

Cambourne to Cambridge busway and active travel scheme: Madingley on-road bus lanes and delivery of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

Background

The note provides a summary of the work which has been undertaken to identify a feasible alternative Cambourne to Cambridge (C2C) scheme along Madingley Road which would be compatible with the requirements of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, and which would, provide a viable long-term alternative to the Cambourne to Cambridge busway.

Initial planning context – the submitted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2014

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan was submitted for examination in March 2014. It covers the period to 2031 and sets out the proposed planning context for the future development of the South Cambridgeshire area over that timeframe, in accordance with statutory requirements.

The draft Local Plan included significant proposed development along the Cambourne to Cambridge corridor, including development sites at West Cambourne, Bourn Airfield and West Cambridge. The plan also included proposed infrastructure requirements to support the sustainable delivery of the plan.

Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire 2014

The Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire¹ (TSCSC) was prepared in parallel with the local plans for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire and sits alongside the adopted Local Plans of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. Within the TSCSC, the strategy for the St Neots and Cambourne to Cambridge corridor centred upon:

¹ www.scambs.gov.uk/media/11028/transport-strategy-for-cambridge-and-south-cambridgeshire.pdf

- The over-arching approach will be to intercept as many car-based trips as possible before they reach Cambridge, through the creation of an attractive high quality passenger transport system.
- In the short to medium term, the focus will be on providing bus priority in locations where buses currently get caught up in congestion, in particular between the A1303 and A428
- Creating a High Quality Public Transport (HQPT) corridor along the corridor will deliver segregated bus links on the A1303 or on an offline alignment between the A428 and the M11.
- In the longer term, a busway or HQPT bus infrastructure will be introduced along the A1303 section of the corridor to completely segregate buses from other traffic. It will service a second Park & Ride site between Cambourne and the A1303, which will intercept traffic further out from Cambridge and free up more capacity at the existing Madingley Road site which would then be used principally for traffic coming off the M11

Cambourne to Cambridge bus and active travel scheme – business case development

The Cambourne to Cambridge scheme commenced development in 2015. The option development considered both on and off-line routes, including the Phase 1 Consultation undertaken in 2017/18. As the scheme was developed towards the Outline Business Case stage, options were refined to an off-road option south of the existing A428/A1303 which, whilst substantially amended, forms the basis for the current preferred option. A low-cost alternative, based on on-line improvements, was also developed as required by Department for Transport guidance.

A further on-line solution based on the use of tidal flow was also developed at the request of the local stakeholders. These are described below and were documented in the 2017 End of Stage Report².

The low cost on-line option provided minimal infrastructure improvement west of Madingley Mulch roundabout and, to the east, comprised sections of inbound bus lane running between Madingley Mulch Roundabout and Lady Margaret Road to the east of the M11. Due to the constraints at Junction 13 the bus lane was not continuous and

² www.greatercambridge.org.uk/asset-library/Sustainable-Transport/Public-Transport/Cambourne-to-Cambridge/C2C-End-Of-Stage-Report-Sept-2017.pdf

terminated before the M11 Junction 13 Bridge, where buses would join general traffic. Walking and cycling facilities on Madingley Road would remain largely unaltered from the current provision, as there is insufficient width to improve them if bus lanes are to be provided.

The other on-line option was a community-based option that was developed through close engagement with the Local Liaison Forum (LLF) based on their suggestions. This began on the A428 eastbound off-slip where a bus lane would be provided for buses to bypass general traffic and reach the give-way line at the Madingley Mulch Roundabout quicker. It then comprises of a central tidal bus lane which runs between Madingley Mulch Roundabout and High Cross to the east of the M11. This option would require the installation of approximately 19 gantries along the A1303 in order to manage traffic through the tidal system.

Following the 2017/18 consultation, the Option Appraisal Report 1, which forms part of the Outline Business Case, recommended the best on-line and off-line alternative to be taken forward for further consideration³. These were based on the schemes taken to consultation.

The on-line and off-line options were then assessed further in Option Appraisal Report 2⁴, which concluded in December 2018, that an off-line option for Phase 1 was better performing and was taken forward as the basis for consideration.

Planning context – the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

In parallel to the above appraisal process, the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan was adopted following publication of the Planning Inspectors' report on 29/8/18.

