

24 March 2023

Dear Sir, Madam, dear Councillors, Officers and Consultancy Teams,

**Ref - Proposed Revised Central Route for the Waterbeach to Cambridge
Guided Busway and Park & Ride Options B and C – OBJECTION**



We would like to submit our **strong objection** to the proposed Central Route and Park & Ride options B and C as they would have a detrimental and permanent impact on the essentially rural setting of Landbeach village including its Conservation Area and over 500-year old Tithe Barn – **Appendix 1**.

Landbeach is a small village with a long-documented history dating from before the Norman Conquest. It retains a number of significant and listed features. There are 22 listed buildings, most on either side of the road through the village, the High Street and Green End, in addition to the milestones on the A10. Also, crop marks in the surrounding fields, supported by archaeological excavations, give evidence of Middle Iron Age (300 – 50 BC) settlements that continued through to the early Roman period.

Particularly relevant to the issue at hand is the cluster of buildings including All Saints' Church (Grade I), the Old Rectory (Grade II*), both with 13th century origins, and the recently restored medieval Tithe Barn (Grade II) – dating from approx. 1475 (15th century). This cluster of historic buildings stand close to the site of the Manor of Chamberlains (a Scheduled Ancient Monument), which was abandoned in the 14th century due to the increasing floods at that time.

Tithe Barns are very rare in the UK, with approximately 90% of them having been converted to other uses. Only 190 of them remain, and the only one in Cambridgeshire is in Landbeach. The Landbeach Tithe Barn is probably unique in retaining much of its original timber framed wooden structure and 18th century brick threshing floor. It looks out onto open Common land and is close to a medieval waterway linked with the Roman Car Dyke running from the River Cam to Lincoln and York.

This Fen-edge setting of the Barn is of special character: the view from the Tithe Barn looking east over the Common has probably little changed through the centuries – **Appendix 2**. The original Common of the medieval village is still called the Common however today it is in the ownership of the Diocese of Ely and the Church through the Enclosure Act of 1813. The fields further to the east are now part of the County Farms Estate.

Because of this special setting and the irreplaceable historical value of the buildings (Church, Old Rectory, Tithe Barn) in their context are of a high heritage group value together with the wider designated Conservation Area – **Appendix 3**. It would be harmful and inappropriate to intrude on this special environment with a guided busway with all its ancillary development features as part of the now proposed Central Busway Route and its nearby proposed interchanges/ bus stops.

Adverse impact on the Tithe Barn

The Tithe Barn is a community facility managed by the Tithe Barn Trust (a charity). It is a rural leisure place, teaching resource and increasingly hosts varied events and activities throughout the year for the local communities as well offers others to hire the building and its surrounds. Hosted activities include: storytelling, art exhibitions, theatre, cinema, farmers market, weddings, meetings, teaching and training sessions, heritage and other open days, school and other group visits and more. It is a space supporting mental health and relaxation and giving access for all to the local countryside at the edge of the village with its adjacent pastures, grazing animals and wildlife. The importance and value of the barn and its surrounds has been recognised by local people as much as small and larger grant giving bodies.

As the Trust we are responding in view of the Tithe Barn and its setting and are concerned about expected adverse commercial impact due to the proposed infrastructure. The current rural environment and views and relatively tranquil surrounds and thus the overall setting of the Barn is special and key for Tithe Barn to act as a local leisure facility and accessible heritage environment – **Appendix 2**. Our business model is based on the provision of a quality environment where heritage and nature shine unimpeded by adverse development or other adverse visual or audible interference. We have been working with the local community to achieve this over the recent decade and over time are continuing to make improvements to our own infrastructure and landscape. In addition we particularly fear that the visual intrusion/ impact of the busway on the setting of the building and its immediate surroundings will make the Barn less liked and thus less hired and as such will reduce our annual income that is required to sustain this heritage building and its surrounds for the long-term future.

Thus we cannot support the central route, nor the Park & Ride locations B and C. We consider these proposals will create adverse impacts in relation to the setting and operation of the Tithe Barn and its usage - particularly:

- The busy guided busway will visually **intrude during day and night and adversely affect the setting of the Tithe Barn** and neighbouring listed buildings and the Conservation Area of Landbeach (from colour scheme of buses to lighting along the route and at interchanges/ stops)
- The route and interchanges/ bus stops, the park & ride locations B & C with their **built features as well as lighting will urbanise/ suburbanise the rural environment of Landbeach as a Fen village** and as such adversely impact the historic Barn including its enjoyment
- **The proposals will make the Barn's operational set-up significantly less sustainable** – the net effect of these impacts will threaten the long-term preservation of this important and rare medieval structure

If the Revised Central route is taken forward, we would like to see:

- **The undertaking of a 'Settings Study' of the cluster of high value historic buildings around the church** – as per guidance as provided by Historic England¹. There is a statutory obligation on decision-makers to a) have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings, b) the policy objectives in the NPPF and the PPG establishing the twin roles of setting:

¹ The Settings of Heritage Assets - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition)

it can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset, and it can allow that significance to be appreciated. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the heritage asset's conservation, including sustaining significance². Suggested study area (i.e. the Conservation Area and its pastoral setting) is outlined as per **Appendix 4** and will permit that the significance of heritage assets is considered in depth and allow that significance of the setting of heritage assets to be appreciated, as well as advice on how views contribute to setting. We would like confirmation that this work is already in train as key views photographed during winter (when there are no leaves on the trees) are as much of importance as obtaining summer views (when green vegetation blocks/obscures views).

