

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE GUIDED BUS
(Report by Head of Environment & Transport)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire County Council formally served notice of their Transport and Works Act (TWA) Order application, relating to the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus (CGB), on 19 February 2004.
- 1.2 This report invites Cabinet to consider a response to the application and updates Cabinet on the process for dealing with aspects of the CGB not subject to the Order.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the CGB proposals have been developed in response to the requirement for improved public transport between Huntingdon and Cambridge, identified by CHUMMS.
- 2.2 The District Council was instrumental in securing a route within Huntingdon that extended beyond the town centre to the railway station and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.
- 2.3 The TWA Order will provide the County Council with the authority to construct the guided sections of the route (principally between St Ives and Histon but including sections within Cambridge City) including the necessary planning consents and associated powers to compulsorily purchase land. The period for submitting objections to the application runs until 2 April 2004. Unresolved objections will be considered at a public enquiry, probably in September/October 2004.
- 2.4 Essential to the success of the project, but not formally part of the TWA application, are a range of measures on existing public highways to improve journey times and reliability of the CGB service. These will be subject to approval by the Huntingdonshire Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee.

3. TRANSPORT & WORKS ACT ORDER

- 3.1 The TWA Order application comprises a substantial volume of material including outline technical proposals, land acquisition plans, impacts on existing rights of way and a comprehensive environmental statement. The environmental statement includes consideration of the on-highway proposals.
- 3.2 Two aspects of the application have been explored further with the County Council. These relate to –
 - detailed design issues in respect of the St Ives Park and Ride site; and
 - the opportunity to improve pedestrian and cyclist access from Fenstanton to the guideway and hence St Ives.

- 3.3 Issues at St Ives Park and Ride site include the need to provide layover facilities for local buses in order to release land at the existing bus station and allow it to be included in any future redevelopment at the eastern end of the town. St Ives is developing as a destination for group travel and the site also provides an opportunity to create tourist coach parking. Finally, a cycleway/bridleway will be created along the route linking St Ives to Cambridge. The routing for cyclists through the site requires further attention in the detailed design stage.
- 3.4 An existing footpath (Footpath 12) links Fenstanton to the route of the guideway. The County Council have been asked to consider improving this link to provide better access from the village to the Park and Ride site and St Ives town centre.
- 3.5 It is not considered that the issues raised in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 above would provide the basis for a sustainable objection to the TWA Order. The County Council has also indicated a preparedness to enter into discussion on these issues during the detailed design of the project.

4. PROPOSALS BETWEEN HUNTINGDON AND ST IVES

- 4.1 The essence of the CGB is that it is an open system and that operators with buses meeting the quality standards will be able to develop a range of commercial routes throughout Huntingdonshire which eventually feed into the guideway at St Ives for the final leg to Cambridge. At this point in time, however, works are only proposed to enhance services running from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, through Huntingdon town centre and along the A1123 to St Ives where they join the guideway.
- 4.2 The following paragraphs outline the key measures and associated issues in respect of the route from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to St Ives.
- 4.3 Hinchingsbrooke Hospital is a key destination for both workers and patients and the CGB services will significantly improve public transport access to the site. The adjacent residential development also will potentially generate patronage from residents wanting to access St Ives and Cambridge for employment and leisure purposes.
- 4.4 Concern has been expressed that the service may attract drivers heading for Cambridge from the north and west of Huntingdon and that this would exacerbate the parking problems that exist in the residential areas. In the short-term this could be addressed by the introduction of waiting restrictions (similar to those recently agreed for the nearby Scholars Avenue). Eventually the CGB service should be extended to a park and ride site to the northwest of the town. The concept of a park and ride site is already identified in the Local Transport Plan, albeit in the vicinity of Godmanchester, and the opportunity exists to identify a potential site through the current work on the local development framework.
- 4.5 To avoid Huntingdon-bound buses emerging from Hinchingsbrooke being delayed by morning traffic congestion on the Brampton Road it is proposed to construct a bus-lane (also available to emergency

vehicles) from the junction to the A14 over-bridge. This can be wholly accommodated within the existing highway limits.

