

TITLE: COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE GREATER CAMBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP'S MAKING CONNECTIONS 2022 CONSULTATION

Committee: Council

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1.0 ISSUE

1.1. To agree a submission to the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) Making Connections 2022 consultation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1. Members are requested to agree the submission to the GCP attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1. The Making Connections 2022 consultation is part of the GCP's City Access programme to improve the way that people and vehicles move around the city, whilst reducing congestion and improving air quality.

3.2. The proposals include:

- Transforming the bus network: From mid-2023, the GCP is proposing to change the bus network through more services to more locations, with cheaper fares set at £1/£2.
- Investing in other sustainable travel schemes: Alongside the bus network, the GCP are proposing to invest in new sustainable travel schemes, such as better walking and cycling links.
- Creating a Sustainable Travel Zone: The GCP are proposing the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone in the form of a road user charge on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council. Vehicles would be charged for driving within the zone between 7am and 7pm on weekdays, and money raised would fund improvements to the bus network and other sustainable travel schemes. The Zone would be fully operational in 2027/28 but only once the first bus improvements are introduced.

3.3. At the Full Council meeting held in April 2022 East Cambridgeshire District Council passed a Motion opposing congestion charging in Greater Cambridge.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSION(S)

4.1. The Council agrees that a better public transport system to ensure that most people have a quicker, more convenient and reliable journey than by car is

needed, but the Council has concerns regarding the delivery of the proposed Future Bus Network and its long term sustainability, in particular the proposals for Demand Responsive Transport in rural areas. These are set out in Appendix 1.

- 4.2. The hourly service for most areas and limited Demand Response Transport (DRT) resource for more rural parts of the District does not provide a comprehensive bus network that offers a genuine and attractive alternative to private vehicle for the residents or businesses of East Cambridgeshire.
- 4.3. The Council supports the aim of making public transport, cycling and walking the obvious choice for most people. The Council does not believe that road charging has been proven to be necessary and believes that the GCP, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and all partner organisations across Cambridgeshire should focus on early delivery of multiple small improvements as well as accelerating work on larger projects that can and will encourage people away from vehicle use.
- 4.4. At its Full Council meeting in April 2022 East Cambridgeshire District Council agreed a motion opposing congestion charging in Greater Cambridge and upholds that decision.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT STATEMENT / CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.
- 5.2. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required.
- 5.3. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) not required

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: East Cambridgeshire District Council's Response to the Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections 2022 Consultation.

Background Documents:

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 April 2022.

Consultation materials available on the GCP website:

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/city-access-programme/making-connections>

**East Cambridgeshire District Council's Response to the
Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership's Making Connections 2022 Consultation**

East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) supports the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) aim of making public transport, cycling and walking the obvious choice for most people. It reflects work that the District Council is already undertaking through its Corporate Plan and its Environment Plan to facilitate improved active travel and public transport infrastructure. We are aware of the positive environmental impacts and improvements to air quality and health that such improvements bring.

The Council recognises that not everyone can use public and active travel transport options and that many people need to make regular complex journeys.

The GCP proposals for scheduled bus services for East Cambridgeshire residents to access locations within the Sustainable Transport Zone (STZ) are insufficiently frequent to provide the realistic and attractive alternative that is necessary to make using public transport the obvious choice.

The GCP proposals essentially offer three tiers of public transport to East Cambridgeshire residents:

- Two Key Bus Corridor services (operating hours: 5.00am to 1.00am)
- Connecting Rural services (operating hours: 5.00am to 1.00am)
- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) (operating hours: Monday to Friday 6.00am to 10.00pm, Saturday unknown, Sundays and Bank Holidays 8.00am to 8.00pm)

A majority of residents in East Cambridgeshire do not live on, or near to, the two Key Bus Corridors proposed for the district.

For the minority of residents in East Cambridgeshire living on, or near to, one of the two Key Bus Corridors, services to Cambridge are proposed at a frequency of two per hour (Ely, Little Thetford, Stretham) or hourly (Littleport, Stuntney, Soham, Fordham). Residents able to use these services that are accessing destinations in the STZ that are not on the same service route face one or more changes of bus. The overall frequency levels proposed are not sufficient to make this a realistic or attractive option. Even for people undertaking 'simple' journeys the frequencies proposed are insufficient. For people making 'complex' journeys the frequencies proposed are unrealistic.

For residents in East Cambridgeshire living on or near a Rural bus service, services to a connecting Key Bus Corridor are proposed to run hourly. Residents able to use these services face multiple changes of bus – one change from the Rural service to the Key Corridor service, followed by one or more changes to access destinations within the STZ (unless the destination happens to be on the Key Corridor service route). The overall frequency levels proposed are not sufficient to make this a realistic or attractive option.

For the thousands of residents in East Cambridgeshire that do not live on, or near to, either a Key Bus Corridor or a Rural service, travel via Demand Responsive Transport is proposed. Residents able to use DRT to access a Rural service or a Key Bus Corridor service face multiple changes of bus – for example, one change from DRT to a Rural service, a second change from the Rural service to the Key Corridor service, followed by one or more changes to access destinations within the STZ (unless the destination happens to be on the Key

Corridor service route). The frequency levels proposed, coupled with the complexity and unpredictability of DRT make this an unrealistic option.

It is not yet clear if DRT services are planned to offer door to door pick up / drop off, or whether they will be limited to specific pick up / drop off points. If specific pick up / drop off points are proposed, this will reduce the numbers of people in rural locations that will be able to use DRT services.

