

## **A proposal for a busway through the Parish of Madingley does not make sense in a post-pandemic world, and violates an International Agreement between the UK and USA**

### **First things first**

The East-West Rail plans need to be finalised and agreed before any additional or complementary mass transit systems are designed. If there is to be an efficient rail link from St. Neots and Cambourne to Cambridge there should be no need to take away yet more agricultural land for a special busway.

### **Current thinking about Cambridgeshire's future belongs in the pre-pandemic past**

All of the thinking to date about solving traffic problems in the locality belongs to history. Even after vaccines arrive, irreversible changes in working patterns and their associated mobility needs will have happened. Much more office work is being done from home and this will continue for many industries and occupations. Consequently, the need for office space is likely to decline, and preparations to convert offices into dwelling space are already being investigated. This seems both sensible and helpful. We should be doing all we can to reserve agricultural land for feeding a growing population in a more sustainable way and preserve the countryside we have left -- principally to maintain biodiversity but, also significantly, to provide amenities for the well-being of local populations. If anything, we should be increasing areas of biodiversity.

The accelerating change brought on by the pandemic demonstrates that society is reacting to new realities and if this reduces the encroachment of housing onto good agricultural land it has to be a good thing. But what's important to remember is that the chronic traffic congestion generated by pre-Covid work-patterns will be less of a problem in the future. Bus services may therefore be fine on existing, less-congested roads. Perhaps fleets of much smaller electric buses might be the answer, and city-centre schools -- responsible for so much of the term-time congestion in the past -- should be obliged to provide electric buses to ferry the majority of children needing transport to and from school.

### **Historical amnesia rules**

When the various busway/metro route options were investigated in 2015/16, one route went through the Madingley 800 Wood (adjacent to the ancient Madingley Wood) and through the fields to the north of the American Military Cemetery. Two thousand five hundred and thirty-five people from around the world signed a petition against this idea<sup>1</sup>. Both Historic England and Natural England were against it, as well as the University of Cambridge.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/the-greater-cambridge-city-deal-protect-madingley-wood-and-the-cambridge-american-cemetery-from-the-greater-cambridge-city-deal-and-cambridge-bold>

Rejection was based on:

- environmental reasons (noise and air pollution)
- ecological reasons (The woods form a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) and are the subject of unique, long-term research within several Departments of the University of Cambridge, including Zoology, Botany, and Archaeology)
- short and long term financial costs
- and crucially, breaking an International Agreement between the British and American Governments made when the site for the American Military Cemetery was chosen.

The American Cemetery in Madingley is the most significant permanent American WWII memorial in the UK. In 1943 the site was donated “in perpetuity” by the University of Cambridge and it was selected for its beauty and tranquillity on a hill overlooking fields. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in a letter to the then US Ambassador to the UK in 1954 promised that ‘the area ... will be restricted to agricultural use’. For this reason the A428 had to be put in a cutting, adding significantly to the cost to that project. The views from the cemetery were not to be spoilt by roads.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership commissioned a report from the University to assess the environmental impact of routing the busway through the 800 Wood. This report showed just how much native flora and fauna had already begun to migrate from the ancient Madingley Wood into the 800 Wood.

In 2016 the GCP “Following high level assessment and public consultation” rejected the northern route. However they later felt it should be re-examined in order to be certain. Reasons to reject a busway through Madingley are summed up in the technical notes (May 2019) drawn up by Mott Macdonald, working for the GCP:

“A route north of the A1303 is restricted due to various constraints, including listed buildings such as the Grade I Madingley Hall and its grounds which include a number of other listed buildings, the American Cemetery and Madingley Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Whilst the SSSI could be avoided, the alignment would have to pass close by the SSSI and would be likely to have an impact on the view from, and setting of, the American Cemetery (a heritage site with national significance and the only permanent American World War II military cemetery in the British Isles). Historic England have stated they would be concerned about any scheme impacting the setting of the cemetery. Natural England have voiced similar concerns regarding the SSSI.

The land north of Madingley Wood SSSI (the Eight Hundred Wood) has been planted up to be an extension of the SSSI woodland. To avoid directly impacting the SSSI the only possible route would be through this newly planted area. Natural England would almost certainly object to an alignment in this area as they have stated they do not favour any scheme that increases traffic around or near to the SSSI.”

## **What's actually being 'proposed'**

The new - entirely speculative - northern route, which leaves Cambourne on the A428, first enters Madingley by Highfield Farm, crossing fields beyond Granary Court before crossing the A428 (presumably on a new bridge) and then cuts across the 800 Wood before crossing Cambridge Rd next to Trinity cottages and continuing through fields in full view of the cemetery before requiring another bridge to cross the M11 into Cambridge (exactly where isn't clear, but possibly into Eddington).

## **Some implications of this**

Madingley already suffers from noise pollution from the A428 and the noise of a regular bus service would significantly disturb the owners of Trinity Cottages on Cambridge Road (already the houses in the village most affected by the A428 noise), but potentially those at the end of Church Lane, too. The point at which the imagined busway would cut across Cambridge Road is just over the brow of a hill and hazardous on that account, especially if buses were given priority to cross the road.

The '800 Wood' was created in 2009 by the University to celebrate its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary and has benefitted the residents of Madingley, the surrounding villages and Cambridge, young and old. A busway would destroy the peace and seclusion that the wood was always intended to provide.

An additional concern is that the busway envisaged would not be 'guided'. It would simply be another tarmac road, with the potential to be widened in the future.

## **The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority**

At a meeting of the Transport Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) on 4 November 2020, the Mayor discussed his 800 Wood route proposal (described as the 'preferred indicative route') with the aim of formally ratifying it and forcing it onto the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) for adoption. Despite the fact that Mayor Palmer had no support at the meeting he still believes he can find sufficient support for the proposal to become reality.

Curiously a CPCA report affirmed, "This is a proposal for an alternative route which will require considerable further exploratory work and consultation with the public before the route can be approved. It is provided to give some transparency on the discussions between the CPCA and the GCP."

But in fact exploratory work has already been done. Extensive research was undertaken by the GCP before they dismissed a northern route through Madingley, not only for the reasons already mentioned but also for the increased cost when compared to alternative routes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/asset-library/imported-assets/C2C%20LLF%20Technical%20Note%20Northern%20Route%2022-05-2019.pdf>

### **Summing up...**

Madingley Parish Council supports neither a southern route through Coton nor a northern route crossing the A428 near Madingley on a bridge and cutting through woods and fields adjacent to the American Military Cemetery. Nor does it support speculative 'plans' to dig a tunnel for a busway mid-way between Coton and Madingley, because of the huge costs involved: financial, environmental, and geological. "Out of sight" is not the panacea it appears to be!

Once again we must lament the lack of connectivity at the Girton Interchange between the A428 and the M11 going south which would have allowed buses to move freely between Cambourne and places of work around Addenbrooke's. Where possible we should be using existing roads (altering them if necessary) and not creating new ones.

We are currently living in a time of dramatically altered work patterns, some of which will undoubtedly affect the way we travel in the future. This is not a time to carve up more of our countryside to meet pre-pandemic traffic patterns but an occasion to reflect on what the mobility needs of the post-pandemic future are likely to be, and to consider what sensible (and sensitive) approaches to meeting those needs might be.

Madingley Parish Council  
November 2020