- 4.6 Improvements to the Huntingdon ring-road already have been identified in the Market Town Transport Strategy. These are necessary to reduce congestion, improve access to major town centre redevelopments and improve journey times for existing bus services.
- 4.7 The CGB will require one additional improvement only to the ring-road. This will be an all-traffic lane on the outside of Nursery Road to avoid delay to buses travelling towards St Ives caused by traffic which is queuing on the ring-road, in morning and evening peaks. The lane will extend from the new access road to be provided to Chequers Court to the Riverside Road/Hartford Road junction. This and the development related contra-flow lane at this location generally can be accommodated within the existing highway limits but may have an impact on some mature trees.
- 4.8 To avoid the morning congestion on Hartford Road buses travelling into Huntingdon will be provided with a bus-lane from the vicinity of Toll Bar Cottages to the ring-road. The addition of this lane generally will be achieved within the existing highways limits. However, a footway/cycleway will be provided in conjunction with the bus-lane and this will encroach onto land in the District Council's ownership, i.e. Huntingdon Riverside Park, necessitating the removal of the existing hedge. It will be necessary to provide appropriate replacement planting to preserve the character of the park.
- 4.9 Traffic travelling into Huntingdon from the St Ives direction often queues to join the roundabout at Hartford from the vicinity Huntingdon Garden and Leisure during the morning peak. It is proposed that a bus-lane is provided from the vicinity of the store to the Old Houghton Road for the benefit of west-bound buses. The Old Houghton Road will be opened for west-bound buses; access for other vehicles will be prevented by rising bollards.
- 4.10 The proposal to reopen Old Houghton Road is opposed by the Hartford Civic Society. However its impact will be minimal as only Huntingdon-bound buses will use it. The alternative, of extending the bus-lane alongside the A1123 to the roundabout will require land to be acquired and will be costly as substantial filling will be needed to low lying land before the bus-lane can be constructed.
- 4.11 From Huntingdon Garden and Leisure to the top of Houghton Hill (junction with Sawtry Way) buses in both directions will use the existing carriageway. A bus lane will be provided from the top of Houghton Hill to the Houghton Road/Hill Rise junction for St Ives-bound buses to allow them to bypass the queuing that takes place on this section of road in the evening peak.
- 4.12 Residential development is planned on both sides for much of this length of Houghton Road. It will necessitate a major new junction to give access to the developments and the bus lane will have to be integrated with this. The opportunity also will be taken to improve the Houghton Road/Hill Rise junction to create an improved right turning facility for west-bound traffic into Hill Rise from the A1123. The

challenge with all of these works will be to minimise the impact on existing hedgerows and trees and to secure appropriate new planting to mitigate any adverse impacts.

- 4.13 Provision was made to route east-bound buses through St Ives town centre in the environmental improvements completed in 2002. Although still supported by the Chamber of Commerce the St Ives Town Council have now withdrawn their support, having previously been instrumental in promoting the idea, and the St Ives Civic Society has confirmed its opposition.
- 4.14 There remain good economic and public transport justifications for this routing although it is understood the County Council are now investigating an alternative route which would result in buses continuing along the A1123 and then using Harrison Way to access the Park and Ride site from the north. This would necessitate the provision of a bus-lane on the Harrison Way approach to the Meadow Lane roundabout. In the longer term it is considered that the town centre routing should be actively pursued in conjunction with a rationalisation of the market managed by the District Council.
- 4.15 West-bound buses after leaving the Park and Ride site will enter the town via Station Road, pass through the bus station and use the route taken by existing St Ives to Huntingdon services to pass through the town.
- 4.16 In addition to the specific measures detailed in the preceding paragraphs all light-controlled junctions along the route will be able to detect the approach of CGB vehicles and set the priority at the junction accordingly. With the exception of this facility all other measure will be available to all buses and will make a substantial contribution to service reliability.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 At paragraph 3.5 the opinion is expressed that it would be difficult to sustain an objection to the TWA Order application. The Cabinet previously has established a policy that –
- the District Council supported the concept of guided-bus in principle;
 - required further evidence that the financial case for the project was sound; and
 - required to be reassured that any adverse environmental impacts would be dealt with appropriately.
- 5.2 Subsequent to that decision, which itself was informed by the opinion of an independent transportation consultant retained by the District Council, the Government has endorsed the financial case for the project and confirmed some £65 million of funding through the Local Transport Plan settlement.
- 5.3 The environmental statement prepared in support of the project is comprehensive insofar as it addresses issues in respect of the guideway and in general terms deals adequately with the on-highway sections. However, issues arising from the on-highway sections in respect of landscaping can only be fully addressed when detailed

designs are approaching completion. All such proposals will be subject to final approval by the Huntingdonshire Environment and Transport Area Joint Committee.

- 5.4 Exchanges of correspondence with Cambridgeshire County Council (see Annex A) have confirmed their willingness to an approach that would allow the District Council to influence the final designs submitted to the joint committee.
- 5.5 In the circumstances, therefore, it appears that the policy objectives outlined in paragraph 5.1 has been either been met or arrangements are in place for securing them during the design of the scheme.

6. RECOMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a) notes that the TWA Order application has been served on the District Council;
 - b) does not object to the application;
 - c) authorises the Director of Central Services to negotiate with the County Council in respect of the transfer of land in the District Council's ownership required for the scheme; and
 - d) authorises the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, to seek agreement with the County Council on –
 - I. detailed proposals for the sections of on-highway works within the District;
 - II. detailed proposals for the St Ives Park and Ride site; and
 - III. the use to be made of Footpath 12.

Background papers

Cambridgeshire Guided Bus: Transport and Works Act Order application
— deposit copy held by Planning Division, further copy in Environment & Transport Division

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ANNEX A

Letter to Mr G Hughes
Cambridgeshire Guided Bus Project Director
Cambridgeshire County Council

12 March 2004

Dear Graham,

Cambridgeshire Guided Bus

You will be aware that the District Council's Cabinet will determine the council's response to the County Council's Transport and Works Act (TWA) proposals at their meeting on 25 March 2004. Having now had the opportunity to review the TWA documentation there remain a number of significant areas of concern but these, with the exception of issues concerning the design and operation of the St Ives Park & Ride site, relate principally to the proposals in respect of works to existing public highways.

