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The Cambourne to Cambridge Order

Cambridgeshire County Council

Transport and Works Act 1992

Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004

Inquiry into:

THE CAMBOURNE TO CAMBRIDGE ORDER

SUMMARY OF PROOF OF EVIDENCE

of

Ralph Lewis

of WSP

On behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council

18/08/2025

Planning Inspectorate Reference: **DPI/E0535/25/1**

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1. SUMMARY OF RALPH LEWIS' PLANNING PROOF OF EVIDENCE

1.1 Scheme Development and Site Context

- 1.1.1 The scheme comprises a 9.5km guided busway connecting Cambourne to West Cambridge and ultimately to Grange Road. It traverses multiple parishes, including Bourn Airfield, Hardwick, and Coton, intersecting strategic growth areas and established planning designations. The infrastructure includes segregated busway corridors, active travel routes, a park and ride facility at Scotland Farm, two new bridges over Bin Brook and the M11, landscape mitigation areas, and supporting drainage and ecological enhancements.
- 1.1.2 Planning history across the route is mixed, with parts of the corridor previously benefiting from reserved matters approvals particularly around Cambourne and others requiring new consents. The proposed scheme intersects allocated sites in adopted Local Plans and draft emerging frameworks, including West Cambridge and Bourn Airfield, as well as Mineral Safeguarding Areas for sand, gravel, and chalk.

1.2 Planning Policy Framework and Compliance Assessment

- 1.2.1 National policy support is anchored in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), which promotes sustainable transport, modal shift, climate adaptation, and place-sensitive infrastructure. The scheme aligns with paragraph 11's presumption in favour of sustainable development and contributes to the three interdependent goals of economic growth, environmental resilience, and social inclusion.
- 1.2.2 Local policy compliance is assessed against both the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018). Policies SS/7 and SS/8 reference the scheme explicitly, requiring direct, congestion-free public transport links through Bourn Airfield and Cambourne West. The proposal also reflects the strategic ambitions of Policy 14 (Areas of Major Change), Policy 80 (Sustainable Access), and Policy TI/2 (Planning for Sustainable Travel), delivering connectivity between homes and employment clusters in line with adopted growth strategies.
- 1.2.3 Beyond adopted frameworks, strong alignment is demonstrated with the Greater Cambridge Local Plan (First Proposals, 2021), the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, and ministerial statements including the Case for Cambridge (2024) and Matthew Pennycook MP's letter to the Chief Executive of Cambridge City Council. These reinforce the need for infrastructure-first planning, integrated travel corridors, and accelerated modal shift.

1.3 Key Policy Compliance Themes

- 1.3.1 In relation to transport, the scheme meets national and local policy expectations by delivering high-frequency, electric-compatible bus services insulated from traffic congestion. It incorporates pedestrian and cycle access along the majority of the corridor and interfaces with future infrastructure such as East West Rail and Comberton Greenway. Journey time reliability, congestion relief, and reduced emissions are all evident compliance outcomes.
- 1.3.2 On landscape and design quality, the scheme responds to the principles outlined in NPPF Chapter 12 and Local Plan Policy 56 by integrating tree-lined routes, bunding, planting, and visual containment. Eleven landscape character areas are evaluated, with mitigation tailored to topography, settlement edge conditions, and receptor sensitivity.
- 1.3.3 Ecological impacts are acknowledged, particularly in relation to hedgerow loss and orchard fragmentation at Coton. However, biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, with an ambition of 20%, is proposed, alongside badger crossings, bat-friendly planting, and species-rich reinstatement.

- 1.3.4 In the assessment of flood risk, the scheme satisfies Sequential and Exception Tests under NPPF guidance and Policies CC/9 and Policy 32, with detailed hydraulic modelling at Bin Brook and provision for surface water attenuation. Lined drainage systems, SUDS, and runoff management are embedded in both design and construction protocols.
- 1.3.5 Climate and greenhouse gas emissions are addressed through modal shift modelling, solar-powered infrastructure, and a carbon reduction strategy. The scheme is forecast to save around 5,000 tCO₂e over a 60-year appraisal period, and potentially 47,000 tCO₂e under enhanced mode-shift scenarios.

