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The Cambourne to Cambridge Order

Cambridgeshire County Council

Transport and Works Act 1992

Transport and Works (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 2004

Inquiry into:

THE CAMBOURNE TO CAMBRIDGE ORDER

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

of

Peter Freeman

of Cambridge Growth Company

On behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1.1 I am Peter Freeman CBE, and I have been appointed by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning to chair the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC). Over my career, I have consistently championed mixed-use, infrastructure-led development and collaborative, inclusive approaches to creating vibrant, economically resilient places. After qualifying as a solicitor, I co-founded the Argent group of Companies in 1981 and remained on their Board until 2024. In that capacity I was also director of the Kings Cross Central Partnership from 2008 to 2024 which delivered the £8bn mixed use regeneration project behind Kings Cross and St. Pancras stations. I was instrumental in delivering the award-winning Brindley Place mixed use development in Birmingham from 1993, transforming it from derelict land to a vibrant part of the city.
- 1.1.2 From 2020 to 2025, I served as Chair of Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency, where I encouraged an increased focus on "place" and regeneration.

1.2 Scope of Evidence

- 1.2.1 My evidence will focus on Matter 1, addressing the aims and objectives of, and the need for, the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge guided busway.
- 1.2.2 In doing so, my evidence may contribute to Matter 6. Having regard to the criteria for justifying compulsory purchase powers in paragraphs 12 to 15 of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 'Guidance on the Compulsory Purchase Process' published in October 2024 and updated in January 2025:
- a. Whether there is a compelling case in the public interest to justify conferring on CCC powers to compulsorily acquire and use land for the purposes of the scheme, including whether reasonable efforts have been made by the acquiring authority to negotiate the purchase of land by agreement.
- c. Whether there are likely to be any impediments to CCC implementing the scheme, including the availability of funding.

1.3 Context of My Evidence

1.3.1 The role, function and purpose of the Cambridge Growth Company

- 1.3.2 I was initially asked in July 2023 by the then government, in my role as Chair of Homes England, to review the potential for further growth in Cambridge and the obstacles to such growth. In a letter dated 30 October 2024, the current Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook MP, reconfirmed my appointment **[CD7-39]** to chair the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) which has been established to advise on and drive forward the government's growth ambitions for the area.
- 1.3.3 The success of Greater Cambridge and unlocking economic growth, productivity, housing delivery and infrastructure provision are key, national priorities for the government. Cambridge has untapped economic potential and is a key economic asset for the UK. It is a global centre of research and innovation, home to one of the world's most prestigious academic institutions and the largest biotechnology cluster in Europe. The city and its surrounding area, however, are facing critical constraints preventing it reaching its full economic potential and affecting those who live and work in the area - including housing affordability and supply, transport congestion, and constraints on water and sewerage. The challenge of tackling these barriers to growth, while protecting and enhancing the environment, is one that the government is supporting, seeking to realise the city's economic potential to the benefit of its residents and the UK as a whole.

- 1.3.4 The aspiration for an expanded Cambridge is based around well connected, sustainable, urban extensions with quicker journey times, better digital and power connections, a safe and sustainable supply of water, improved access to health and social care services and better air quality.
- 1.3.5 As chair of the CGC, I am actively engaged with local stakeholders to help fulfil the government's vision for the long-term future of Greater Cambridge –with a strong focus on supporting its communities and ensuring the area's continued success. Since stepping down as chair of Homes England in April this year I am concentrating on Cambridge full time.

1.3.6 The Legal Status and Function of the CGC

- 1.3.7 The Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) was established as a company limited by guarantee and a subsidiary of Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency. The CGC is a government supported, pro-growth company working closely and collaboratively with local elected leaders to help realise the full potential of Cambridge, overcome obstacles to growth and to promote sustainable, infrastructure-led development and economic growth for local residents, communities and businesses.
- 1.3.8 The CGC is supported by an Advisory Council which I chair, consisting of all four elected local leaders (the Mayor of Peterborough and Cambridge and the leaders of County, City and South Cambridgeshire) and three experts (representing the University, Innovation and water resources). The Growth Company works with local and central government, convening and leveraging central government resources to promote and unlock key projects and to support local authorities and landowners to deliver the infrastructure needed to help unblock barriers to sustainable growth.

