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From: Geoff Hale <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 20 February 2025 20:29
To: TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE
Subject: Objection to Transport and Works Act Order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a new busway to the southeast of Cambridge

To: Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit, Department for Transport,
Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR

20 February 2025

I, Dr Geoff Hale, 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 to the southeast of Cambridge”, as submitted by the Greater Cambridge Partnership on 9 January 2025.

I am objecting for the following reasons:

1. The proposed cross-country route for the busway was adopted following a consultation undertaken by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) in the early part of 2018 where it was presented as *Strategy 1 - A new off-road, segregated public transport route from the A11 to CBC* with three elements:

A new dedicated public transport route from the A11 via Sawston to CBC (Cambridge Biomedical Campus).

A Park & Ride site near the A11/A505 junction.

Would form part of the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) proposed at the time by the CPCA.

The number of responses to the consultation was slightly more than 1900. However, based on this small number, GCP discarded the other options and has subsequently continued to promote this off-road route ever since. This is despite repeated requests from parish councils, a variety of organisations and individuals, for GCP to go back and look in depth at other route options in particular along the A1307. In my view, given the small number of responses, it is clear that the level of public awareness of the proposals at the time was limited and there should have been further efforts made to engage with the community to confirm their opinions.

Strategy 1 was the only option that was compatible with the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) proposal being pursued at that time by the CPCA Mayor, James Palmer. The CAM Metro system used autonomous driverless vehicles and hence could not run on the normal road network. However, following the election of the current CPCA Mayor, Nik Johnson, in 2021, the CAM Metro proposal was dropped.

Following the cancellation of the CAM Metro scheme, GCP undertook a comparison of the off-road route and the rejected route alongside the A1307 plus the short busway into the CBC (essentially Strategy 2 from the 2018 consultation). This showed that the environmental impact and the noise levels were worse for the off-road route than for the A1307 route. The only benefit was for active travel - which is being addressed by the construction of the Greenways (as discussed below).

By this point, had the GCP devoted so much resource (time and money) that they felt unable to go back and seriously reconsider a route along the A1307?

2. The construction of 5 miles of new road through open countryside is unnecessary to deliver improvements in transport. Similar transport and economic benefits can be achieved by building a version of the Strategy 2 scheme first proposed by GCP in 2018 as outlined above. This would involve building sections of bus lane adjacent to the A1307 and 1 mile of new road (busway) into the CBC.

3. The projected cost of the proposed route is c. at least £160m, whereas the cost of the A1307 route is around £60m. Given the constraints on public spending, a saving of around £100m is not insignificant. Furthermore, the off-road route will not be useable until the entire busway is complete, whereas the alternative along the A1307 would be useable sooner, as sections were completed.

4. As the A1307 scheme only requires a limited amount of new bus lanes, the carbon emissions associated with this route will be orders of magnitude lower than construction of a 5-mile new road through the countryside. Has a complete Life Cycle Assessment been undertaken for both options?

5. This (A1307 + a short bus route into the CBC) alternative would better serve the planned expansion of the CBC and serve more of the Campus. The proposed GCP route comes into the western side of the CBC campus, but future expansion of the campus is due to be at the other side, nearer where the alternative route would come in. In addition, the existing expansion plans for the CBC already include a short busway from the Hinton Way roundabout into the campus.

6. This alternative route along the A1307 would avoid building two significant bridges (estimated to be 118m and 130m in length respectively) over the River Granta chalk stream and putting Hobson's Conduit chalk stream into a culvert/or adding a further small bridge.

7. The A1307 route would avoid creating a scar in the Gog Magog Hills landscape, one of the most important landscapes in the Cambridge area. The open countryside view from Little Trees Hill on Magog Down in an arc from east to south would be broken by a roadway and associated structures in the near foreground. With the proposed off-road route, the bus stop at Stapleford and the associated lighting, shelters, and tarmac would cut right across the open view from Haverhill Road, at the edge of the village, up the hill towards Magog Down. This is listed as a Protected View in the Stapleford and Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan (which has just completed its Submission Consultation).

