[redacted]

From: Sara SAYER <[redacted]>
Sent: 04 March 2025 16:29
To: TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE
Subject: Opposition to CSET

Dear Sir

I write to formally oppose the CSET Scheme.

In summary the scheme will irreparably damage this valuable, precious and unique visual landscape surrounding and providing the lungs to the historic city of Cambridge. It will adversely impact the creatures that live on the neighbouring 150 acres of Chalk Grassland restoration conservation site at Magog Down and the adjacent SSSI, endangering and jeopardising their habitat and thus survival. It will make the area vulnerable to further development thus threatening the creatures (rare butterflies etc) even further. Plus commuting habits have changed since this scheme was first mooted such that it does not reflect the new model of more work being done from home. Instead a far less amount can be spent on improving the frequency of current buses and trains in a far less destructive manner than concreting over GreenBelt.

The Busway project will result in the invasion and destruction of an historic and attractive Green Belt landscape immediately adjacent to the Gog Magog Hills and the Granta Valley by creating a 14 metre wide tarmac road, brutal-looking concrete flyovers, and frequent (sixteen an hour) motorised vehicles that will increase pollution in both the Green Belt and in Great Shelford and Stapleford. The massive process of construction, the irreversible damage to the biodiversity and agricultural heritage of the landscape, the appalling visual impact, and the frequency of the buses will all contribute to catastrophic environmental damage.
The area of Green Belt landscape that will be invaded by the Busway currently forms an important part of the setting of the City of Cambridge and the area to the South of Cambridge. It provides a crucial role in the physical and mental health of the residents of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. At a time when the value of such a setting is increasingly realised and valued, the Busway project will seriously and irreversibly damage this precious and rejuvenating resource.
This initial invasion of the Green Belt, a national asset, is likely to be used to justify further invasion and destruction of this landscape by planners and developers who will not be satisfied until much of the Green Belt has disappeared.

The Busway proposal lacks strategic coherence. CSET is a stand-alone project and is not part of an integrated transport solution or network for the whole region. The proposed route starts at a remote location and places bus stops at a distance from centres of population. As such, it fails to meet the public transport needs of local people.
The Busway then terminates at Addenbrookes Hospital, a considerable distance from the centre of Cambridge, a compromised final destination for a Busway whose major objective is to reduce the number of private vehicles travelling into Cambridge.
Other strategic omissions of this Busway relate to the failure to take advantage of rail links and cycle ways.

GCP is proposing two Busway stops and two crossing points in Great Shelford and Stapleford. As no public parking will be provided at these Busway stops, which in reality are bus stations and will therefore add to the environmental and visible destruction of the Green Belt, Great Shelford and Stapleford will become targets for massive fly parking of the kind that has become so problematic in the Addenbrooke's Hospital area and elsewhere in Cambridge. In spite of many public expressions of concern, the present Busway

proposals do not acknowledge this problem and therefore make no provision for such fly parking to be prevented.

The two crossing points in the already busy Haverhill Road and in the already busy and congested Hinton Way will be used every four minutes by the Busway, resulting in massive increased congestion, long lines of idling cars, resultant health-threatening pollution for residents of all ages, and obstacles to emergency vehicles. The queues in Hinton Way are likely to merge with the already lengthy queues resulting from the existing Shelford railway crossing. In effect, the scheme will transfer congestion and pollution, environmental blights that GCP says it is committed to eliminating, from the A1307 to the residential heart of Great Shelford and Stapleford. It is difficult to believe that GCP Officers and consultants have not modelled these effects. GCP claims that some 'mitigation' of the damage will take place but GCP has provided no details, presumably because genuine and meaningful 'mitigation' is impossible. Incredibly, the Busway proposals have been developed without publication of a detailed environmental report addressing such issues. The GCP Executive Board should therefore instruct Officers to publish as a matter of urgency a complete Environmental Impact Assessment on the preferred route and on viable alternatives.

Great Shelford and Stapleford Parish Councils have not been meaningfully consulted by GCP about the route currently proposed. Holding several early public displays and surveys concerning the Busway project falls well short of a formal process of public consultation prior to which residents have been fully alerted and informed. Nevertheless, at the GCP Assembly on 3 June 2020, when the proposal to use the current route through the Green Belt was tabled, GCP Officers wrongly stated that there were no outstanding consultations. If GCP genuinely believes that formal public consultations have taken place, it should publish the dates and minutes of these meetings rather than claiming that early surveys involving comparatively few people, many of whom at the time were unaware of the environmental and financial significance of this project, demonstrate public support for the Busway.

Recent political changes in Cambridgeshire, not least in respect of the election of a new Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with different views on public transport from his predecessor, and an independent report on a light railway option commissioned by Great Shelford and Stapleford Parish Councils have created an
opportunity for alternative routes and solutions to be considered. At a meeting of the GCP Executive Board, there was some acknowledgement of these developments. However, instead of pausing the Busway project, as suggested by the former MP for South Cambridgeshire and by the newly elected Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, so that alternative routes and the general credibility and viability of the Busway project can be reconsidered, the Executive Board, driven by its Officers when the reverse should be the case, has refused to consider this sensible and prudent course of action and ploughed on regardless ever since - riding roughshod over the opinions of local and regional residents.

GCP seems oblivious to the consequences of Covid-19. The economic, social and financial landscape in the medium to long term has changed. Fewer people travel to work on a daily basis. The project should be paused until the post-Covid-19 work landscape has been assessed which will likely result in an abandonment of the project. South Cambs DC itself operates a 4 day working week.

At a time when as a result of Covid-19 there has been a huge increase in public debt, with major public service commitments such as the NHS, schools, and social services struggling to cope with increasing needs and inadequate levels of funding, it is extraordinary that the GCP is planning to spend almost half billion pounds on Busway schemes with strategically questionable outcomes that will cause huge environmental damage. Before more scarce public resources are committed, for all the reasons outlined in this paper, this project should at best be abandoned and at the very least be paused.

The Business Case Ratio (BCR) for this project is dubious. To put this figure more starkly, recent calculations by Smarter Cambridge Transport suggest that the CSET Busway project and similar projects elsewhere in South Cambridgeshire will cost a total of almost half a billion pounds, with every resident in South Cambridgeshire contributing £1370, and each new anticipated bus user costing £180,000.00 ! These

figures were part of a question asked at the GCP Executive Board meeting on 1 July 2021, to which the GCP Officer did not respond. Nor did the Chair of the meeting remind the Officer that he should comment on these remarkable figures. These figures alone, which GCP has not challenged, should result in this Busway project being abandoned, especially as GCP's already poor calculation takes no account of the environmental cost of huge damage to the Green Belt, to the Granta Valley, and to the villages of Great Shelford and Stapleford.

Moreover the Planning Inspector who gave the go ahead for the Strawberry Fields Retirement home development on the edge of Stapleford was influenced by the new NMOS to be set up at Chalkhill Down. Little did he realize this new and precious site it threatened to be dissected by a concrete busway running right through it - threatening the very purpose and amenity of this land. If you build the busway you will have to revoke the planning permission given for the Strawberry Fields development otherwise it was given on a flawed and untrue basis which raises public law principles. Revocation and reinstatement of the land to its former state would mean that significant Compensation (multi multi millions) would need to be provided to the developer, people who have signed up to live there and to Magog Trust who are owners and operators of the new NMOS.

I urge you to veto and block the scheme.

Yours sincerely,
Sara Sayer - writing as a private individual but also as a Trustee of Magog Trust, the Board of whom also object to this scheme

[redacted]

This email has originated from external sources and has been scanned by DfT's email scanning service.