1.3.9 CGC High Level Principles

- 1.3.10 The CGC will follow the High Level Principles set out in **[CD7-39,Page 2]**.
- *When it comes to the growth strategy, development on a more dispersed geographical footprint is perfectly acceptable, but one or more contiguous urban extensions of the city must be core components of the vision the Growth Company brings forward, in order to maximise the benefits of agglomeration.*
 - *It must also build on and go further than local plans, in terms of scale, ambition and timescale, and you should work closely with local partners to tackle the constraints that can be difficult to overcome at the local level alone*

1.3.11 The CGC Priorities

- 1.3.12 The CGC is tasked with progressing the following priorities, also defined in **[CD7-39]**:
- *Development acceleration: enable and accelerate developments which align with the government's ambitions for Cambridge and unlock development on stalled sites.*
 - *Developing the evidence base to support development of an infrastructure-first growth plan and a long-term delivery vehicle: work with experts to assess infrastructure requirements, including transport, and lay the foundations for a long-term delivery vehicle.*
 - *Cross-government engagement: identify solutions to complex constraints and support cross-government engagement to unblock existing development and provide the right incentives for successful development in the long-term.*

- *Cambridge Growth Company business plan: responsibility for overseeing the effective delivery of the Cambridge Growth Company's business plan and other associated documents.*

2. MAIN ISSUES FOR THE INSPECTOR RELEVANT TO MY EVIDENCE

2.1 The Cambridge Growth Company's developing strategy for Cambridge

- 2.1.1 As Cambridge is a national priority, the CGC has been tasked with developing ambitious plan for the housing, transport, water and wider infrastructure that Cambridge needs to realise its full potential, working effectively with local leaders to build an evidence base to support the development of a long-term strategy that will benefit both the residents of Cambridge and the wider UK economy and also to enable and accelerate developments which align with the government's ambitions for Cambridge and unlock development on stalled sites.
- 2.1.2 To achieve these aims, it is important to support delivery of planned growth identified in the current Local Plan and the emerging new Local Plan, together with the transport strategies that underpin that growth.
- 2.1.3 The emerging local plan outlines the opportunities for growth up to 2041 which aims to deliver up to 66,600 jobs and 51,723 homes although this may be updated when the Regulation 18 consultation comes forward. The local plan progress through the planning system is supported by CGC and the local plan needs to conclude in a timely manner to maintain progress on housing and economic growth and delivery of infrastructure.
- 2.1.4 In alignment with the high-level principles set out in 1.3.9, the work of the CGC aims to look at growth beyond the local plan, with a minimum 25-year horizon and through addressing some of the constraints e.g. water and transport, deliver ambitious growth which builds on the existing work and goes further, through an evidence-based approach. The evidence base work is in progress. Until this concludes it is premature to identify the scale and location of the growth proposals and the detailed transport strategy. However, government has been clear in instructions to the CGC of the need for an ambitious plan for the housing, transport, water and wider infrastructure that Cambridge needs to realise its full potential". [CD7-39,page 2] and has therefore committed £10m of funding for preparatory work.

2.2 The Need for the Scheme

- 2.2.1 Greater Cambridge is formed of the administrative areas of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. The area has a rapidly growing economy and population fuelled by a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation-led growth.
- 2.2.2 Greater Cambridge has become the economic powerhouse of the East of England. As of 2023, a total of 23 businesses founded in Cambridge have reached the \$1 billion 'unicorn' status, while knowledge-intensive firms in the area generate an annual turnover of £21 billion [CD7-01, Page 7]. As a result, Greater Cambridge is widely recognised as 'Europe's Life Sciences Capital' and a key contributor to the UK's international influence and soft power. For example, Cambridge is ranked as the third most significant science ecosystem in the world, behind the Bay Area and Boston.
- 2.2.3 While Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest growing and most productive areas in the UK, critical infrastructure challenges, particularly in transport, threaten its competitive advantage in the global high-tech market.
- 2.2.4 The rapid population and economic growth in Greater Cambridge have placed substantial pressure on existing infrastructure. This growth has created an imbalance between supply and demand for infrastructure and housing, leading to increased

congestion and a sharp rise in housing and rental prices that now far exceed national averages.

