

Transport and Works Act 1992

Transport And Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales)

Rules 2006 SI 2006 No 1466

The Cambourne to Cambridge Order

PINS ref: DPI/E0535/25/1

OPENING STATEMENT
ON BEHALF OF CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL AND SOUTH
CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

1. This is the Opening Statement on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council in this Inquiry into the applications for the Cambourne to Cambridge Order. Those applications are for a draft Transport and Works Act Order (“**the Proposed Order**”) sought pursuant to s.6 of the Transport and Works Act 1992 (“**the 1992 Act**”); a direction under s.90(2A) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (“**the 1990 Act**”) that planning permission be deemed to be granted for the development proposed to be authorised by the Proposed Order; and for a certificate to permit exchange land for the replacement of open space pursuant to s.19(1A) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 (“**the 1981 Act**”).
2. Together, the applications seek permission for the development of a new, segregated, guided busway from Cambourne to Cambridge, a Park and Ride facility at Scotland Farm and an emergency and maintenance access track running along the length of the busway for pedestrians, cyclists and (for most of the length of the track) equestrians (“**the Scheme**”).
3. Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council (“**the Councils**”) are the local planning authorities for the administrative areas in which the Scheme will be implemented and as such are statutory consultees for the Proposed Order pursuant to ss.10 and 11 of the 1992 Act and rr.21 and 23 of the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 SI 2006 No 1466.

4. The Councils have a separate role in relation to the Scheme as members of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (“GCP”) Executive Board, on which they have voting rights on decisions related to the commissioning of projects funded by money provided through the City Deal. The Scheme is one such project. Following the decision of the GCP Executive Board to approve the making of a formal request to Cambridgeshire County Council to approve the submission of a Transport and Works Order **[CD10-18]**, and the submission of the applications for approval of the Scheme by the Applicant on behalf of the GCP, the Councils appear at this inquiry solely in their role as local planning authorities for the areas affected by the Scheme.
5. The provision of a high-quality public transport access corridor between Cambridge and Cambourne is a central plank of the Councils’ adopted development plans. It is necessary to achieve the spatial development strategy and the sustainable development objectives set out therein, as well as enabling anticipated further growth beyond the plan period. It is essential for a number of reasons, including to support housing delivery, economic integration and expansion, research and education, sustainable transport goals, equitable access to opportunities for all and to underpin the national and international importance of Cambridge as a science hub. The Councils have therefore supported the need for and principle of the Scheme throughout **[CD2 REP-09]**.
6. Following extensive constructive dialogue with the Applicant, the Councils consider that the matters raised in their Statements of Case can be resolved through the imposition of conditions which have been agreed with the Applicant. A Statement of Common Ground between the Councils and the Applicant is well-progressed. It is anticipated that it will be agreed shortly and will confirm alignment of the parties on all material matters subject to any refinement of the wording of proposed planning conditions during the course of the Inquiry. While the Scheme results in some unavoidable impacts, these are capable of mitigation to an acceptable degree. Harm to the Green Belt and to heritage assets is outweighed by the significant public benefits of the Scheme which amount to very special circumstances.
7. The Councils’ position at the Inquiry is therefore one of supporting the Scheme. Bearing in mind the critical role that the Scheme plays in delivering the Councils’ spatial development strategy and identified housing and employment needs both now and into

the future, the Councils primarily appear at this Inquiry to support the Applicant's case on Matter 1 – the aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge guided busway. The evidence provided on behalf of the Councils will also confirm their view that the Scheme is acceptable in planning terms.

The Greater Cambridge Spatial Strategy

8. The Spatial Strategy for Greater Cambridge essentially seeks to balance the need to safeguard the qualities that make Cambridge and its environs special and contribute to their desirability as places to live, study, work and visit – namely the historic character of the city, its compact urban form and the setting provided by the tightly drawn Cambridge Green Belt – with the growth needs of Greater Cambridge in supporting a centre of international economic significance and a highly-developed knowledge-based economy.
9. The Strategy, which has evolved through successive development plans since the late 1990s and close working between the Councils, is well-developed. It has been promoted, tested and consistently endorsed by the Councils and inspectors examining those development plans. Central government has provided financial and policy support for the Strategy via the City Deal in 2014 and the Case for Cambridge in 2024.
10. Essentially, the Strategy seeks to focus growth in accessible locations in and around Cambridge, while supporting the delivery of new communities at a sustainable scale in locations beyond the Green Belt where existing or planned public transport can support such development while reducing car dependence. The Strategy is taken forward in developing proposals for a joint Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area. The emerging plan maintains and builds upon earlier commitments to introduce or expand settlements *beyond* the Green Belt where comprehensive infrastructure can be planned from the outset and seeks to concentrate growth along corridors where high-quality public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure is or will be in place [CD6-05, pp.xv-xix].
11. The Scheme is aligned with and crucial to the delivery of this latter aspect of the Spatial Strategy. That is particularly evident in Policies SS/7 and SS/8 of the South Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2018, which both rely on improved public transport to support the scale and accessibility of the housing allocations at Bourn

Airfield and Cambourne West respectively. Without radial public transport links such as the Scheme – described in the City Deal as the “*backbone*” of the strategy for growth [CD7-02, p.3] – Cambridge will be unable to grow sustainably and equitably in line with its Spatial Strategy.

