

Cambourne to Cambridge Busway Consultation Response by Cambridge Green Party, July 2022



We submitted our response via the online form. Below are our key points. Given that we believe the entire concept of the busway is inappropriate, we did not comment on the questions relating to details of the proposals.

The Cambridge Green Party normally supports active travel routes being created and is generally strongly in favour of public transport, travel hubs and bus stops as they mean getting away from a culture reliant on the carbon-heavy car. Good public transport is part of our manifesto. However, we are opposed to this as part of the project of building of the busway because we are firmly against the Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) project for the following reasons:

- 1. A very significant point is that a less damaging and more effective alternative has been worked out and already presented to the GCP.** The Cambridge Green Party wholeheartedly supports the plan set out by Cambridge Past, Present and Future¹ which deals with the transport problem quickly, cheaply and without the damage to landscape, ecology and local community. We strongly recommend that the GCP follows this plan instead of ploughing through our green belt with their first idea which completely contravenes the county council's net zero commitments.

To summarise, Cambridge Past, Present and Future's report "Cambourne to Cambridge: In-Highway Proposals for High Quality Public Transport Scheme" reveals the following:

- Analysis of bus travel time data from 2019 reveals that there is no problem with outbound congestion west of the M11 junction: 99% of bus journeys are delayed by less than 2½ minutes.
- Congestion east of the M11 junction in both directions is typical for an urban road with multiple junctions, and tolerable until city-wide demand-management measures are implemented.
- There is minimal congestion inbound to Madingley Mulch roundabout (delays are mostly related to dwell times at bus stops).
- Congestion is a serious problem only inbound during the morning peak from Madingley Mulch roundabout to the M11 junction. Journey times are wildly erratic. Around 9am on the worst days, 5% (1 in 20) of inbound buses experience delays of 42 minutes or more.

Therefore, rather than investing a great amount of money to develop something entirely new and unnecessary, the report sensibly recommends that the existing

problems can be solved with the following adjustments. It focuses on measures that may be implemented relatively quickly to reduce delays to inbound buses from the Madingley Mulch roundabout to the Park & Ride junction. In their report, a package is recommended which includes 1,135m of bus lanes and other technical interventions which would reduce a 42- minute delay to under 10 minutes. They show that large improvements to bus journey times along Madingley Rd can be achieved relatively quickly with in-highway interventions. Buses to west, central and south Cambridge can run via any combination of the A428 and St Neots Rd to the Madingley Mulch roundabout, then take advantage of bus priority measures on Madingley Road. Buses to north and east Cambridge can run via the A428 and A14, taking advantage of the bus priority measure on the approach to the Girton Interchange.

The interventions they propose would fully satisfy the requirements in the Local Plan to enable and support development of Bourn Airfield and Cambourne West. They therefore achieve most of the benefits of the GCP Busway at a fraction of the cost, and therefore with a significantly higher benefit-to-cost ratio. They would also have much less negative social and environmental impacts.

Their proposal is a subset of Options 'Low Cost a/b' in the Options Appraisal Report, with some additions. Option 1 had an estimated cost of £32.6m (in 2016 prices) and a Benefit-Cost Ratio of 1.22, five times higher than GCP's preferred option at that stage. The recommended package is expected to cost well under £10m and to provide most of the same social benefits as the GCP option at a benefit-cost ratio in excess of 4.0, compared with 0.43 for GCP's option. Therefore, they recommend this package of 'quick win' interventions to the Greater Cambridge Partnership and Combined Authority as an effective and low-cost interim solution while the details of longer-term infrastructure schemes, such as East West Rail, the CAM network and the Girton Interchange, are worked out.

We ask the GCP to adopt the Cambourne to Cambridge: In-Highway Proposals for High Quality Public Transport Scheme Produced for Cambridge Past, Present & Future by Edward Leigh MA MSc, February 2021 which can be delivered using the existing highway corridor.

- 2. The project has high embedded carbon costs which misalign with and prohibit the council's carbon net zero target.** As quoted on the Cambridgeshire County Council's website: "Net Zero Cambridgeshire by 2045: Cambridgeshire communities and businesses to decarbonise by 2045. To improve all biodiversity across the council's estate by 2030. Understand and grow our Natural Capital account to benefit people and nature by 2025 and integrate this into the delivery of council functions by 2030."

3. **It will destroy precious green belt land amidst a climate and biodiversity emergency**, and this project goes against what Cambridgeshire County Council has committed to do in its Net Zero Cambridgeshire statement above. Cambridge Past, Present and Future has estimated that the building of the proposed busway would destroy 0.5-1.5 km of wildlife habitat: trees, meadows, scrub, orchards and hedgesⁱⁱ.
4. **Not least, it has been opposed by a significant number of Cambridgeshire residents so it doesn't have a democratic mandate.** For example, the Local Liaison Forum for the Cambourne to Cambridge busway scheme has opposed the scheme: *“Sensible and viable alternatives suggested by the Local Liaison Forum have been consistently whitewashed, and public consultations have been a box-ticking exercise. Now there appears to be an unseemly haste to rush the scheme through whilst people are in lockdown and cannot use the usual means to protest.”* (Helen Bradbury, Chair of the Local Liaison Forum for the C2C busway, 20th May 2020)ⁱⁱⁱ.
5. **Learning from the busway we already have, it has been found that repairs have drained millions from local taxes and that the design has safety flaws and service issues.** In 2017, Smarter Cambridge Transport, a voluntary community group seeking to advance integrated and sustainable transport for the Cambridge region took an interest in the Guided Busway because of the reported need for repairs costing at least £36.5m. They noted that the author of that report, Capita, considered the busway design to be flawed, so that was the starting point for their enquiry. Richard Cushing and Edward Leigh, the authors of the report, wrote: *“the work on this occasion should be a definite fix, rather than something which is repeated every few years. The monetary cost of £36.5m plus legal fees plus potential compensation to the operators may be recoverable on this occasion; if it is, it will likely be ‘a full and final settlement’. Local taxpayers will have to foot any future bill and suffer the disruption and loss of amenity while further repairs are carried out.”* Not only that, Smarter Cambridge Transport have also found^{iv} that *“whilst the wheel-on-kerb guidance may appear reassuring, there are reasons to doubt this, for example: A. Several accidents have occurred on busways in Cambridgeshire and elsewhere, most of which have been attributed to driver error. B. Vehicles have to slow down even at light-controlled intersections in order to reengage safely with the guideway. C. Buses cannot overtake an obstruction or reverse along the guideway. D. Vehicle breakdowns cause major delays and recovery is slow.”*

ⁱ Cambourne to Cambridge: In-Highway Proposals for High Quality Public Transport Scheme. February 2021. <https://www.cambridgeppf.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=19b623a9-920d-425e-b8bd-41f2c95dc0fd>

ⁱⁱ Cambridge Past, Present and Future, website article. <https://www.cambridgeppf.org/cambourne-cambridge-busway>

ⁱⁱⁱ Revised Cambourne to Cambridge busway route would still 'cause irreversible damage' says Local Liaison Forum. Cambridge Independent, 29 May 2020. <https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/revised-cambourne-to-cambridge-busway-route-would-still-cause-irreversible-damage-says-forum-9111515/>

^{iv} Smarter Cambridge Transport, 2017. Cambridgeshire Guided Busway defects. <https://www.smartertransport.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Guided-Busway-Defects-1p.pdf>