

From: [REDACTED]
To: [TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE](#)
Cc: [FeCRA Committee](#)
Subject: Re: Application for a Transport & Work Act Order to the Dept for Transport for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge
Date: 09 January 2025 22:24:23

Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport Department For Transport Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Letter sent by email to the Secretary of State: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

Copy to: FeCRA Committee

Dear Secretary of State,

Ref: "Application for a Transport and Work Act Order to the Department for Transport (DfT) for a new busway linking Cambourne to Cambridge", as submitted by the Cambridge Greater Partnership on 12 November 2024.

I am the Chair of the Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations and I 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 linking Cambourne to Cambridge", as submitted by the Cambridge Greater Partnership on 12 November 2024.

Our members strongly object to the off-road section **between Madingley Mulch and West Cambridge**. They say that there is an excellent on-road alternative for this section including new bus lanes and bus priority measures following the A1303 which has never been properly assessed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).

While they agree that improving public transport should be a priority and they support this residents tell us that they do not think that this proposal is the best use of taxpayers' money. The Benefit Cost Ratio for the GCP scheme is less than 0.5 which indicates extremely poor value for money and does not meet the Department's criteria for considering such a scheme, whereas the suggested alternative is a fraction of the cost. Many residents support the need for a tram or light rail system to serve Cambridge. The proposed route of the Cambourne to Cambridge busway would not be the preferred route for light rail.

Where is the benefit for Cambridge residents?

- (1) It is not at all clear what happens after the busway route terminates in Grange Road. This route does not serve major employment destinations or Cambridge's sixth form colleges..
- (2) It does not make journey times to Cambridge a lot faster – a difference of only 1.5–3.5 minutes between on-road and off-road routes for a 30-minute journey.
- (3) It does not provide faster journeys to most key destinations
- (4) It does not take into account current road usage data or evolving working–commuting patterns
- (5) This offhighway route will destroy Coton Orchard, a county wildlife site, East Anglia's largest remaining ancient orchard, the eighth largest in the UK.
- (6) It carves up the Cambridge greenbelt with restrictive covenants in favour of the National Trust and some of the UK's best farmland.
- (7) It ruins some of Cambridge's best views. The beautiful views and setting of one of the UK's premier heritage cities with its medieval villages is known and loved all over the world. This scheme will spoil the city's unique heritage as well as urbanise the attractive rural and historic village of Coton.

Our members believe that that this proposal has very little to do with improving public transport. The real reason they conclude for this destructive off highway busway scheme is that the claimed major benefit is "Land Value Uplift". In other words, to break up some of the UK's best farmland and countryside, including within the Cambridge Green Belt, for further development.

See GCP document: *"Cambourne to Cambridge Better Public Transport Project - Outline Business Case - Economic*

Case" dated 17 January 2020,

Section 13.4 Value for Money Statement reads:

*"The monetised Level 1 economic benefits (based on transport modelling outcomes) show that the scheme produces an **initial Benefit to Cost Ratio** (BCR) of 0.43 from a PVB of £93.334m (2010 prices, discounted to 2010) and a cost to public accounts of £195.141m (2010 prices, discounted to 2010). According to DfT guidance and criteria the BCR of 0.43 yields poor VfM.*

*Taking into account the monetised Level 1 benefits and Level 2 additional benefits of the scheme, relating to Wider Economic Impacts based on fixed land use, the scheme produces an **adjusted BCR** of 0.48 from PVB of £93.334m (2010 prices, discounted to 2010). According to DfT guidance and criteria the BCR of 0.48 reflects poor VfM."*

and Section 13.5 Indicative Monetised Impacts - Value for Money reads:

*"As the strategic case that underpins the need for investment is based on the scheme supporting future economic growth by unlocking dependent housing sites, the scheme's Wider Economic Impacts in relation to land use change must be taken into consideration. Taking into account estimated Land Value Uplift (LVU) impacts, the scheme has the potential to deliver additional PVBs valued up to £287.8m (2010 prices). Applied these as a switching value moves the scheme into a **Medium VfM category**.*

*If the value LVU drops by 25%, either because not all houses are built and occupied, or to reflect the transport external costs impact (not accounted for in the initial LVU value), then the VfM category still remains **Medium**. This would drop to low if only 50% of the LVU value is realised and linked to the scheme. In all cases, this is still greater than the poor VfM category based on the core PVB used to calculate the initial BCR."*

BUT, our members point out that even by including Land Value Uplift arising from developments at Cambourne West, Bourn Airfield, and West Cambridge and other development opportunities that will arise from the creation of uneconomic farm units along the route, the Value for Money of this scheme remains at best **Medium**.

It is the view of our members that the best transport options for Cambridge are NOT being considered because they do not offer developers the possibility of developments of the lucrative Cambridge green belt close to London.

This was highlighted in a letter of complaint sent by NE Cambs MP Steve Barclay to the Auditor General in 2017 which we reproduced on our website in "Update May 2017".

Mr Barclay highlighted that: *'The relationship between prominent local developers, and City Deal is opaque and open to abuse'...that 'developers, or their clients, own green belt land around Cambridge which has low value without planning permission. The developers have then lobbied the LEP and City Deal to fund transport improvements which increase the value of these sites. They have also lobbied the LEP to recommend their sites be designated as Enterprise Zones or Science Parks, as this then allows grants in excess of state aid rules as exemptions apply to both Enterprise Zones and to Innovation. Both the transport improvements, and loans or grants for new facilities, increase the viability and value of the housing on their site. This housing also benefits from high prices in the nearby Cambridge market. Large scale housing meets a key Government objective, and benefits local councils through new homes bonus funding, satisfying key stakeholders. '*

Mr Barclay added 'There is nothing wrong with this approach if the investment decisions on transport links .. and approving schemes on green belt land are taken independently using clear criteria' he also pointed out that 'Developers also influence the LEP and City Deal through organisations like Cambridge Ahead where the relationship is also close.'

But, there is no point in entering into any discussion about transport schemes and land uplift or opening up the Cambridge green belt for further housing expansion and employment led growth until the water shortage in the Cambridge area is resolved.

At a time when the rest of the UK is crying out for funding it does not make sense to many Cambridge residents to be concentrating the greatest employment-led growth in the UK's most water stressed region, an area which is also affected by rising sea levels and flooding. Cambridgeshire is the most nature depleted county in the country. This scheme will deplete the county's nature even further.

For all of these reasons we strongly object to this busway proposal.

Wendy Blythe

Chair of the Federation of Cambridge Residents Associations (FeCRA)



Wendy Blythe
Chair, FeCRA

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