



The countryside charity
Cambridgeshire
and Peterborough

The Town Hall, Market Hill
St Ives, Cambridgeshire
PE27 5AL
www.cprencambs.org.uk
Tel: 01480 396698
Email: office@cprecambs.org.uk

Cambridgeshire County Council
New Shire Hall,
Emery Crescent,
Alconbury Weald,
PE28 4YE

Branch President
Christopher Vane Percy
Branch Chair
Alan James
Branch Vice-Chair
Jane Williams

20 March 2023

Letter sent by email to Council Chair and Vice Chair:

ken.billington@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

skindersley@hotmail.com

Copy to: County Council Members

Dear Councillors,

Ref: County Council Meeting 21st March 2023 – Agenda Item 7 – Cambourne to Cambridge Busway

CPRE Cambridgeshire & Peterborough objects in the strongest possible terms to the above application to the Council for their support to build an off-road busway between Cambourne and Cambridge for the reasons given below.

We recognise that it is very unusual for a letter such as this to be sent to full Council by ourselves but we are unable to attend the Council meeting due to professional commitments and there is no Planning Application associated with this item, so we are unable to address the officer concerned.

Reason for Construction and Cost Benefit Case: Having reviewed the associated GCP documentation it is clear that this proposal from the Greater Cambridge Partnership has little to do with improving public transport. The real reason and claimed major benefit is “Land Value Uplift”. In other words, to break up the countryside, including within the Cambridge Green Belt, for 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

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*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."*

So 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**.

This proposal is certainly not good value as a public transport scheme and it is not a great deal improved by adding in the notional land value uplifts of developments which would be much better served by a more flexible and better integrated approach to public transport.

This concentration of transport expenditure on Cambridge represents poor use of public money at a time when the County Council spending on highways and transport elsewhere in the county is so badly constrained.

Effects on Landscape and Ecology: We are appalled by the effect that this proposal will have on the landscape and ecology along the route.

High earth banks with tarmac or concrete topping will form ugly and unsightly intrusions upon the landscape.

They will cause tremendous damage to the local ecology all along the route, perhaps the best example of which will be the division of the largest traditional, ancient, orchard in the UK at Coton, very few of which remain. The loss of its biodiversity will be impossible to restore.

The UK Government recently signed an international biodiversity treaty which is committed to addressing biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. In 2019, Cambridge City Council pledged '*to provide leadership and to ensure that we work with partners and our communities to reverse the decline in biodiversity and deliver measurable biodiversity net gain within Cambridge and the wider region*'. This proposal appears to ignore those commitments.

This proposal will cause a further negative effect on the American Cemetery at Madingley, whose setting has already been severely damaged by the unsympathetic A14 flyovers to the north. The cemetery will become at additional risk if the break up of agricultural units to the south leads to applications for development there. Do not the 3,811 American war dead buried there, all of whom died fighting for the freedom we enjoy today, and the many thousands of visitors (many of them their descendants) who come every year, deserve more respect?

Effectiveness of Segregated Busways: Busways are not an effective way of maximising the use of bus services. The fixed routes mean that services cannot be adapted or changed as travel patterns develop and they are very costly to maintain. Furthermore, they are unable to serve any of the smaller communities that they pass by, without those residents driving to the nearest bus park.

CPRE has the advantage of the advice of a transport engineer who is a member of another branch who has worked globally on transport projects including busways. He has told us:

"Guided buses are used in a few places around the world but they have not caught on. I have used them in Rouen and Caen in France. Caen has since ripped them out and replaced them with a light rail scheme after experiencing many problems. The Rouen ones are guided by a white line whereas the Caen system used a single rail to guide and return power supplied by an overhead wire. Caen effectively spent its money twice over. Like most French cities, Rouen also has a light rail system. That was far better than its guided buses both in terms of capacity and ride.

In the late 70's I did a Highways and Transportation MSc and we had a visit to the fairly new Runcorn busway which was not guided but had a reserved track. This was planned together with the surrounding

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development. I believe it fell foul of bus-deregulation like the bus-rail interchange in Gateshead and it has also suffered from social problems and vandalism. Some sections have been abandoned."

In Cambridgeshire, we have seen similar problems and the high costs of maintenance with the existing busway which is now suffering from capacity constraints despite much of the community it was supposedly built to serve, Northstowe, remaining unbuilt.

Timing: We find it surprising to say the least that this proposal for bus-related infrastructure is coming forward now when the body which has the responsibility for bus service planning and funding right across the county, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, CAPCA, has only just completed a public consultation of its Draft Bus Strategy. A copy of CPRE's response to that consultation is attached.

The responses have yet to be finalised and the County Bus Strategy to be revised, confirmed and steps taken towards implementation.

This proposal therefore appears completely premature.

Need for an Integrated Approach to Public Transport: In our response to the CAPCA Draft Bus Strategy, CPRE made the point that something which is urgently needed is a plan for integrated public transport across and even beyond the county boundaries.

