

Greater Cambridge Partnership

By email to:

consultations@greatercambridge.org.uk

14/12/2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Wandlebury Country Park
Cambridge CB22 3AE

Phone 01223 - 243830

www.cambridgeppf.org

Cambridge Eastern Access Consultation

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxtton Watermill.

We have considered the proposals and consultation material that you have produced and below is our response:

1. Options N1-N3

Having looked at the carriageway widths it seems to us that Options N2 and N3 could involve cutting down a row of mature trees. Information has not been provided to say whether that would, or would not be the case. We are deeply concerned that the consultation material does not make clear to people that to achieve some of these options could require concreting over some of the highway verges, which would include cutting down trees. Surely the GCP has learnt the lessons from Histon and Milton Roads, where proposals to widen the carriageway and cut down the trees met with fierce opposition and resulted in significant changes to the proposals and delay to the projects.

It is essential that people have all the information on which to base decisions, ie that they might have to choose between a buslane and trees. Getting people's views on this would also ensure that you are better informed to develop the scheme to the next stage.

Assuming that options N2 and N3 would result in the loss or damage to mature trees we object strongly to these options.

There are a wide variety of trees along Newmarket Road, some of them are large and contribute significantly to the public realm and will also provide ecosystem services such as shading, urban cooling and mitigating air pollution. Some trees are young and as yet do not provide the benefits of their older relatives, but they were planted with the intention that they would do so. Some trees are mature but of smaller varieties and although their contribution to the public realm and ecosystem services may be lower they are still important. The public realm along Newmarket Road is not good and so the roadside trees are important. We would accept that any recently planted trees could be (re)moved providing that they are replaced by young trees of similar size but we

would object to the cutting down of any fully grown trees, which would appear to be contrary to the City Council Tree Canopy Project. We would encourage you to consider opportunities for additional tree planting along Newmarket Road.

The highway verge between Airport Way roundabout and the Park & Ride has a significant colony of Bee Orchids and other botanical interest. Ecological surveys would be required to assess the impacts of widening the highway verge in this location and are likely to require the creation of new compensatory habitat nearby.

2. Options E1-E2

The roundabout is in a significant location from the point of view of public realm and urban design. Most importantly it is the visual gateway into the centre of the city from the north (looking south along Elizabeth Way Bridge). The present roundabout design is not helpful but there are trees which provide some greenery and that provide ecosystem services, these trees will grow larger over time and so will their positive impact. Your project must seize the opportunity it presents to significantly improve the public realm and visual gateway – this is not just a highway project and requires high quality urban design and architectural skills. We urge the GCP to employ such skills on this project before going any further. Neither of the options presented in this consultation look like they can achieve what is needed and without visualisations it is impossible to judge. For example we would be concerned that option E2 would create a giant area of tarmac as the visual centrepiece.

If the GCP does not have the appetite or budget for such a project then we would suggest that one of the options you should consider is to retain the subway for those who wish to use it (and that efforts are made to improve attractiveness, safety, signage, etc) and that surface crossing is provided for those who would prefer to wait at signals.

We make the observation that for active travel users, waiting on a traffic island in 4 lanes of traffic is never a positive experience and ideally they should be able to cross a junction in one go.

