



Coton Busway Action Group (CBAG)

To: C2Caudit@sharedintelligence.net
From: Coton Busway Action Group (CBAG)

Audit of the Cambourne to Cambridge Better Public Transport project on behalf of Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) – Second submission by CBAG

The Coton Busway Action Group represents the views of and acts for residents of this necklace village within the Cambridgeshire greenbelt. CBAG understands and supports the need for better transport links in Cambridge and the surrounding areas but opposes the proposed off-road busway. It is non-political.

We submitted our preliminary comments on this scheme on 19th March 2021 and a copy is attached as **Appendix B**.

Our detailed comments are now contained in a version of the Assumptions and Constraints document published on the GCP website on 25th March which is attached as **Appendix A**. In order to reduce the volume of paperwork we have only included those paragraphs of the Assumptions and Constraints document on which we have made comments.

In summary, our principal objections to the off-road busway are as follows:

Environmental

1. The off-road busway is environmentally very destructive, carving a 15-meter-wide tarmac road through one of the highest points and most admired views in Cambridgeshire yet without offering a material improvement in journey times. An on-road solution could be as effective in reducing journey times. An alternative route via Girton was rejected by the GCP without proper consideration. Such a route would preserve the prominent greenbelt landscape on Madingley Hill which forms part of the setting of the American Cemetery and protects it from urbanisation.

Connectivity

2. The off-road busway does not get people to where they want to go. The proposed route ends up at Grange Road in the residential area in the West of Cambridge. The main employment centres are on the fringes of the City – Addenbrooke's Hospital and the Bio-Medical Campus (BMC) in the South, the West Cambridge site and the Science Parks. It would be a monumental failure of purpose to build a transport system which does not take people to where they need to go.

3. The proposed construction of East West rail (with a station at Cambourne offering fast transport to Cambridge South station which is adjacent to Addenbrookes and the BMC) totally undermines the business case for the busway. The speedier rail connection will significantly reduce passengers and revenue for the busway. We do not need two infrastructure projects serving one route.
4. The GCP has failed to take account of the implications of a four-way interchange at Girton. This upgrade and the recent cancellation of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway would dramatically reduce traffic on the A428/A1303 coming into Cambridge and remove the need for an off-road busway.

Economic

5. An on-road solution can be built at a fraction of the cost of the off-road proposal but would offer comparable journey times.
6. The claimed Wider Economic Benefits for the off-road busway are based on assumed better journey times and reliability. The reality is that a well-designed on-road solution can offer virtually the same journey times and reliability so the WEB would be the same in each scenario.
7. The GCP has claimed that the off-road busway is an integral part of the Local Plan adopted by South Cambridgeshire in September 2018. The Local Plan did not in fact stipulate that there had to be a segregated off-road busway.
8. The MCAF score favouring the off-road option is highly subjective.

Failure of process

9. The failure of the GCP to properly engage with the LLF and local communities is disappointing as is their refusal to give proper consideration to valid alternatives.
10. Whilst none of us know the long-term impact on commuter numbers and transport patterns following COVID-19, we believe it is unwise to make a decision on a £160m plus project before seeing how commuter behaviour changes. In the meantime, a very low-cost system of priority bus lanes and bus gates would offer a perfectly acceptable on-road short term solution.

In conclusion, the construction of a £160m off-road busway would most probably be a complete waste of money if a faster and more reliable train service along the same route were available. In any event, an on-road solution could be implemented at a fraction of the cost of the off-road proposal and which would offer the same benefits in terms of quicker journeys and reliability. The GCP has simply not made the case for spending upwards of £160m on an environmentally destructive off-road busway through the Green Belt that does not take people to where they want to go.

We would be happy to elaborate on any of the points made in this letter and our attached submission.

Dr Marilyn Treacy

Chair of Coton Busway Action Group.