- **Undertaking of Landscape Visual Assessment/ Landscape Visual Impact Assessment of both Western and Revised Central busway routes and Park & Ride proposals B and C and propose suitable mitigation** – which can be realised before any construction of the infrastructure starts.
- **Developing appropriate mitigation – such as:**
 - **Protection of the special setting of the Tithe Barn** – through integration of minimum 10m wide shelterbelt with planting of trees and shrub species (including high proportion of evergreens) along the western side of the busway and any proposed buildings, park & ride boundaries close to the Barn etc to ensure good screening during all seasons and in particular during winter periods. Species choice in accordance with the 'Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines' (1991) and subsequent advisory guidance.
 - **Retention of fully operational drainage systems** – to avoid any poor drainage/ flooding during higher rainfall periods of the adjacent land parcels including the Commons and land owned by the Tithe Barn Trust.
 - **Colour of buses designed to be more appropriate to countryside routing** – to avoid bright colours visually intrusive within the rural landscape – see **Appendix**.
 - **Avoidance of intrusive lighting** – along the route and at major busway interchanges as well as proposed Park & Ride Car Park options B and C as proposed close to the village edge of Landbeach – this to improve the setting of the barn, its environment as well as the village of Landbeach as well as limiting the adverse impact on wildlife.
 - **Off-site mitigation and amenity** – by improving the biodiversity of The Common by working closely with the tenant farmer and the Diocese of Ely to gain benefits for grazing animals and wildlife and exploring options such as:
 - Improving the hedge rows with trees – particularly to the eastern boundary of the Common creating a secondary thick shelterbelt using appropriate native woody species
 - Improving the pastures and their boundaries
 - Improving ditches including the silted-up pond
 - Adding paddock trees at suitable locations.
- **Integration of directional signage and information panels** – informing users of the guided busway of those heritage features which can be experienced close to the route at nodal points and as such benefitting local communities.
- **Provide planning gain (Section 106/ CIL) to the Tithe Barn and other heritage/ leisure management organisations along the route** – to make contributions and improvements benefitting the barn and its landscape and communities.

² NPPF, paragraph 132, NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary (ref National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance)

Overall we consider that the proposed western route and late suggested central route of the proposed guided busway linking the expanding Waterbeach with Cambridge have been ill-conceived and that the cost-benefits are not clear (also in view of other options under discussion in recent years).

We consider that a guided busway (except new cycle and walking routes) should run adjacent or nearer to the A10 where it at the same time can deliver substantial environmental improvements to the whole A10 corridor – i.e. significantly benefitting both wildlife and people initially and long-term.

Please keep us informed with this project and we welcome timely updates and further discussions.

Kind regards Carolin

Carolin Göhler - Trustee and Interim Chair



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CC

- Landbeach PC – Melanie Lombardi (Clerk), Melanie Hale (Chair), Elizabeth McWilliams (Vice Chair)
- Waterbeach PC – Belinda Westwood (Clerk); Clive Rabbett (Chair), Jane Williams (Vice-Chair)
- SCDC District Councillors – Paul Bearpark, Judith Rippeth
- Greater Cambridgeshire & SCDC Officers: Jane Green (Built and Natural Environment Manager), Sarah Cheng (Senior Conservation Officer); Tony Collins (Principle Conservation Officer)
- Cambridgeshire County Council Councillors: Lorna Dupré, Nick Gay, Alex Beckett, Neil Shailer, Anna Bradnam
- Cambridgeshire County Council officers – Quinton Carroll (Historic Environment Team Leader)
- Waterbeach Heritage Group – via Katheryn Owens (Urban & Civic)
- Historic England – Sarah Lewis-Briggs
- Denny Abbey
- CambridgePPF - Sarah Nicholas
- Neighbours to the barn.