We will not repeat those arguments here. However, we think this proposal should not proceed until such integrated planning, which includes bus, rail, metro, cycling and walking, has concluded. See our response to the CAPCA consultation for more.

For example, we seriously question whether the GCP has properly taken into account the effect on travel numbers of the change in working practices that has occurred since the COVID pandemic. All integrated public transport planning needs to take this into account.

We also question whether the GCP has properly modelled the effect on car use and congestion of simply providing better bus services along existing highways with a mixture of stopping and express services and appropriate capacity vehicles.

Other GCP Proposals: CPRE notes that this proposal has been brought forward at the same time as proposals for a Congestion Charge within the city of Cambridge, and other busway projects. Clearly, these matters are linked and it seems likely that the GCP considers that they are inter-dependent and even that one facilitates the other, but has not clearly stated so.

These other proposals are as unpopular as this one and we would ask councillors to explore the relationships, before making up their minds.

Climate Change: CPRE is well aware of the climate crisis affecting the globe and locally, in particular the threat to the Fens and even the city of Cambridge, as the rate of sea level rise increases due to glacial ice melt in Greenland and Antarctica.

According to the Committee on Climate Change, manufacturing & construction, along with buildings, are second only to surface transport as major emitters of carbon dioxide. We therefore question how many years it will take to reach a balance between the reduction in carbon emissions arising from buses on the busway replacing car usage and the one-off emissions of building the busway instead of making better use of existing highways.

According to the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's greenhouse gas emissions are almost 25% higher per person than the UK average. The area will exhaust its carbon budget to 2050 in another four years and must therefore take the need for carbon emission reductions very seriously.

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Conclusions

CPRE is concerned that the reason for the current application is not better public transport but is purely financial with the core benefit being Land Value Uplift.

Even taking Land Value Uplift into account, this proposal has a weak financial case with at best Medium Value for Money.

CPRE considers that the effects on landscape and ecology of this proposal are totally unacceptable.

CPRE considers that the actual and potential effects of this proposal on the American Cemetery at Madingley are disrespectful.

CPRE believes that there is a growing body of evidence that segregated busways are not an effective means of cost-effective, flexible, public transport provision.

CPRE understands that CAPCA is the authority for planning bus service provision in the county and that this proposal is premature because CAPCA plans for bus service provision remain under development.

CPRE believes that the county needs and deserves an Integrated Approach to public transport planning, not the piecemeal approach that this proposal represents.

CPRE is concerned that if this busway is built it will be the council tax-payers of the County that will be left to pick up the ongoing high maintenance bills just as they have been with the existing busway.

CPRE considers that the relationship between this proposal and the proposed Congestion Charge and other busway projects for Cambridge should be investigated and clarified before this proposal goes forward.

CPRE is very concerned by the effect on greenhouse gas emissions of the major construction project this proposal predicates.

CPRE objects most strongly to this proposal.

Finally, please note that our submission is in respect of the current proposal and based upon available publications. While we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration in our role as a consultee, we are not a decision maker, therefore we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions and you should satisfy yourselves on any facts before reaching any decisions.

Yours sincerely

Alan James BSc.Tech., PhD, CITP, CEnv

Chairman – CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Enc. – CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Branch (CPRE) - Response to CAPCA Draft Bus Strategy Consultation.

cc. Anthony Browne MP
Mayor Nik Johnson



Bus Strategy Team
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
2nd floor, Pathfinder House,
St Mary's Street,
Huntingdon,
Cambs, PE29 3TN

24th February 2023

Ref: Draft Bus Strategy Consultation

Letter Sent by email to: contact@yourltp.co.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref: CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Branch (CPRE) - Response to Draft Bus Strategy Consultation.

We have read the information provided on your website and the associated document Bus Strategy Version 4 and response form. CPRE's comments are as follows.

Bus Strategy Vision

1 CPRE fully supports the bus strategy vision, in particular:

- Ensuring a fully integrated and planned public transport system
- Improving connectivity
- Encouraging travel to be sustainable
- Making bus travel economic, reliable, convenient and comfortable in order to attract people out of their cars
- Making bus travel affordable to everyone, particularly those living in rural communities who are forced to travel for goods, services and healthcare
- Cutting carbon emissions
- Integrated with cycling and walking improvements
- Protecting the environment
- Reducing pollution
- Tackling congestion
- Improving public health

Bus Strategy Aims

2 CPRE strongly agrees with the Key Aims and Objectives expressed under the headings in the Survey document of:

- Convenient
- Attractive
- Easy

To these we would add:

- Safe
- Improved waiting facilities such as weatherproof bus stops
- Convenient bus service interchanges
- Convenient interchanges with rail services

Delivering the Bus Strategy

- 3 CPRE strongly agrees with the four delivery principles expressed in the Strategy. However, we would also add a clearer commitment to increased investment through additional public funding in order to ensure that the strategy is kick-started and then, as usage increases becomes increasingly self-funding from fares.