My understanding is that all works on the existing public highways will be subject to the ultimate approval by the Huntingdonshire Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee (AJC). I am anxious to ensure that the proposals put before the AJC have the greatest likelihood of being supported by the joint committee. To that end I would hope that we can build on the excellent partnership working that has characterised the approach to the project to date, to achieve schemes that address adequately the District Council's outstanding concerns.

Together with colleagues from the council's Planning Division I have already met with Chris Creed to discuss the design brief being issued to W S Atkins and we have been actively involved in the briefing process. This provides a strong foundation for future joint working that will help to ensure that the final proposals include comprehensive measures to minimise adverse environmental impacts and to mitigate adequately those that cannot be avoided throughout the length of the project within Huntingdonshire.

It would be helpful to formalise arrangements that would lead to both council's, at an officer level, being able to sign-off the proposals before they are submitted to the AJC. In that regard it may be appropriate to reconstitute the joint technical group which informed the St Ives to Huntingdon route development, possibly augmented by the inclusion of an appropriate representative from the W S Atkins design team.

In addition to considering the general environmental issues such a group will need to focus on:-

- providing reassurance that parking on residential roads in Hinchbrooke Park will be controlled from the opening of the CGB;
- bringing forward early proposals for a Park & Ride site (currently identified in the LTP for Godmanchester) for a location on the north-western periphery of Huntingdon such that land can be identified in the emerging Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework;
- co-ordinating the improvements to Huntingdon ring-road arising from the CGB, major developments in the town centre and the Market Town Transport Strategy;

- addressing concerns regarding the reopening of the former Houghton Road as a bus-only route through Hartford;
- dealing sensitively with the impacts of the proposed bus lane on the Houghton Road (A1123) approach to St Ives from the west; and
- routing options within St Ives and the potential for activating, possibly in the longer term, the route through the town centre.

Turning to areas within the TWA submission the District Council would welcome early discussion on the following issues in respect of the St Ives Park & Ride site —

- provision of lay-over facilities for local buses;
- coach parking; and
- routing of the cycleway through the site from the maintenance track to the exit to the town centre.

Finally, the inclusion of the route of Footpath 12 (from Fenstanton to the guideway) in the TWA land plans is noted, although the purpose is unclear. This does raise, however, the potential for creating a high quality cycleway link from the village, via route of Footpath 12, to the Park & Ride site and St Ives. This may help to mitigate some of the concern within the village over the potential reduction in the bus service that they currently enjoy.

I look forward to your confirmation that that AJC is the vehicle by which all on-highway aspects of the scheme will now be approved. Further, that you will concur with my suggestion of a joint technical group to provide a mechanism for signing-off proposals before they are submitted to the AJC and that, possibly through the Steering Group, we can resolve the issues relating to the Park & Ride site and Footpath 12.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Preston
Head of Environment & Transport

Letter to Mr Richard Preston
Huntingdonshire District Council

Dear Richard

Cambridgeshire Guided Bus

Thank you for your letter of 4th March 2004 concerning the next steps for this project.

As you note in your letter, the County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council have worked hard over the course of the Guided Bus scheme development to ensure that proposals, as they come forward, are acceptable to both Councils. A particular example of this is the Huntingdonshire Task Group which in just a short period of time, secured agreement on the principles of the on street measures in your district.

We want to continue this close working relationship on the project and I too am anxious that schemes moving forward to AJC and other processes have been worked up together and thus have the greatest chance of success through the political process. To this end, I would suggest the establishment of a Huntingdonshire Steering Group. As an initial thought, this should consist of myself and Bob Menzies from the County side and yourself and others as appropriate from the district council. The remit here would be to coordinate and move forward at a high level the elements of the scheme that lie in Huntingdonshire including on street, Market Town Strategy and LTP schemes. A meeting at an early stage to scope the work that needs to be done would be helpful.

Picking up the points from your letter, I would anticipate that the key elements that would be covered by the group would be to:

- i. steer and at an officer level sign off the proposals to move towards AJC including any parking measures that may be required;
- ii. to scope work for identifying and moving forward with the Huntingdon and Godmanchester park and ride site as contained in the LTP;
- iii. co-ordinating the other Market Town Strategy works

To work up the details of the schemes in your area, I also suggest that the Huntingdonshire Task Group be re-convened and include key players from the County, Atkins and Huntingdonshire.

Through the above proposals, I would hope that we can move forward together on the required elements of the guided bus and LTP within Huntingdonshire. Clearly, however, the programme and actual delivery of any of these elements will still be subject to the political decision making process and budget allocations.

I trust that this is a satisfactory way to progress these important schemes and look forward to getting together to scope the work we need to oversee.

Yours sincerely

Graham Hughes
Guided Bus Project Director