

Date: 22 January 2018  
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Dear Ms Heller

### **Cambourne to Cambridge Better Bus Journeys Phase One consultation**

Thank you for consulting Natural England on the above in your email dated 13 November 2017.

You will be aware that Natural England provided comments at the earlier options stage of this scheme, in our letter dated 12 October 2016 (ref: 197667).

Please note that our comments below only apply to the proposed route between Madingley Mulch roundabout and Cambridge. We are not aware that route options from Cambourne to Madingley Mulch roundabout form part of the current consultation. Natural England will expect to be consulted on the rest of the proposed route in due course.

It is also important to note at this stage that the level of detail provided for the proposed route options is too indicative for us to provide any detailed comments or advice. Based on the detail currently available Natural England is unable to make any judgement regarding likely impact of the proposed options. This is particularly the case with respect to on-line route options A and B which are located in very close proximity to Madingley Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Further plans should clearly indicate the boundary of the SSSI in relation to detailed route options.

Traffic modelling / air quality screening should be undertaken for the different route options, to inform the assessment process and preferred route selection. This will be particularly important in assessing potential impacts on the sensitive ancient woodland habitat of Madingley Wood SSSI. This is located within the 200m screening distance<sup>1</sup> for air quality impacts associated with road schemes.

As mentioned previously we are supportive of the aims of the scheme to achieve improved connectivity and reduced congestion between residential and employment areas while improving the quality of life in Greater Cambridge. Natural England is pleased that potential impacts on the natural environment have been given better consideration. Whilst we welcome preparation of an environmental constraints map we are aware that a number of locally designated wildlife sites have been omitted from the plan. These should be included and given appropriate consideration through this and future phases of scheme development.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/135001>

## **Route Options A and B**

The route plans do not show the boundary of Madingley Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the supporting habitat of the adjacent 800 Wood. Options A and B are located in close proximity to this nationally designated site and proposals could have an adverse impact, through direct and indirect effects, on the notified features of the ancient woodland. Potential impacts are not considered in the route descriptions.

Route option A appears to be an on-line scheme involving widening of the transport corridor to the north. This would bring the road corridor closer to the boundary of Madingley Wood SSSI. This option therefore appears to pose the greatest risk of direct and indirect impact to the SSSI. The strip of land between the existing road corridor and the SSSI provides an important habitat buffer which protects the SSSI from adverse effects associated with the road corridor including traffic emissions, contamination, noise, lighting and access.

The nationally important and sensitive habitats of this site are very limited in extent and isolated from similar habitat; consequently this habitat and dependent species are extremely vulnerable to environmental change through the effects of development. Natural England will not support any project likely to have an adverse impact on this designated site or buffering habitat. Detailed ecological assessment will need to demonstrate that any project will not have an adverse impact on this site through direct or indirect effects. Ancient woodland is particularly sensitive to changes in air quality associated with transport schemes hence detailed assessment will need to include consideration of air quality impacts on Madingley Wood SSSI.

Natural England advises that options / proposals should seek to reduce the amount of traffic passing close to the SSSI as far as possible. We would also welcome consideration of proposals to deliver an enhanced habitat buffer between the road corridor and Madingley Wood, to reduce traffic related adverse effects to the SSSI and thus provide benefits for wildlife.

Route option B appears to be an on-line scheme involving widening of the existing transport corridor to the south. This scheme is therefore located slightly further from the boundary of Madingley Wood SSSI than Route A and should therefore pose less risk of direct impact to the woodland. Nonetheless our comments and advice relating to Route A apply similarly to Route B.

## **Route Option C**

This off-line route option appears to be sufficiently distanced from designated sites and therefore unlikely to have any adverse impact on these. Potential indirect impacts will need to be assessed in detail.

We are aware of the presence of a number of locally designated wildlife sites, not indicated on the route plans or discussed in the route descriptions, with the potential to be adversely affected by proposed development. This includes potential direct impact to Coton Path Hedgerow County Wildlife Site (CWS) and impacts to several City Wildlife Sites. The plans should be revised to show these sites and potential impacts should be assessed to identify an appropriate route that avoids these sites of local biodiversity importance.

This route also includes Priority Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and areas of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land (Agricultural Land Classification grades 1 -3a).

Any further development of Route C should ensure that impacts to CWSs and other locally designated sites and Priority Habitat are avoided. Proposals should also seek to prioritise development on lower grade agricultural land, to protect higher quality land, as far as possible.

## **Park & Ride options**

Natural England does not have specific concerns with either of the proposed options as these are unlikely to affect key interests within our remit. However, we would wish to see details of traffic modelling and air quality assessment to be satisfied that proposals will not have any adverse effect

on nearby designated sites.

**Other comments**

A scheme of this scale should deliver significant biodiversity net gain, in accordance with paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Further consultation should include proposals for ecological enhancement including creation of green infrastructure / corridors and ecological networks – implemented and managed to make a valuable contribution to local Biodiversity Action Plan targets and Green Infrastructure Strategy<sup>2</sup> objectives.

Natural England will be pleased to provide further comments on proposed route options following the preparation of additional information to address our advice above.

I hope these comments are helpful. For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Janet Nuttall on 0300 060 1239. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondence to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Janet Nuttall  
Sustainable Land Use Adviser

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<sup>2</sup> Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (Cambridgeshire Horizons 2011)