), a key stakeholder group, lacked representation from affected areas such as Great Shelford.

3. Alternative Proposal: On-Road A1307 Solution

We recommend an A1307 route that incorporates on-highway bus lanes and a dedicated spur into the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC). This alternative:

1. **Serves Key Destinations:** The A1307 route better connects key employment sites, including the Babraham Research Campus, Copley Hill Business Park, and CBC, as well as new housing developments near the Biomedical Campus.
2. **Aligns with Proposed Hospital Developments on the CBC:** The A1307 route potentially integrates more effectively with the proposed developments on the CBC, unlike the proposed off-road route, which is a significant walk away from the main hospital and not easily accessible for those with limited mobility.
3. **Cost-Benefit Ratio:** Estimated at £100 million less than the guided busway, the on-road solution offers significant financial savings while minimising construction disruptions.

4. Community Concerns

4.1 Local Transport and Accessibility

- **Inadequate Local Benefits:** The proposed busway stop is over a mile away from most residents of Great Shelford, rendering it less accessible than the centrally located train station and existing bus routes, which provide fast and efficient service to the CBC and Cambridge.
- **Traffic Disruptions:** Granhams Road and Hinton Way, already burdened by level crossings which are closed for c.23 minutes per hour during the day, would face further congestion during and after construction.

4.2 Community Consultation

- Great Shelford Parish Council conducted a survey of its residents in 2021 which showed that a clear majority favoured the on-road solution.
- Residents also made clear that they were unlikely to use the Great Shelford stop on CSET as there were more appropriate public transport provisions in the village.

4.3 Lost Opportunities for Rail Connectivity

- **Impact on Haverhill Rail Reconnection:** The guided busway reduces the potential for reinstating a rail link to Haverhill, a critical commuting hub for CBC workers. This short-term bus solution is not scalable to meet future transport demands.

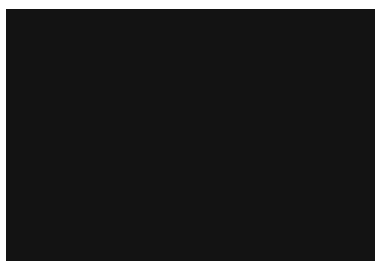
5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Great Shelford Parish Council strongly objects to the proposed guided busway. The irreversible environmental damage, non-compliance with planning policies, and inadequate community benefits render the project inappropriate. We urge the adoption of the A1307 on-road solution as a more sustainable, cost-effective, and community-aligned alternative.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Re-evaluate the guided busway proposal in light of its environmental and social impacts.
2. Prioritise the A1307 on-road solution to reduce costs and improve construction efficiency.
3. Reopen consultations with local stakeholders to ensure representative decision-making.

By adopting a more community-oriented and environmentally sensitive approach, we can achieve sustainable infrastructure improvements without sacrificing the character and ecological integrity of South Cambridge.



Nicola Webster (Mrs)

