

## **Statement on the City Deal from Cambridge Past, Present & Future**

The City Deal has come in for considerable public criticism over its plans to improve public transport in the Greater Cambridge area. Is this warranted? How can the City Deal improve its performance and enhance its public reputation?

This statement sets out CambridgePPF's position on the City Deal. Although we support its overall aims and objectives, we have serious reservations about the approach it has adopted. We suggest a number of practical steps to improve its performance, with specific reference to the growing controversy over the Cambourne to Cambridge bus route.

1. CambridgePPF believes that the City Deal provides the opportunity to address the infrastructure deficit that risks jeopardising the further prosperity of the City and South Cambridgeshire. The infrastructure investment provided by the City Deal has the potential to alleviate problems of housing costs and availability, employment provision, traffic congestion, and skills development, all essential components for sustainable long-term economic growth.
2. CambridgePPF endorses the decision of the City Deal to focus its investment primarily on public transport. With house prices driving lower paid, and even mid-range, workers to live a distance from the city, the resulting commuting congestion risks the recruitment of businesses and skills and thus our continued economic prosperity.
3. The City and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans up to 2031 are predicated on a spatial planning strategy of keeping Cambridge as a compact dynamic city surrounded by its tightly bound Green Belt, and locating essential housing outside the Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire. CambridgePPF agreed a Statement of Common Ground with both Councils in 2014 endorsing this strategy but with the proviso that its viability depended on the creation of adequate public transport links connecting the new housing with the emerging centres of employment around the city fringe. The City Deal is the mechanism to provide these transport links.
4. If the transport links were deemed to be insufficient by the Planning Inspector at the ongoing Examination of the Local Plans, then the Plans would be rejected. The consequences could, in CambridgePPF's opinion, be highly detrimental in that a number of speculative major developments for urban extensions around the city fringe in the Green Belt would come forward. Although these would most likely be rejected by the Councils, there is a strong possibility that at least some would gain approval from a planning inspector. We would then end up with unplanned and uncoordinated development around the city fringes in the Green Belt.

However our support of the principle for the City Deal is tempered by serious reservations about its approach. To improve its performance, CambridgePPF calls on the City Deal:

1. To widen its thinking beyond its obsession with buses and bus-lanes. We agree that the priority must be given to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, but other modes of public transport must be part of its remit. If any city in the UK can come forward with exciting and innovative ways of addressing the universal problem of urban congestion, it ought to be Cambridge, but the City Deal seems to be stuck with a focus on engineering solutions for new bus-lanes. Non-polluting shuttle buses, driverless buses, light rail, even the use of tunnels beneath the city, should all be part of its thinking. The City air quality already on occasion breaches both European and UK legal pollution limits, so increasing the numbers of large polluting buses in the city centre will simply make a bad situation worse.

2. To address the problem of city-wide congestion before focusing on specific arterial roads. The City Deal needs to adopt a more holistic approach to tackle traffic management across the whole city and to break away from its current piecemeal project-by-project approach to deliver a more strategic joined-up vision. Driving bus-lanes cross-country or down urban arterial roads should be the option of last resort once other means of reducing congestion have been tried.
3. To ensure that its decision-making gives equal consideration to the social and environmental implications of a project as to the economic factors. In CambridgePPF's opinion, decisions are being made in a rush with insufficient consideration given to the broader sustainable development issues early in the design stages. Options that would cause unacceptable social or environmental harm are being allowed to progress as serious alternatives. A multi-disciplinary planning team that includes city planners, urban designers, and landscape architects could help counter the emphasis on road engineering and ensure that better balanced proposals were presented for public consideration.
4. To take a more long-term and less rushed approach to its decision-making. CambridgePPF appreciates the urgency for spending the first tranche of money if the second tranche is to be released, but this need does not justify the approval of projects that could cause long-term harm to the fabric of the city and its setting. A more measured approach, with the early input of affiliated disciplines, leading to a more constructive public debate is required.

Applying these principles to the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge bus route, CambridgePPF stresses the following points:

1. The scale of new housing proposed along the A428 corridor out to St Neots and the A1 (some 10,000 new homes by 2031) necessitates a major improvement to the public transport and traffic flows approaching Cambridge from the west. However, congestion across the whole city should be addressed before the piecemeal tackling of specific bottlenecks like Madingley Hill. If congestion could be cut by 20% (the target proposed by the City Deal itself through its City Access and Peak-Time Congestion package) is such a heavy engineering solution as the proposed Cambourne-Cambridge cross-country bus road actually needed?
2. A 2014 report by Mott MacDonald showed that some 20% of traffic descending Madingley Hill on the A1303 in the morning rush-hour is actually wanting to turn south onto the M11 at J13. The re-design of the Girton Interchange (J14) into an all-ways junction would relieve the A1303 of this traffic. This should be an elementary improvement.
3. Before agreeing to any cross-county bus roads, the City Deal Executive Board must satisfy itself that on-road options have been thoroughly examined. CambridgePPF is concerned that the premature rejection of the on-road option for the A1303 by the County Council could influence the impartiality towards its belated inclusion as a realistic option.
4. This lack of impartiality has already made itself manifest with the rejection of J13 as a possible crossing point of the M11 on the grounds that the bridge did not have the capacity to accommodate dual bus-lanes as well as the existing traffic with an adequate pedestrian and cycle path, only for this position to be rapidly reversed with the emergence of a 2015 consultants' report that the bridge with some modification did indeed have sufficient capacity.
5. If the City Deal insists on pursuing a new bus route, then CambridgePPF supports the option for on-road bus route with a Park & Ride at Scotland Farm (Hardwick) and believes that the appraisal for this option should be pursued positively ("what is needed to achieve it").
6. Driving a new cross-country bus route across the side of Madingley Hill and the West Field is manifestly unacceptable on social and environmental grounds. This option would never have been allowed to progress as a serious consideration if adequate multi-disciplinary analysis had been undertaken before any public consultation.

7. Similarly, any decision to site a Park & Ride car-park that will be floodlit at night on top of Madingley Hill, one of the most prominent landscape features in South Cambridgeshire and adjacent to a woodland of SSSI status, would be tantamount to environmental vandalism on the part of the City Deal.
8. Any decision by the City Deal Executive Board must first go through the planning application process before any work can begin. Planning applications must be assessed in accordance with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, which stresses that development projects must conform to the principles of sustainable development. This means giving equal weighting in the decision making to social and environmental factors as to economic matters. This requirement should be front-of-mind for the City Deal Executive Board when considering its preferred option.