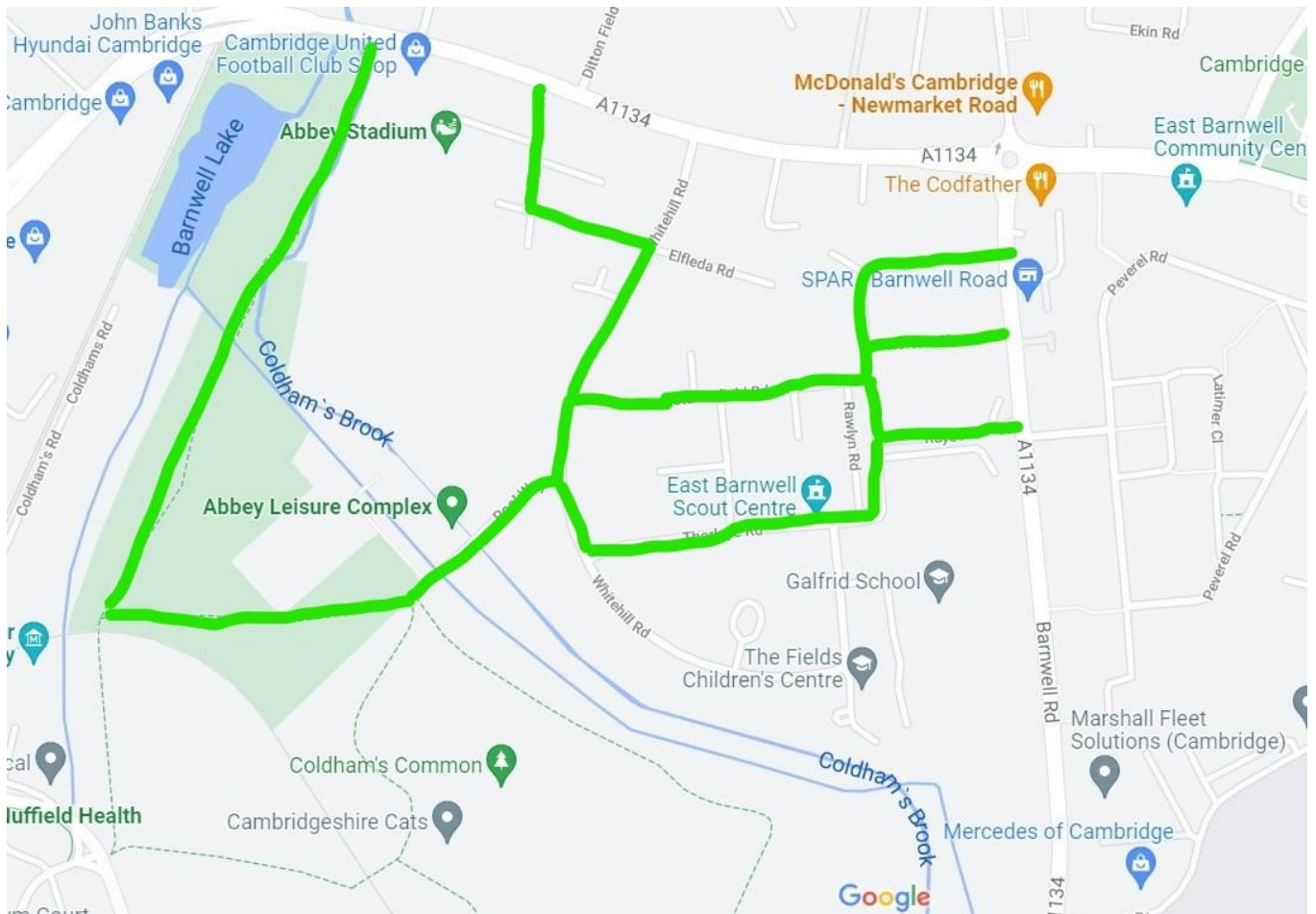
3. Options B1-B2

The roundabout is in a significant location from the point of view of public realm and urban design in relation to the regeneration aspirations for this location. The present roundabout design is not inspiring but it does have vegetation which helps to visually ameliorate the impact. Your project must seize the opportunity it presents to significantly improve the public realm – this is not just a highway project and requires high quality urban design and architectural skills. We urge the GCP to employ such skills on this project before going any further. Neither of the options presented in this consultation look like they can achieve what is needed and without visualisations it is impossible to judge.

The main problem at this junction is the McDonald's Drive Thru which cannot cope with the level of demand and results in traffic backing up along Wadloes Road and over the roundabout. Queuing traffic from Wadloes Road then blocks traffic from other arms, causing gridlock. Buses are stuck in that traffic contributing to delays in public transport, journey times and reliability. The current layout enables some traffic to get past this gridlock (eg turning left from Ditton Road into Newmarket Road (west) or turning left into Ditton Road from Newmarket Road (east), etc). Option B1 would remove these options and therefore increase grid-lock unless the McDonald's problem can be resolved. The solution clearly lies with the McDonalds problem and we are aware that you are considering what can be done about this.