Location of the Tithe Barn of Landbeach



Aerial map of Landbeach (source: google maps web accessed 22Mar 2023)

KEY: ● Tithe Barn ● Old Rectory ● All Saints' Church



Proposed central Guided Busway route and interchange (south of Waterbeach Road) –
(Source: Guided Busway Consultation winter 2023)

Important Views – to and from the Tithe Barn of Landbeach

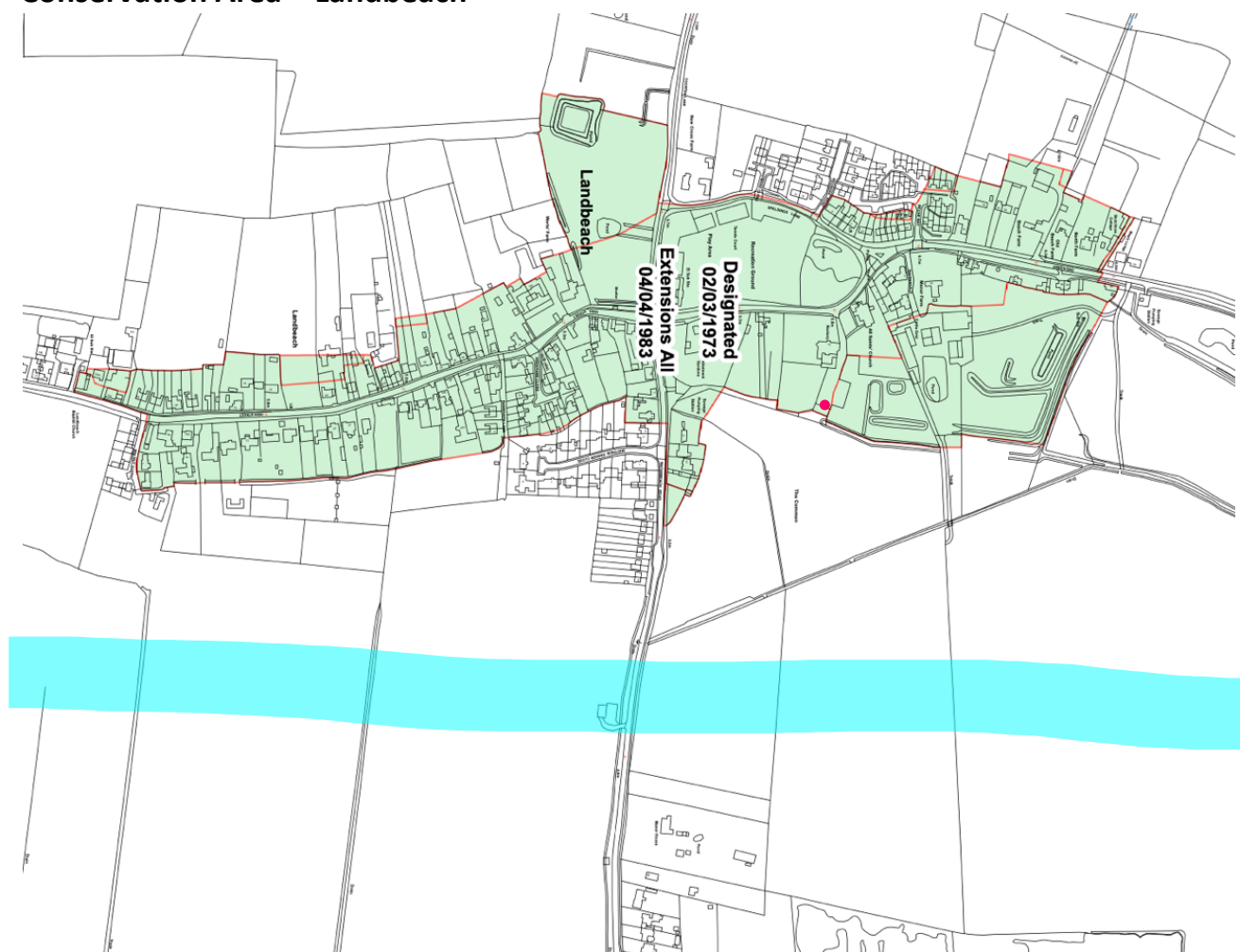


The principle view east from within the barn – image taken on 15 March 2023 (copyright: Tithe Barn Trust)



The principle view east from the green just outside the barn – the proposed guided bus route will be highly visible as just beyond the open hedgerow in the middle distance together with existing farm building, Manor House (off Waterbeach Road) is mostly screened by evergreen and deciduous trees (image taken on 15 March 2023, copyright: Tithe Barn Trust).

Conservation Area – Landbeach



Landbeach Conservation Area – see outline in red and green infill.

KEY: ● Tithe Barn ■ proposed central busroute

(source: SCDC web accessed 22 Mar 2023 -

<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2182/lanbeach-conservation-area-boundary-map.pdf>)

Suggested Area for a Setting Study – draft



Aerial map of Landbeach (source: google maps web accessed 22Mar 2023)

KEY:

- Tithe Barn ● Old Rectory ● All Saints' Church
- area of Settings Study (to include the pastures surrounding the village edge)

Considerate colour scheme of buses



Gentle colour scheme of the Great Western Railway's rolling stock – shown here in a similar flat countryside with main train wagon and locomotive in deep heritage green (Brunswick-type green) and only notion to modernism using a yellow nose to locomotive. Such coloured buses and service vehicles would blend in well into the countryside but would also look smart enough within Cambridge as a historic but also modern city.

(source: Experience Oxfordshire – web accessed 22 Mar 2023 <https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/venue/great-western-railway/>)