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8th January 2025

By email to

transportinfrastructure.dft.gov.uk

Secretary of State for Transport

c/o Infrastructure Planning Unit

Department for Transport

Great Minster House

33 Horseferry Road

London SW1P 4DR

Dear Secretary of State,

Objection to Transport and Works Act Order submitted to the Department of Transport for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge

I, John Arthur Latham, of [redacted], am writing to make a formal objection to the 'Application for a Transport and Works Act Order to the Department of Transport (DfT) for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge as submitted by Cambridgeshire County Council for the Greater Cambridge Partnership on 12th November 2024.

Whilst I support improvement of public transport, which, for many reasons that are well documented elsewhere, is very clearly required both in and around Cambridge, and for residents of Cambourne, I do not support this proposal.

This application for an Order to build the proposed busway should be rejected for the following reasons:

1. This scheme is ill-founded. The concept of kerb-guided buses, were that guidance method to be chosen, has not been successful in locations outside the UK. Various UK schemes, both built and unbuilt, have been abandoned. The short section of guided busway in Edinburgh has been converted into a conventional tramway, as was the scheme in Mannheim two decades ago.

   As a 'technology' it is outmoded and inflexible and an anachronism. The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, often cited as a 'success' suffers from serious engineering and design failures which will cost tens of millions of Pounds to remedy, if they ever are. These shortcomings are increasingly obvious to anyone travelling on the busway between Cambridge and St Ives through poor ride and speed limits.

   The many weaknesses and risks of the kerb guided system resulted in the 'last kilometre' late addition to the Guided Busway from Milton Road to Cambridge North station being executed as a normal road surface with car traps.

2. If, instead, optical guidance is chosen for the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme, then this too represents a technology that has not been successfully implemented in a range of locations outside the UK, and in the UK it is unknown and unproven. It is also now a decades old technology and is becoming outmoded. As well as carrying specific security risks, optical guidance generates problems when used with asphalt road surfaces of ruts in the road being created by buses. Similar problems arise with other electronic guidance systems, and the 'Translohr' guidance system which has been all but abandoned. Attempts to avoid this degeneration of the road surface lead to excessive use of concrete, with severe carbon implications.

3. There is no compelling evidence that guided bus systems are cheaper to implement than conventional light rail. On the contrary. Bus 'rolling stock' is much more short-lived than tram vehicles.

4. The dangers posed to pedestrians and cyclists from a lack of barriers between the busway and the multi-user path which have resulted in various deaths and injuries in Cambridge and in Luton, and in prosecution of Cambridgeshire County Council by the Health and Safety authorities, have generated a 'solution' which requires an additional two metre safety verge. Thus the 'land take' for a busway is therefore no less than for a conventional road, and arguably more, and certainly no less than for a tramway or railway line.

5. There is no evidence to support the view that passengers equate the experience of riding in a guided bus with riding in a tram on a light rail system. This therefore reduces the attractiveness of guided bus offerings, and reduces potential for achieving 'modal shift'.

6. The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway has demonstrated the inability of guided bus arrangements to scale upwards sufficiently in response to passenger demand. This is particularly noticeable for people travelling towards St Ives and the intermediate villages and Park & Ride facilities at peak times from the Cambridge Science Park. Each conventional tram with modern articulated vehicles has far greater capacity than a bus, and trams are unquestionably more effective than buses in generating modal shift.

7. No properly audited passenger figures have ever been provided to substantiate the often repeated contention that the existing Cambridgeshire Guided Busway has been a success.

8. The financial case set out for the Cambourne to Cambridge scheme points to a Benefit:Cost Ratio of 0.5:1. This is so weak that the scheme should have been stopped long before a draft TWAO was submitted. With such a weak financial case the Department should reject the application as not worthy of consideration under its own published criteria. Once the East West railway is in place the Benefit:Cost ratio of the proposed busway will fall still further.

9. Once it became clear that the East West Rail project is proceeding toward construction from Bedford to Cambridge, and includes a station at Cambourne, providing a far more effective means to transport large numbers of passengers at high speed between Cambourne and Cambridge

South for Addenbrooke's and the Biomedical Campus, and the sixth form colleges, the busway scheme should have been abandoned.

10. The busway proposal is not coherent with the future implementation of a Light Rail system for Cambridge, and indeed, is likely to make that more challenging by using an alignment along the Rifle Range Path which could be better used for Light Rail (please see the Cambridge Connect scheme).

11. I therefore contend that the proposed busway is fundamentally flawed.

I object in particular to the proposed off-road section between Madingley Mulch and West Cambridge

12. This off-road route is unnecessary for the improvement of bus services between Cambourne and Cambridge. GCP have failed to give proper consideration to on-road alternatives that would offer improved bus journeys on the A1303 using bus priority measures and bus lanes. They have therefore failed to analyse the low cost alternative to their scheme.

13. The proposed scheme includes on-road sections, so the contention that a fully segregated bus route is necessary is undermined by the scheme's own characteristics.

14. The proposed scheme cuts through countryside which has long been regarded as of prime importance for the setting of Cambridge, and is protected by covenants dating back up to a century.

15. The proposed busway goes through valuable green belt land on the side of Madingley Hill, and would be a permanent disruption both to the landscape and to the American Cemetery.

16. The proposed busway would slice through Coton Orchard resulting in a serious loss of prized habitat and important and noted mature trees. This is a County Wildlife site and is East Anglia's largest remaining orchard, and one of the largest remaining orchards in England. It would also impact land owned by Cambridge Past Present & Future whose

successful efforts to preserve and enhance the rural setting of Cambridge deserve much more respect.

17. The proposed route ends on Grange Road which means that it does not serve any purpose in relation to major employment sites, including Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Biomedical Campus. Nor does it offer any help to students at the Sixth Form colleges to the south of the City, nor does it offer any useful service to the rapidly increasing population of Eddington.

18. There is no evidence as to how the proposed services on the busway would effectively and efficiently access either the city centre of Cambridge, or by taking the M11 provide fast services to the burgeoning employment centres to the south of Cambridge. Services to these destinations would all be far better provided through the on-road A1303 alternative.

I therefore reiterate that I object to the proposal and the draft TWAO, and I urge you and your Department to demand that instead Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership pay proper attention to the clearly expressed wishes and concerns of residents and local community groups, as well as national conservation bodies, and turn their attention to the much cheaper and less environmentally damaging on-road alternative, which can be much more speedily implemented with greater and wider benefits.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

(signed)

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John A. Latham

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