- 2.2.5 Research undertaken by Cambridge Ahead states that if no significant new policy interventions are implemented to address housing and transport gaps in the next decade, employment growth in Greater Cambridge is likely to reverse and decline from 2031 onwards.
- 2.2.6 There is an existing transport strategy in place through the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan **[CD6-09]** that needs to be delivered to promote safe, integrated and efficient transport provision which will help deliver the growth proposed in the existing Local Plan. The Cambourne to Cambridge proposal (CtoC) is part of that existing transport strategy and has been developed and promoted by the GCP since 2014.
- 2.2.7 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is preparing the Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy (GCTS) which will respond to the transport requirements for the emerging Local Plan.
- 2.2.8 CGC is also preparing an evidence base to support the scale and location of future growth. This will include a transport strategy and will build upon existing work being undertaken through the CPCA with the development of the GCTS and the Local Plan.
- 2.2.9 The CtoC (mainly) segregated busway will provide linkage to Cambridge for the thousands of homes and jobs planned in this important growth corridor including Bourne Airfield, which is restricted to building 500 homes from the 3500 proposed until the CtoC is constructed. The new route would support existing and new communities e.g. West Cambourne, Cambridge West, as well as sites in the emerging Local Plan. This would be available in the short term whilst longer term proposals for wider transport solutions are being explored. Additional analytical work is underway, building on what has already been completed, to assess the feasibility of integrating the busways into a long-term solution. The CtoC scheme could play a complementary role in this – for example, it could be possible to repurpose busways to other modes of transport in the future. Without delivery of CtoC, new growth in this corridor will be restricted and may not proceed. This would impact on delivery against the Local Plan and investor confidence in the area.
- 2.2.10 The CtoC would enable growth along this corridor which is consistent with Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and consistent with the achievement of sustainable development. It is also consistent with a number of emerging national planning policy and government statements of intent surrounding the delivery of homes. including:
- The Deputy Prime Minister's statement to the House of Commons of 30th July 2024 entitled 'Building the Homes We Need' **[CD9-33]**
 - The Deputy Prime Minister's letter to all local authorities in England dated 30th July 2024 entitled 'Playing your part in building the homes we need' **[CD9-34]**
 - The publication on 30th July 2024 of a revised draft of the National Planning Policy Framework (subsequently published as National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - updated Feb 2025") **[CD8-01]**; and
 - The launch on 30th July 2024 of a consultation entitled 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' **[CD8-37]**.
- 2.2.11 National government support for busways and wider services as sustainable transport has recently been demonstrated in the spending review which included support via funding and policy measures.

2.3 Alignment with the High Level Principles

- 2.3.1 The Growth Company will start detailed transport work to support a coordinated approach across transport, housing and employment, helping to align investment and policy decisions for Greater Cambridge's long-term success. The work will define the objectives and success factors for transport in Cambridge and the integrated spatial and transport strategies to achieve those objectives accompanied by a programme level Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC).
- 2.3.2 Transport work has also started to explore the analytical case for a mass rapid transit solution to serve the growth of Greater Cambridge and develop the most appropriate long term transport solutions. This will be informed by evidence and options analysis and conclusions of the transport strategies and growth plans being developed by the CGC and partners including the GCTS being developed by the CPCA.
- 2.3.3 Whilst the emerging Local Plan concludes and the CGC evidence base develops, it is important to maintain momentum on existing schemes and growth corridors already identified in the current adopted Local Plan, which is in line with the governments ambition for this area. This includes delivery of CtoC in support of those growth corridors and specifically the Bourn Airfield development.

2.4 Alignment with Priorities

- 2.4.1 One of the Priorities of the CGC is development acceleration (enable and accelerate developments which align with the government's ambitions for Cambridge and unlock development on stalled sites) and also Cross-government engagement (identify solutions to complex constraints and support cross-government engagement to unblock existing development and provide the right incentives for successful development in the long-term).
- 2.4.2 To accelerate and unblock we need the Local Plan to continue to deliver and allocated development land in advance of the CGC evidence base being developed. Hence the importance of delivering existing planned transport schemes and supporting the Local Plan.
- 2.4.3 The CtoC scheme specifically helps to achieve that by unlocking growth at Bourn Airfield which has stalled whilst the provision of public transport has been debated.
- 2.4.4 It will also help to create capacity to enable further growth as envisaged in the First Proposals for the Local Plan **[CD6-04]**. As such it also addresses one of the High Level Principles by creating the conditions for partners to "go further than local plans, in terms of scale, ambition and timescale".

2.5 Synergy With Other Schemes Under Consideration

- 2.5.1 The growth in this area will be further supported by EWR in the future as the proposals develop for a station around the Cambourne area which will unlock the opportunity for more housing and jobs. However, EWR will not deliver growth envisaged the current Local Plan nor the early years of the emerging Local Plan, and CtoC will complement EWR by providing first/last mile connectivity to development sites not served by rail. EWR will provide a link to Cambridge South station and then onto Cambridge station but will not provide improved access to Cambridge West or Cambridge centre generally.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1.1 In presenting my evidence I have addressed Matter 1, the need for the scheme, by outlining the following:
- The role, function and purpose of the Cambridge Growth Company.

- The Cambridge Growth Company's developing strategy for Cambridge
- The role of (and need for) the CtoC scheme in order to deliver the growth ambitions for Cambridge

3.1.2 Through that discussion I have also provided evidence that may support Matter 6, the justification of CPO powers. In doing so I have set out the following points:

- The UK Government has been clear in instructions to the CGC and to me that ambitious growth is envisaged in order to maximise the economic growth of Cambridge.
- It is important to maintain momentum on existing schemes and growth corridors already identified in the current adopted Local Plan, which is in line with the governments ambition for this area. This includes delivery of CtoC in support of those growth corridors.

4. STATEMENT OF TRUTH

4.1.1 The evidence which I have prepared and provided in this Proof of Evidence is true and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution. I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.