

Update on Better Ways than Busways Campaign

BWTB is campaigning against a greenbelt busway in S Cambs around Magog Down, advocating instead for an alternative route following the A1307 corridor which would deliver the same benefits but at a fraction of the cost. We've had another busy month...

Parish Council/South Cambs District Council (SCDC) Cabinet Liaison meeting

I attended a Parish Council/South Cambs District Council (SCDC) Cabinet Liaison meeting and asked a question on protecting the environment and the carbon cost of the new road. The response from the Leader of the SCDC, Cllr Bridget Smith, was that SCDC are providing homes and decent transport for working families. In the process she failed again to recognise that all the Cambridge SE Transport (CSET) objectives can be achieved with a better route. No answer was forthcoming to the point about the poor economic benefit and the fact that Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) is expanding towards the alternative route proposed by BWTB along the A1307 corridor.

GCP Executive Board Q&A

A number of us attended in person the GCP Executive Board meeting on 30 June. Noteworthy that that Cllr Brian Milnes, our own County Councillor, voted to progress CSET in its current route. We asked several questions and responses by the GCP Officer are set out below.

Q1: CSET was designed to fit with the former Mayor of the Combined Authority's Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM). This meant that it had a much higher specification including segregated lanes so that it could be part of an integrated regional transport system. Given that this scheme has now been dropped, will the GCP review the scheme against an optimal scheme in the A1307 corridor?

A1: CSET is a standalone scheme. The route decision predated CAM.

Q2: The 2018 consultation was skewed because only one off-road route was offered as opposed to two on-road (A1307) schemes, thus splitting the votes for the on-road option. By contrast, Anthony Browne MP's consultation (with more respondents than for the GCP's) showed that 81% would definitely not, or probably not, support the GCP busway. In light of this, will the GCP have regard to overwhelming public opinion and review their route?

A2: GCP followed guidance on consultations.

Q3. Over recent years there have been several studies of the Haverhill-Cambridge corridor, all showing a stronger business case than CSET. The business case will be further weakened by the imposition of safety speed limits and additional crossings such as for the Rangeford retirement village, whereas a route through the proposed CBC expansion along the A1307 will improve the on-road business case. Will the GCP therefore reassess the business case for all three strategies and make public the outcome of that reassessment?

A3: The GCP complies with its statutory requirements. The full business case will be presented to the Board later.

Q4: CSET poorly serves the villages and undermines existing bus services; it has an adverse impact on the Countryside Park; and it conflicts with the construction of Cambridge South Station.

A4: CSET meets the criteria set out in the Local Plan. Assertions about benefit-to-cost ratios are inaccurate. Following Local Liaison Forum feedback, the route will serve the villages as well.

Q5: The busway will now separate the new countryside park from the retirement village. Where is the compatibility with the Planning Inspector's finding, in granting the planning appeal for the retirement village and associated country park as one unified project?

A5: The busway was included in the Planning Inspector's decision and the GCP have had dialogue with the developers since.

Impact of the Rangeford retirement village on the busway

The busway must now carve through the countryside park and around the retirement village, and hence two alternative busway stop locations in Stapleford are now open for consultation.

Misleadingly, the GCP consultation states that Option 2 (the slightly cheaper route) has the bus stop nearer the village: all of 10 metres! What they don't point out it is that Option 2 creates a triangle of land which developers are already earmarking for housing. Issues over access to the countryside park from the retirement village (particularly for older people with mobility issues) and environmental damage are also ignored. The GCP's consultation closes at midday on 22 August. Your opinion will count so please respond: www.greatercambridge.org.uk/CSET-Stapleford2022.

Better Ways than Busways website

A lot of work has gone into a Better Ways than Busways website, which will be ready to launch shortly. This will hold all the relevant reports and images and be the focus of fundraising, with a direct link to Cambridge Past Present & Future's website. CPPF has responsibility for holding the finances for the campaign. A poster and leaflet campaign is being planned to link people to the website. In the meantime, look out for www.bwtb.co.uk.

Meeting the GCP Exec Board

We have a meeting arranged with the GCP Executive Board (first requested at the beginning of February 2022), albeit Cllr Bridget Smith Leader of South Cambs is unable to attend.

Mayor of Combined Authority consultation

The Mayor's consultation on the Local Transport Plan closes 4 August. The last section gives an opportunity to state that the current busway proposal is misguided and that there are better alternatives which will not undermine existing bus services. It is very important that lots of responses are made at: <https://yourltcp.co.uk/vision-and-objectives/>.

Next steps

The timetable suggests that we need to get our case formally presented to the Planning Inspector by summer 2023, so preparations for this, coupled with a fundraising campaign, will get underway this autumn. If you would like to be kept informed, please contact me.

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