

# Waterbeach to Cambridge Consultation 2020

*Submission from South Cambridgeshire Green Party (SCGP)*



Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Waterbeach to Cambridge transport route. Since the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) is not considering detailed route proposals at this stage, our comments focus on overarching concerns.

## **1) Potential impacts on Waterbeach village**

We have concerns that taking the route through Waterbeach would have significant negative impacts on the village. Residents are understandably alarmed that three of the proposed routes appear to require the demolition of homes and destruction of allotments and valued wildlife habitats. A petition to rule out any option that results in homes being demolished has so far (as of 4 December) garnered over 1500 signatures. South Cambridgeshire Green Party (SCGP) support the requests made in this petition. Concerns have also been raised (for example at the webinar on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, attended by members of SCGP) that the scheme could worsen congestion on some roads within the village, and that the suggested location of new bus stops would be too far away from the majority of houses in Waterbeach. In the absence of detailed route proposals, it is not possible to rule these concerns out, or to meaningfully compare the costs and benefits of the four proposed ‘areas of interest’.

## **2) Whether there is a need for a new segregated transport route**

We welcome the stated intention to improve public transport and active travel options for the communities to the north of the city, thus providing alternatives to car use. We do not, however, agree that a new busway is necessarily the most efficient or effective way to achieve this. The financial and environmental costs of constructing a new bus route are high. On the other hand, improvements to rail capacity in the area are already underway. Smarter Cambridge Transport has proposed an alternative approach whereby each railway station would become a hub for high frequency bus services, a network of protected cycleways, and plentiful, secure cycle parking (<https://www.smartertransport.uk/a-vision-for-waterbeach-transport/>). We agree that this option could serve more people at a lower cost than the proposed new segregated route.

## **3) Lack of joined up planning**

We are very concerned at the apparent piecemeal approach to development in our region. The consultation is “assessing the very broad picture of where this route should begin and end”. We contend that the starting point for any proposed transport project should be an assessment of need. A proposal recently brought forwards by Cambridge Sports Lakes Trust (<http://www.cambridgesportlakes.org.uk>) includes “a busway linking Waterbeach to

Cambridge North station”: it is not clear how that project (if it goes ahead) would relate to the GCP proposals currently being consulted on. There is also the question of the proposed A10 dualling. In the GCP consultation FAQs, it is acknowledged that although “there is a clear relationship between the two projects”, the Waterbeach to Cambridge project is being developed “independently of plans for dualling the A10”. This point came up at the 2<sup>nd</sup> November webinar. According to our understanding, the GCP response was that the two projects could not be considered together simply because the A10 project was funded from central government while the proposed busway was not. There also seems to be a focus on making all new transport schemes serve the proposed Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro scheme, although the details of the latter have yet to be set out.

### **Summary**

It seems that transport (and other development) projects are being brought forward according to which projects are politically favoured. What we need is coherent and overarching transport planning for the region which takes us towards the goal of net zero carbon emissions. Before the Waterbeach to Cambridge project progresses further, we call for an updated assessment of transport need in the area, taking into account all changes including current and proposed rail and road projects, housing development and changes to ways of working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. If a need for increased transport capacity is identified, options for improving existing public transport and active travel links should be considered alongside building a dedicated new route.

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*Response prepared by Ellie Crane, South Cambridgeshire Green Party, December 2020.*



# **Green Party**

*South Cambridgeshire*