

19th July 2022

By email

Cllr Bridget Smith
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne
CB23

Dear Bridget

I am writing to you in your capacity as Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) regarding the two large transport infrastructure projects that have been proposed for South Cambs including Great Shelford: East West Rail (EWR) and Cambridge South East Transport (CSET). Neither of these plans were conceived by SCDC, but you do have considerable influence over them, hence this letter.

To get to the point quickly: you know that there is considerable opposition to both CSET and EWR within Great Shelford and the surrounding parishes. This is reflected by the positions of the parish councils, including Great Shelford Parish Council (GSPC), and the multiple grass-roots opposition groups that have spontaneously formed. Numerous local surveys have confirmed this opposition. In addition, many SCDC Councillors – including ours (Peter Fane and William Jackson-Wood) – publicly and openly oppose the current plans. Yet despite this, we see nothing but unwavering support from SCDC for these projects. For CSET, this is evident in SCDC's public statements and your voting record at Greater Cambridge Partnership executive meetings; for EWR, this was most recently displayed in your recent letter to Grant Shapps dated 22nd June asking for EWR to be fully funded without any criticism. (I should point out that we only found out about that letter from a Twitter post by the Cambridgeshire Labour Party.)

GSPC accepts that better transport infrastructure is necessary and that, sadly, some negative impacts may occur to enable the benefits of the projects to be unleashed. Provided the strategic benefits of the projects can be clearly and obviously explained and quantified; that those benefits clearly outweigh downsides; the route options adopted are demonstrated to be best available; and the downsides are fully mitigated, these projects will eventually obtain broad support. The reason these projects have elicited such a vociferous opposition within South Cambs is because the case has not been made according to this logic and some robust counter-arguments have been made.

The purpose of this letter is not to rehearse the arguments for and against these projects. What GSPC cannot understand is the unwavering support of SCDC given that large swathes of your district are against these projects and that their arguments have considerable merit.

GSPC's position at the moment is intolerable and our frustration is real as we believe that the net impact of these projects on Great Shelford are potentially devastating. We have been forced to defend the interests of our residents by setting aside large sums from our reserves. Further, the time and energy of our Parish Councillors have been diverted from other worthwhile projects. All this is to protect ourselves against projects that are being imposed on us by external organisations that have far greater resources than us,

Mrs Libby White BEM FdA FSLCC, Clerk to the Council
PO Box 1492, Cambridge CB1 0YQ
T: 01223 616 622
E: clerk@greatshelfordparishcouncil.gov.uk



against the will of the local population, whilst ignoring local knowledge that could be used to improve the projects. Compounding our frustration, we are seemingly ignored by SCDC who, in our opinion, is actively pursuing policies that will cause lasting damage to our village and the surrounding areas of South Cambs. It is almost inconceivable that we find ourselves at odds with SCDC, whom we believe ought to be helping us and standing up for us.

Peter Fane has assured us that he has been pushing our points at SCDC meetings, but we have seen no evidence that his presentations are being heard and acted upon in any way.

This letter is therefore a heartfelt plea: can you please undertake an urgent review of SCDC's policies regarding EWR and CSET with a view to acknowledging the significant opposition to the current proposals? A more nuanced policy that takes into account the arguments against these projects should result in better proposals that will increase the benefits to South Cambs and its villages and minimise the negative impacts. I believe it will also reflect well on SCDC as it will show that it is capable of responding to constructive criticism of these two projects.

I look forward to receiving your response and, as always, GSPC remains open to any dialogue.

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Watson
Chair

cc. D Cllr Peter Fane
D Cllr William Jackson-Wood