Policy SS/7 (Bourn Airfield) of the adopted local plan requires the delivery of a comprehensive movement network including significant improvements to public transport. In particular, the local plan site allocation policy requires the following public transport measures:

³ www.greatercambridge.org.uk/asset-library/Sustainable-Transport/Public-Transport/Cambourne-to-Cambridge/C2C-OBC-Jan-2021/C2C-OBC-2020-Options-Appraisal-Report-Part-1-Appendix-A.pdf

⁴ www.greatercambridge.org.uk/asset-library/Sustainable-Transport/Public-Transport/Cambourne-to-Cambridge/C2C-OBC-Jan-2021/C2C-OBC-2020-Options-Appraisal-Report-Part-2-Appendix-B.pdf

- i. Provision of a segregated bus link from Cambourne to Bourn Airfield new village across the Broadway, and on through the development to the junction of the St Neots Road with Highfields Road;
- ii. Any measures necessary to ensure that a bus journey between Caldecote / Highfields and the junction of the A428 and the A1303 is direct and unaffected by any congestion suffered by general traffic;
- iii. Provision of high quality bus priority measures or busway on or parallel to the A1303 between its junction with the A428 and Queens Road, Cambridge

Policy SS/8 (Cambourne West) also requires that the development will provide for additional travel demands along the A428 corridor, with the development needing to address a range of measures including the following:

- a) Any measures necessary to ensure that a bus journey between Cambourne West and the junction of the A428 and the A1303 is direct and unaffected by any congestion suffered by general traffic;
- b) High quality segregated bus priority measures on the A1303 between its junction with the A428 and Queens Road, Cambridge;
- c) Direct, segregated high quality pedestrian and cycle links to west Cambridge, Papworth Everard, Caxton and Bourn;
- d) The impact of the proposals on the junctions of the A428 with the A1303 and the A1198 will be assessed in detail and contributions towards or direct funding of improvements to the junctions may be required;
- e) Delivery or funding of any measures required to mitigate the traffic impact on Bourn, Caldecote, Toft, Comberton and Barton;

The Inspector's Report into the soundness of the Local Plans explicitly references the Cambridgeshire LTP and the Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The policy requirements for high quality public transport access were part of the Inspectors' consideration of the soundness of the plan (with their requirement for early review of the Local Plans being prompted by challenges over the delivery of the HQPTC).

Whilst the Inspectors Report was produced too late to influence OAR1/2, its conclusions on the soundness of the site allocations at Bourn and Cambourne West rest upon the delivery of a high-quality public transport route in line with the TSCSC and the site-specific local plan policies.

The Cambourne to Cambridge project has subsequently been developed by GCP to deliver the TSC&SC requirements, i.e a High Quality Public Transport corridor, and to meet the requirements in the Local Plan policy for both Cambourne West and Bourn Airfield effectively.

Further consideration of on-road options

Following extensive representation from the Local Liaison Forum and other stakeholders GCP revisited the On-Road option in a further technical note⁵. That note reiterated what was established at the development of options for the end of stage report. Specifically that at constrained points on the corridor, such as Madingley Wood SSSI and the American Cemetery, it would be impossible to provide bus lanes in both directions and that at other locations even an inbound bus lane could not be provide alongside an improved cycle route – this would not constitute a High Quality Public Transport corridor as outlined in the TSC&SC and the Local Plan.

Independent audit

The Independent Audit⁶ of the business case and scheme development process, undertaken in early 2021 reviewed not only the GCP scheme details but a wide range of representations from stakeholders. The Audit endorsed the approach and scheme conclusions.

Conclusions

The GCP has assessed both on-line and off-line solutions for C2C in line with DfT guidance. The process has concluded that the on-line solutions that could be developed would not fulfil the requirements of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This assessment was revisited in a subsequent Technical Paper and the process undertaken was scrutinised, and endorsed, in an Independent Audit.

⁵ www.greatercambridge.org.uk/asset-library/Sustainable-Transport/Public-Transport/Cambourne-to-Cambridge/C2C-LLF/C2C-LLF-Technical-Note-Madingley-Road-Quick-Wins-14-05-2019.pdf

⁶ www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/public-transport-schemes/cambourne-to-cambridge/cambourne-to-cambridge-independent-audit