1.4 Green Belt and Open Space Considerations

- 1.4.1 The scheme intersects several sub-areas of the Cambridge Green Belt, most notably near Coton, West Cambridge, and the Travel Hub at Scotland Farm. While most route sections are judged to preserve openness, the Travel Hub and parts of the orchard corridor represent moderate visual and spatial harm. The scheme therefore cannot meet the Green Belt policy exception test outright and is deemed 'inappropriate development.'
- 1.4.2 The planning case proceeds to demonstrate 'very special circumstances,' citing strategic housing delivery, lack of viable alternatives outside the Green Belt, and embedded mitigation. This is supported by local authority policy (S/4 and NH/8), national policy (NPPF Paragraph 154), and extensive landscape bunding, tree belts, and compensatory habitat planting.
- 1.4.3 Replacement open space is proposed to offset permanent loss of 5,380m² at the M11 crossing and University Rugby Practice Pitch. The proposed site (Site C) lies within Newnham Ward, offers direct connectivity with the West Cambridge corridor, and delivers qualitative improvements over the land lost. A certificate under Section 19(1)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 is sought and deemed achievable.

1.5 Heritage and Arboricultural Impacts

- 1.5.1 Heritage effects are reviewed in detail, with Clare Hall, Elmside, and the West Cambridge Conservation Area being most affected. All impacts are assessed as 'less than substantial harm' under NPPF paragraph 202, and considerable weight is given to the conservation of listed assets as required by Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The design respects key views and setting, using bunding, low-profile surfacing, and route curvatures to mitigate perceptual change.
- 1.5.2 In relation to arboricultural impacts, three veteran Bramley apple trees are proposed for translocation, supported by arborist confirmation of viability and long-term management. This is assessed under NPPF paragraph 193(c), with infrastructure status deemed sufficient to meet the 'wholly exceptional reasons' test and compensation strategy deemed robust.

1.6 Noise, Vibration and Air Quality

- 1.6.1 Noise and vibration effects during construction are judged to be minor to moderate at receptors near Bin Brook, Childerley Gate, and Clare Hall. Operational noise impacts are limited, with hybrid and electric fleet usage reducing peak-hour emissions. Sensitive equipment at West Cambridge labs is considered, and mitigation pathways are agreed with affected stakeholders.
- 1.6.2 Air quality modelling confirms reduced NO₂ and PM across most receptors, particularly through mode shift and clean fleet deployment. Dust suppression and odour control during works are embedded in construction strategy and meet policy thresholds under Policy SC/12 and Policy 36.

1.7 Planning Conditions and Delivery Protocols

- 1.7.1 A suite of planning conditions is proposed to secure biodiversity enhancements, flood risk controls, air quality safeguards, and operational management. These include pre-commencement approvals, restoration protocols, and monitoring arrangements. A joint Schedule is prepared with the Local Planning Authorities to ensure enforceability and consistency across topic areas.

1.8 Overall Planning Balance and Conclusions

- 1.8.1 The scheme results in limited heritage harm, moderate landscape effects, and unavoidable BMVL loss (circa 39ha). These residual impacts are weighed against substantial public benefits: unlocking thousands of new homes for development, enhancing sustainable transport access, reducing carbon emissions, and addressing congestion forecasts.
- 1.8.2 On balance, the scheme is judged compliant with the planning policy framework in principle and effect. The Green Belt impacts, while constituting inappropriate development, are clearly outweighed by public interest and strategic necessity.
- 1.8.3 The planning balance favours approval, and the scheme is recommended for deemed planning permission under Section 90(2A) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and confirmation of the associated Transport and Works Act Order.