DRT services are proposed to have reduced operating hours compared with scheduled bus services, thereby reducing the overall public transport offer for these residents. DRT services do not offer precise timing, meaning they are an unrealistic option for reliable connections to scheduled bus services.

Some residents are not able to use any of the options proposed. Not everyone can use public or active travel transport and rely on their car to be able to access employment, education and services in and around Cambridge.

Many companies, particularly those that require the transportation of equipment and materials or carry out deliveries are unable to use public or active travel transport to conduct their business. These businesses are vital to the economies of East Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire and should not be disadvantaged by the imposition of charges. The Council is concerned that no business impact work appears to have been undertaken by the GCP and considers that this is vital before any decision is made.

Older, disabled and vulnerable people are less likely to be able to use active travel or public transport. They are also more likely to suffer social isolation and economic disadvantage. The Council notes that the GCP has produced an Equality Impact Assessment Draft Report and an Initial Draft Health Impact Assessment and welcomes this.

The Council is concerned that the proposed operating hours for both Key Bus Corridor services, Rural services and DRT services do not represent best use of public funds and are unsustainable.

The Council has concerns about how achievable delivery of the proposed Future Bus Network is and its long term sustainability, particularly in relation to DRT services. What guarantees are offered regarding continuation of services that may be considered to be (comparatively) underutilised in the future?

A lack of resources will undermine the frequency and reliability of DRT services, making them unsuitable for time sensitive and complex journeys. It will also negatively impact the ability to deliver reliable connectivity to onward public transport services by bus or rail. Unlike a scheduled service, there is no guarantee of a regular service or a DRT bus being available in a timely manner.

It is not clear from the consultation materials how the funding and the DRT buses will be allocated throughout the 9 proposed DRT Zones across the county. The Council is concerned that the proposals for DRT coverage are flawed. The 12 buses proposed to cover the 9 DRT zones are wholly insufficient to provide a quality service with a half hour pick up service standard. The £3m proposed spend on DRT services across the county is insufficient. The Council is concerned that the GCP proposals have not catered for the complexities or costs of running DRT services.

Operating DRT services in geographies that also offer scheduled services is complex, and whilst it is possible to work towards integration, the Council is concerned that these issues have not been thought through or presented in the proposals, and that DRT services could

undermine existing scheduled bus routes that do not form part of the Future Bus Network as well as those that do. More work is required on this aspect of the proposals.

The Council is particularly concerned that the Addenbrookes and Papworth Hospitals site (also earmarked for a new Cancer Hospital and a new Children's Hospital in the future) is included in the STZ, as well as other major employment sites on the outskirts of Cambridge.

The Council has concerns regarding the timetable for decision and delivery of the Future Bus Network and the proposals as a whole.

The GCP proposes a decision by Spring/Summer 2023 followed by an immediate (although phased) start to implementation. The Council is concerned that this does not suggest genuine consultation as it fails to cater for full and proper consideration of the consultation responses and further opportunity for consultation following changes to the proposals. This is unrealistic and unreasonable given the scale, scope and complexity of the plans.

Any proposed changes to bus services should be compatible with the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and the second iteration Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to be produced by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). CPCA has not yet discussed or responded to the GCP proposals and does not have a settled funding strategy for either the LTCP or the BSIP. The CPCA is the Transport Authority in Cambridgeshire; these crucial 'parent' documents, setting out the future of transportation across the county must be in place and fully considered before decisions about the GCP plans are taken.

The Council supports the introduction of credible attractive alternatives to the car and agrees that a better public transport system and active travel options are needed; the Council understands that this requires both capital and sustainable revenue funding.

The Council does not support the introduction of road charging to fund the GCP proposals.

The GCP should work with the CPCA to develop the LTCP and the BSIP that will attract government funding to the area; the Council is fully committed to supporting this work.

The GCP should work with the CPCA to introduce franchising (or an alternative arrangement which delivers the outcomes of franchising) and this work should be accelerated; the Council is fully committed to supporting this work.

The GCP should work with the CPCA to deliver further investment in active travel, rail and e-mobility, both within Greater Cambridge and across Cambridgeshire.

The GCP proposals refer to funding cycling and walking infrastructure improvements in Greater Cambridge, but are silent on whether any funding is allocated to other parts of the county. The Council has adopted its own district wide Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy with the aim of making it easier and safer for East Cambridgeshire residents to walk and cycle shorter journeys rather than to drive, and believes there is significant potential to encourage people to use active travel options for onward travel into Cambridge.

The GCP should work with the CPCA to rapidly pursue two railway projects, the Snailwell Loop (Newmarket Curve) and the doubling of the track project, that have the potential to significantly improve rail services through Soham and Newmarket. The GCP should support the CPCA efforts to lobby for delivery of the Network Rail North Ely Area Capacity Enhancement scheme which will maximise the benefits arising from the Snailwell Loop and the doubling of the track projects.

The GCP should also continue its work to increase train services on the Cambridge - Newmarket - Ipswich line as soon as possible.

The Council supports the aim of making public transport, cycling and walking the obvious choice for most people. The Council does not believe that road charging has been proven to be necessary and believes that the GCP, the CPCA and all partner organisations across Cambridgeshire should focus on early delivery of multiple small improvements as well as accelerating work on larger projects that can and will encourage people away from vehicle use.

At its Full Council meeting in April 2022 East Cambridgeshire District Council agreed a motion opposing congestion charging in Greater Cambridge and upholds that decision.

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