8. Using a route based along the A1307 would avoid building a new road through a countryside park, to the detriment of its future users and nature. The new retirement village, Strawberry Fields, at the northern edge of Stapleford was only given planning permission on appeal (December 2021) because the landowner gave land for the adjoining countryside park, thus giving a big boost to local biodiversity. The Inspector's decision was heavily influenced by the benefits of the countryside park which is estimated to give a biodiversity net gain of over 230% and an increase in local chalk downland of almost 20%. It is projected that the busway would take up to one-third of the 19 hectares of the countryside park (as defined in the current S106 agreement) thus reducing the projected environmental benefits of the development and is contrary to the planning decision.

9. By developing an alternative route along the A1307, this avoids severing fields close to villages which make such areas more vulnerable to future development and hence further harm to the countryside.
10. New active travel routes (to support cycling, walking and, in some cases, horse-riding) in this area are already under construction and include the Linton Greenway which will connect Cambridge to Babraham, Granta Park and Linton; and the Sawston Greenway that will connect Cambridge to Sawston. Stapleford and Shelford are already served by the DNA cycle path. Therefore, it is not necessary to create further active travel options, which is one reason that the GCP gives for picking their chosen route as the maintenance track alongside the busway can also be used for this purpose.
11. The proposed route takes up 53 hectares of best and most versatile agricultural land, whereas the alternative along the A1307 will take far less.
12. The GCP route uses buses with some form of guidance system, which means no other vehicle can use the road e.g. other buses, or emergency vehicles. The alternative on an existing road can use existing buses, and, if appropriate, other vehicles could use sections with bus lanes.
13. The GCP cross-country route will result in a reduction in air quality at the crossing points with existing roads as there will be significant traffic queuing, based on 6 buses per hour in each direction (and possibly more at peak times). This is likely to affect nearby houses. There will also be parking issues around the bus stops (as they only have disabled parking and a drop-off/pick-up area), as they are on the edges of villages.
14. For all three villages (Sawston, Stapleford and Great Shelford), the route proposed by GCP is at the edge of the villages. With very limited parking at the bus stops, it is probable that anyone living more than 10-15 minutes' walk away will not use the busway. Therefore, its benefit to the local communities will be limited.
15. The TWAO proposes that the buses have hybrid diesel/electric engines, running on diesel for the majority of the route and electric only within the Biomedical campus. Given the Government intention is that new diesel-powered buses will be banned from the early 2030s, it should be mandatory that all buses using the GCP busway are fully electric from the outset. Stagecoach is already using a number of fully electric buses in and around Cambridge.

There are a number of disadvantages associated with either bus route:

1. The existing number 7 bus service (running three times per hour), which serves the village centres of Sawston, Stapleford, and Great Shelford, would be under threat, if bus resources are diverted to a new busway.
2. Rather than building a new Travel Hub for 1250 cars, the sums of money involved (ranging from £60-160m depending on the route selected) to move people to the CBC or into the city centre could be spent more wisely on providing more buses on lots of routes, giving an incentive for people to get out of their cars and to use a bus, leading to reduced congestion, and avoiding the need to build new busways?
3. The proposed single deck buses only take 40 people seated and possibly some standing. At peak times, there will be at least 6 (and up to 8) buses per hour. That's only 240 (or up to 320) people per hour, which will create very little impact on congestion.

Potential mitigation measures to be considered.

1. The Travel Hub is proposed to have 1250 spaces. Only 150 of these will have solar panels over them to provide the power required for that site. As Government policy is to maximise use of renewables, then all 1250 spaces should be covered with solar panels and excess electricity fed back into the grid. This would, to an extent, compensate for the loss of high-quality agricultural land to create the site.

2. If the GCP plan goes ahead, the countryside park on the edge of Stapleford will lose up to 33% of its projected land (around 6 hectares) with a corresponding loss in biodiversity. To counteract this, there should be compensatory Green Belt land and/or biodiversity gain, over and above the statutory biodiversity gain required from any major construction project.

Yours faithfully

Geoff Hale

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