The Need for the Scheme

12. The Scheme is not only a key measure for the delivery of the Spatial Strategy set out in the adopted development plan, but also an enabler of infrastructure-led wider growth to support the Cambridge economy and its residents into the future. In addition, it offers a near-term and rapid measure to ease the impacts of existing traffic congestion and high house prices on those living and working in Cambridge and its western environs in advance of and complementary with larger-scale transport interventions such as East-West Rail. Realising the economic potential of Cambridge is likely to require a growth strategy that “*goes further than the Local Plans in terms of scale, ambition and timescale*” [CD7-39]. It would therefore be wrong, as some objectors to the Scheme have done, to focus simply on the identified need and allocations identified in the adopted Local Plans in assessing the need for and principle of the Scheme – albeit the Scheme is necessary in any event to deliver the planned development in those Local Plans.
13. The Scheme aligns with and supports a number of critical growth drivers and strategic objectives for Cambridge identified in adopted and emerging policy at local and national level:
14. **Unlocking housing growth**: the Scheme will enable significant housing growth at Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield to proceed in a timely, sustainable and viable way which respects the local and national priority to respond to climate change. In advance of a high-quality transport link such as the Scheme coming forward, development at Bourn Airfield is limited to 500 dwellings. The Scheme would also support the further growth at Cambourne envisaged in the emerging Joint Local Plan, which following the recent changes to the “*standard methodology*” for calculating housing needs, is required to provide for a materially higher number of new home completions than that planned for in the adopted Local Plans.

15. **Supporting economic growth, labour mobility and innovation clusters:** the Scheme supports the globally significant employment hubs in life sciences, AI, clean technology and advanced manufacturing based in Cambridge by improving access to Cambridge from the west and specifically the West Cambridge Campus of the University of Cambridge (Policy 19 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018). It widens the labour pool for these employment and research hubs, enabling public sector staff, support services and early-career researchers who may not own cars and might otherwise be priced out of the Cambridge housing market to commute reliably and affordably into Cambridge. In doing so it facilitates the success of these hubs and widens participation in Cambridge's economic growth, as well as supporting cross-pollination between academia, business and the wider regional labour market. Without initiatives such as the Scheme, the lack of sufficient accessible and affordable housing for its workforce is a potential constraint on the ability of Cambridge to maintain and improve its world-leading position in science.
16. **Aligning with sustainable transport and climate goals:** the A428/A1303 has long been identified as a corridor of significant congestion, where transformational modal shift is required. The Scheme facilitates such a shift, by, among other things providing a reliable, low/zero emission alternative to car use between Cambourne and Cambridge, intercepting future private car trips towards Cambridge City as a result of anticipated growth within the OxCam Growth Corridor, increasing the capacity of Park & Ride travel hubs serving the City and promoting walking and cycling via a parallel active travel route. It aligns with local net zero ambitions and national climate change goals as well as contributing to improved air quality through the reduction in private car use.
17. **Meeting the needs of communities and social inclusion:** the Scheme aligns with and supports the Councils' commitments in adopted and emerging policy to sustainable and inclusive growth. It enables those without access to or use of a car or who cannot afford to live in the city to reliably reach employment, education, healthcare and cultural opportunities in Cambridge. It will enable emerging businesses to take advantage of more affordable employment locations beyond the city and along the Scheme corridor without further burdening congested road infrastructure or losing employees due to poorer accessibility.

Compliance of the Scheme with planning policy

18. While the Councils acknowledge that s.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is not directly applicable to the present application for deemed planning permission, the adopted development plan is an important material consideration in determining that application, along with the NPPF and the emerging Joint Local Plan. The Councils also have a responsibility to ensure that development in their administrative areas is undertaken in a sustainable manner.
19. As such, the Councils have reviewed the Scheme, including its supporting documents and environmental statement, against adopted and emerging policy and guidance. They have identified a strong measure of compliance and alignment with important strategic policies for infrastructure-led development. The loss of open space would be mitigated by the re-provision of an area of equivalent size, in close proximity to the affected locations and incorporating qualitative enhancements. A planning condition would ensure that the replacement open space would be fully available to the public on the opening of the Scheme.
20. The Councils recognise that the Scheme would result in a number of localised harms. These include less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation areas (engaging the duties in ss.66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990); harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, impact on openness and conflict with purposes; and minor residual harm to trees, landscape character and best and most versatile agricultural land. However, these harms are outweighed by the substantial public benefits of the Scheme. Those benefits include:
 - a. the creation of a fast, reliable, congestion-free public transport spine connecting strategic housing allocations to the west of Cambridge with major employment and education hubs in the city;
 - b. critical support to the adopted spatial strategy by unlocking and sustaining the delivery of at least 6,000 new homes in the western corridor;
 - c. associated carbon reduction, air quality improvement and modal shift outcomes;

- d. enhanced network resilience and capacity through the provision of high-quality active travel links;
 - e. open space and green infrastructure improvements;
 - f. integration with future infrastructure; and
 - g. improving equality of opportunity for non-car users.
21. Even giving the harm identified to heritage assets considerable importance and weight, as required by statute and the NPPF, those public benefits are sufficient to justify the grant of deemed planning permission. They are also of sufficient weight, considered together, to amount to very special circumstances which justify the grant of permission for inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Conclusion

22. The Scheme is critically important to enable the delivery of adopted development plan policy and the future expansion of Greater Cambridge in a sustainable and equitable way. The identified planning harms resulting from a scheme of this nature can be minimised appropriately through mitigation schemes and planning conditions such that the resulting level of residual harm is low and is outweighed by the significant public benefits that the Scheme will bring. The Inspectors are therefore respectfully asked to recommend to the Secretary of State that the Order be made, a direction be granted pursuant to s.90(2A) of the 1990 Act and a certificate be issued pursuant to s.19 of the 1981 Act.

ESTHER DRABKIN-REITER
FRANCIS TAYLOR BUILDING
16 September 2025