This roundabout and the adjacent stretches of road are very poor for cyclists, whilst efforts to improve this must be welcomed, we would also encourage you to consider alternatives that might prove more attractive to some active travellers, especially cyclists who do not like busy roads and junctions. For example there are routes on residential roads that could be used (see below). It would be relatively inexpensive to carry out some road improvements and provide signage and road markings to indicate that these are cycle routes. I live locally and know that many people use the "backstreets" or the cycle route across Ditton Meadows as alternatives to Newmarket Road. Speaking with my neighbours, their view was that they would still not use Newmarket Road if

cycle improvements were made and they would continue to use the alternatives, which are not only more traffic free but also more attractive and enjoyable.



4. Options P1-P3

4.1 General principle

We strongly oppose the proposal to move the Park & Ride for the following reasons:

- It is in the green belt. Under national planning policy a green belt location could only be justified if there was no alternative. As there is already a P&R site, there is clearly an alternative. If increased capacity is needed at the existing Park & Ride then this could be achieved through multi-storey and by providing an additional traffic filter lane along the A1303 so that vehicles do not have to queue to reach the Park & Ride.
- It is further away from Cambridge and therefore less attractive for Park & Cycle than the current P&R site.
- Park & Ride encourages car journeys and competes with public transport (thereby reducing patronage, which in turn reduces service frequency, which in turn reduces patronage, etc). A more environmentally sustainable approach is to support better public and active transport from surrounding areas – as now proposed by the GCP and C&P Combined Authority.
- Park & Ride encourages car journeys and therefore a new large P&R will result in an increase in carbon emissions. This has been recognised in the planning application for the Hauxton/M11 P&R. This is not compatible with zero carbon planning.
- Why is locating the P&R in the Airport development not being considered (the roundabout could be relocated within the development in order to provide a P&R to the east of a roundabout)? We note the arguments given as to why a P&R next to the A14 roundabout is not being considered but these do not hold

any water given that the Milton P&R clearly operates on the same basis. If the GCP wishes to go ahead with a P&R relocation we would urge you to think again about other locations.

4.2 Ecological Sensitivity & Risk

Adjacent to the proposed location of the Park & Ride, to the east and south is an area of nationally significant ecology which is very sensitive to disturbance. The location of a Park & Ride in this location creates a significant risk which must be avoided. We have visited the site with you to show you this sensitivity and which you seem to understand.

It is impossible to gauge from the consultation material the precise locations of the options in relation to existing field boundaries and therefore it is difficult to give a fully informed opinion on them.

In order to avoid the risk of harm any Park & Ride should:

i. Be located as far as possible from the ecological receptors, ie close to Airport Way roundabout. There is a triangular field which would achieve this and also has the advantage that it is bounded by trees and would therefore prevent the P&R from having a damaging impact on the landscape and on the views from the ecological receptor. We believe that the P&R should be confined to this location, if necessary creating two-storey parking in order to provide additional space (the trees are of a height that should screen this). This is a green belt location and a P&R would cause harm to the green belt, so limiting the impact to an area no larger than necessary will be a planning consideration.

ii. There is a risk that a Park & Ride is used as a car park for people to gain easy access to the ecological receptor. Should this happen then recreational disturbance would likely have a negative impact on nationally important ecology, which would be a planning consideration. For this reason we recommend that the designs for any P&R do not facilitate access to the surrounding countryside. Restricting the Park & Ride to the triangular field would be one way to help achieve this.

In addition, the highway verges around Airport Way roundabout have a significant colony of Bee Orchids and other botanical interest. Ecological surveys would be required to assess the impacts of widening the highway verge in this location and are likely to require the creation of new compensatory habitat nearby.

4.3 Preference

We object to all the Park & Ride options presented and especially Option P3. If the GCP wishes to continue to pursue a Park & Ride in this location then we would like to see an option developed which uses only the triangular field in order to minimise harm to nationally significant ecology and the green belt.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely



James Littlewood, CEO