

## APPENDIX B – DRAFT LETTER TO GCP

Dear [name],

### **GCP Making Connections 2022: A City Access Consultation**

I write on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council to express its views in relation to the Making Connections 2022: A City Access Consultation by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).

At its meeting on [xxx], the Cabinet, on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council [will have] considered the potential impacts of the proposals. We recognise this is a challenging issue, and our residents and businesses have a range of views. This response builds on earlier correspondence submitted to GCP pursuant to the consultation of December 2021.

Tackling climate change and caring for the environment is a key strategic objective of the Council, which is committed to proactively tackling the climate crisis and ecological emergency. We therefore welcome the introduction of measures that have the potential to improve sustainable travel across Cambridgeshire and specifically enhance economic opportunities in Huntingdonshire through improved connectivity.

An improved bus network could significantly reduce air pollution, contribute to carbon reduction targets and facilitate a modal shift in transport usage. A well-designed public transport system that is truly sustainable, affordable, equitable and timely would be transformative for residents and businesses within Huntingdonshire. Express services with faster journey times would be particularly valuable in overcoming immediate barriers to bus use from those otherwise able to access and travel on them already.

We do, however, continue to have concerns with some aspects of the proposals, particularly the impact that they may have upon lower income residents, residents living in rural communities, and businesses who are all—in the immediate term—facing incredibly challenging times, as we live through a cost of living crisis and high inflation against a background of great economic uncertainty.

Our primary areas of concern are outlined below:

- If this proposal proceeds, any Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) must be truly sustainable for the long term and take account of shifting behaviours in light of changing work patterns post Covid-19. It is recognised that the city routes will be more profitable, often sustaining rural routes. With that in mind it is essential that the bus pricing must be modelled accordingly with clear evidence that it remains a truly affordable alternative to the car, alongside concrete assurances that rural routes will be maintained for the longer term.
- We remain of the view that the proposed arrangements may penalise residents in villages and more remote parts of the district for whom non-car journeys may involve multiple changes of modes and substantially longer journey times. We recognise the proposed increase in park and ride capacity and site locations, however these would still require significant driving

distances by Huntingdonshire residents making use of them to enter the STZ. We would welcome further investigation of the viability of park and ride locations more distant from Cambridge, which would enable visitors to the city to complete fewer miles by private vehicle.

- If the STZ succeeds in achieving the desired mode changes, it is unclear whether and how adequate funding sources will be secured to maintain support for the alternative travel options if the amount of private vehicular traffic significantly declines overall. We would need assurance that the improvements would remain viable over the long term.
- Clarity is needed on how the proposals are connected with other service reviews being undertaken by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, in particular the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the Transport Strategy Huntingdonshire, as well as the review of the Bus Strategy and its supporting plans.
- The refund strategy associated with visits to the Addenbrooke's/Rosie/Royal Papworth hospital site is unclear, and we are concerned it would be complex to claim. Given the wide catchment area for the hospital trusts operating on the site, and that a large section of our rural residents have no certainty of an affordable and timely travel alternative at this point, they may be disproportionately impacted. In light of this, we urge that a way be found of excluding the hospital site from the geographic area of the STZ. Ensuring all residents have access to healthcare when they most need it is essential. We agree that, with ongoing growth of the hospital site, the status quo (of inadequate parking on the site, inadequate road access to the site, and inadequate park and ride connectivity or public transport alternatives to mitigate the traffic challenges on the site) will not be sustainable either.
- The document makes reference to low income households but fails to define a low income household for the purposes of this strategy. More detail is also required on how the discount would work.
- We remain of the view that clarity is also needed on the relationship between GCP and Cambridgeshire County Council in these proposals, and the funding arrangements for initial improvements and fare reductions prior to introduction of the STZ. We would urge detail on which party would legitimately/legally/practically have the ability to spend revenue improving bus services outside of the GCP area be made available to HDC This will have significant implications for the provision, and long term maintenance of proposed service upgrades to and within Huntingdonshire.
- The current proposals and attached map book outline an improved bus network with Cambridge at the centre. For many of our residents, our market towns are the centre of their transport needs. Many residents of rural Huntingdonshire must travel to market towns for essential journeys to work, education, Hinchingbrooke Hospital, and to access council services. However, no routes have been included in the map book that would link, for example, rural residents

of western Huntingdonshire to the market town of Huntingdon. We urge further development and would welcome further investment in additional bus routes that link our rural communities to our market towns, to contribute to the overall user base and viability of the proposals.

It is imperative that the views of residents and businesses across Huntingdonshire are fully considered and visibly addressed in any future iterations of your proposal. We are also using our channels of communication to encourage their participation directly in the consultation in order to help GCP obtain the fullest evidence base reflecting the varied circumstances, needs and opinions of Huntingdonshire residents.

In light of all the above, we seek assurances that GCP has fully considered the impacts of its proposals on all those who travel across the county, to and from the city, and in particular our rural residents for whom access to convenient public transport options is, and is likely to remain for the foreseeable future, unrealistic.

Huntingdonshire District Council also seeks assurance from GCP that they will proactively engage to address the above issues. We would be pleased to work more closely in order to assist in addressing them.

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Sam Wakeford**

Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing