

To: James Palmer, Mayor Cambridge & Peterborough

Cc: Lewis Herbert, Chair Greater Cambridge Partnership
Ian Bates, Vice Chair Cambridgeshire County Council
Aidan Van Der Weyer, South Cambs District Council
Phil Almendinger, University of Cambridge
Claire Ruskin, Cambridge Network
Heidi Allen MP

From: Howard Kettel, Chair Stapleford Parish Council (SPC)
Mike Nettleton, Chair Great Shelford Parish Council (GSPC)

Date: March 2019

Dear James

Cambridge South East Mass Rapid Transit route (MRT)

We write on behalf of SPC and GSPC regarding the MRT. Both Parish Councils recently passed motions as follows:

"The Parish Council resolves to press the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Combined Authority / elected Mayor to consider carefully and evaluate the costs and benefits of alternatives to their Strategy 1 Mass Rapid Transit route between Granta Park and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. We ask that they make a fuller appraisal of alternative routes and transport modes, including the proposal from Cambridge Connect to follow the alignments of the existing Cambridge to Liverpool Street rail line and of the former Haverhill rail line."

The public consultation in 2018 was professionally, but missed an important option. We believe that either MRT or light rail is probably the most appropriate solution for the SE Cambridge corridor (we are agnostic on the delivery method). However, we do believe that the public consultation should have included a fourth option (or variant on strategy 1), which is to use the route of the former Haverhill rail line North of Sawston and that this option was discounted at too early a stage. The reasons for looking at the fourth option fall under the following headings and are presented in more detail at the end of this document:

- Costs
- Usage patterns
- Environmental impact

We would be very happy to meet to discuss these concerns.

In summary, we request that GCP commission a short project to look into the issues we have raised and the viability of reusing the Haverhill line. We believe that such a project should take no more than 2-3 months to decide whether there is merit in looking at the Haverhill line in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Howard Kettel

Mike Nettleton

Costs

The route of the MRT North of Sawston is still indicative. However, it is almost certain that the route will pass through a swathe of environmentally sensitive Green Belt land. It will also cross three busy road commuter routes – Granhams Road, Hinton Way and Haverhill Road. It is thought unlikely that traffic light controlled junctions for a high density, high speed MRT with those three roads would be acceptable.

We believe therefore that, for both environmental and traffic management reasons, the MRT will require extensive tunnelling, deep cuttings, bridges etc. We do not know the likely level of costs, but suspect it would be hundreds of millions.

If the Haverhill line were to be used instead, the major challenge would be what to do in the centre of Great Shelford. As we have stated above, we are agnostic regarding whether trams, light rail or whatever run on the line. Whichever solution is chosen, it is almost certain that it would require an additional one or two tracks or roadways (assuming the new route cannot share the existing twin line WA rail route). There probably isn't room to increase the existing two lines through Great Shelford to three or four and there are two level crossings at Granhams Road and Station Road which are overloaded with the existing signalling equipment. We believe it would be necessary to put the existing WA lines and the new lines in a tunnel under Great Shelford, probably from the area of the current London Road bridge to the far side of the Granhams Road crossing. It is likely that a new underground station would be required. This looks high cost, but the length of tunnelling required is likely to be much shorter than for the existing MRT proposal. It would free up a significant amount of prime brownfield land for development, which would defray some of the costs. There would also be significant incidental benefits:

- Removal of the level crossings at Granhams Road and Station Road, which are significant current pinch points.
- Creation of an interchange between WA and the MRT outside the City centre.
- The possibility of an interchange with the proposed Sawston transport hub.

Usage Patterns

As stated above the route of the MRT North of Sawston is still indicative. However, the MRT is unlikely to be of any benefit to villages North of Sawston, because it is too far out of those villages to be usable. Rather residents will continue to use the current WA service or the Citi7.

Reusing the Haverhill line, with an interchange station in the centre of Great Shelford would immediately make the services accessible to most local residents.

Environmental impact

Again, as stated above, the route of the MRT North of Sawston is still indicative. However, it is almost certain that the route will pass through a swathe of environmentally sensitive Green Belt land. Our view is that the impact of the MRT will be unacceptable without extensive tunnelling and/or deep cuttings to hide it. It is also likely to create the potential for a development corridor in the Green Belt along its route, which would be immensely damaging to the character of the two villages.

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