Prioritising the Strategies

- 4 CPRE firmly believes that equal weight should be given to all of the seven options listed in the Survey. We would like to see bus services return to being the core of local transport both in towns and cities and in rural areas.
- 5 We do not see electric cars as a 'green' transport solution because of the carbon emissions caused during manufacture and the excessive reliance on scarce rare-earth elements and dangerous lithium batteries to enable their motive power. Therefore, we consider that bus services will play a key role in gradually replacing car transport and the need for public investment should be recognised.
- 6 CPRE believes that issues of Climate Change should be the single most important consideration in all aspects of transport planning and operation. The Annual Report to Parliament by the Climate Change Committee has consistently made the point that surface transport is the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK. Therefore, all transport planning should:
- a) seek to minimise all forms of travel by discouraging commuting and leisure travel and encouraging use of digital communications,
 - b) where travel is essential, encourage active travel and/or use of public transport,
 - c) provide carbon efficient forms of public transport, particularly light rail and heavy rail on the most heavily used routes.

Integrated Transport Planning – Other Comments

- 7 CPRE considers that CAPCA should continue to engage pro-actively with Network Rail to ensure integration between bus and rail service interchanges and the planning of services in order to minimise transfer times.
- 8 CPRE considers that the rail network around and beyond Cambridge should provide the core of integrated public transport, including Metro services.
- 9 CPRE is however very concerned that despite their statutory obligations, neither CAPCA nor Network Rail have complete joint management and financial control of the development of an integrated transport plan for Cambridgeshire.
- 10 It is totally unacceptable that East-West Rail, EWR, should be operating as a separate entity, planning a railway route designed not to serve passengers but to maximise the breaking up of the countryside to enable development. CPRE supports a 'northern' route for EWR which would; enable it to be fully integrated into the local public transport network as the provider of local metro services, facilitate the re-opening of the Colne Valley line to Haverhill, Sudbury and Colchester and enable the conversion back to rail of the existing Guided Busway, thus saving the County Council millions in annual maintenance costs and the extension of metro services to Huntingdon and Alconbury Weald.
- 11 CPRE is extremely concerned by the activities of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, GCP, in relation to public transport. The GCP activities appear to be completely isolated and have no concept of integration of services or co-operation with other authorities, particularly CAPCA. It is CPRE's understanding that CAPCA has responsibility for bus service planning in the county and the GCP need to be strongly reminded of this. It should be CAPCA which is managing the large sums of public money which the unelected GCP is attempting to spend on schemes which the public do not want and which will not be cost effective.

- 12 CPRE is totally opposed to the three busway proposals of the GCP which are designed to break up the countryside for development rather than to provide cost-effective bus services. CPRE is particularly concerned by the impact of these proposals on the Green Belt and its productive farm land. If every bus takes 40 – 60 cars off the road, what exactly is the need for millions of pounds to be spent on busways when CAPCA are proposing a sustainable alternative?
- 13 It is CPRE's understanding that it is CAPCA which now has planning and financial responsibility for bus service provision across the county and CPRE would like to see CAPCA take firm control of its responsibilities and make its integrated service ambitions very clear indeed to the unelected GCP whose proposals will lead to local authorities facing millions of pounds annually in ongoing maintenance costs.
- 14 CPRE is totally opposed to the GCP proposals for car-parks in the countryside as a means of accessing bus services. This will discourage the provision and use of properly planned and integrated bus services and encourage additional car use.
- 15 In Peterborough, CPRE sees the recent announcement by government to fund improvements to the central railway station as an opportunity to improve rail/bus integration at the station. CPRE would welcome the close engagement of CAPCA with this project.
- 16 CPRE supports CAPCA in its efforts to invest in re-opening rail services to Wisbech and would also welcome this investment being integrated with improved bus services for the rural community around Wisbech. We would prefer investment in this project to further investment in upgrading the A47.
- 17 CPRE would encourage the use of appropriately sized vehicles for rural bus services in areas of lower population density. It is not climate-friendly to run 60-seater double-deck buses through rural villages.
- 18 CPRE would encourage CAPCA to investigate the possible use of "post-bus" services in rural areas as are provided in other regions of the country such as the Lake District and parts of Scotland.

Conclusions:

- CPRE welcomes the Combined Authority' Draft Bus Strategy.
- CPRE would welcome the Combined Authority taking full control of the planning and delivery of public transport in the county. This includes Cambridge City.
- CPRE considers that the most important considerations in public transport planning are the delivery of an integrated plan which provides least climate change effects and an affordable, frequent, safe and comfortable public service.
- The Draft Bus Strategy is compatible with the "Every Village, Every Hour" campaign by CPRE nationally, a copy which Executive Summary report is enclosed. CPRE will willingly assist CAPCA in achieving its bus strategy if it can.

Finally, please note that our submission is in respect of the proposed strategy and based upon available publications. While we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration in our role as a statutory consultee, we are not a decision maker, therefore we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions and you should satisfy yourselves on any facts before reaching any decisions.

Yours faithfully,

Alan James BSc.Tech., PhD, CITP, CEnv

Chairman

CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Branch

Enc. Every Village, Every Hour – Executive Summary