

## **Proof of Evidence for Cambridge South Station Public Inquiry**

Submitted by: **Cambridge Past, Present & Future**

Name of witness: **James Littlewood, Chief Executive**

Relevant qualifications: **MSc Countryside Management**

### **Topics Covered:**

Matter 4 – Impact on Hobson’s Park and Nine Wells Local Nature Reserve

Matter 10 – the conditions proposed to be attached to the deemed planning permission.

Our points in relation to Matter 10 are related to Matter 4.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 In principle, Cambridge Past Present & Future supports the new station as a means of reducing car journeys to the Biomedical Campus and our main concerns are to ensure that the new station does not negatively impact Hobson's Park, its wildlife and users and that any impacts on the landscape are avoided or adequately mitigated.

1.2 Hobson's Park was provided in mitigation for the substantial areas taken out of the Cambridge Green Belt in the 2006 Local Plan. In addition to its considerable amenity for local residents, this green corridor is one of four such corridors in and through the landscape of Cambridge, and serves a city wide not just a local purpose. Work has been done to enhance biodiversity, right up to the railway line in some places. It includes the successfully established wildlife reserve on the lake and the park now has a flourishing botanical and invertebrate communities which in turn are supporting good populations of birds, including those of conservation concern such as Kestrel, Corn Bunting and Skylark. This would be threatened by the temporary construction site and the permanent station and associated access.

1.3 We welcome the efforts that Network Rail have made through the optioneering process to try and select options and produce designs that have least impact on the park. However there are still some aspects of the scheme where temporary and permanent impacts could be avoided or more adequately mitigated. It is these aspects that we object to and wish to see revised through the TWAO application process.

## **2. Permanent adverse impact on Hobson's Park**

2.1 The western station building includes a large area of glass frontage which faces out to Hobson's Park, which the Design & Access Statement (NR15) states is to allow light into the station building. This is true, but the Design & Access Statement fails to point out that at night, when the inside of the station is illuminated the converse will be true – resulting in light pollution and making the upper storeys of the station very visible. The use of glass frontage is therefore at odds with the lighting strategy and the design strategy, which aim to reduce light pollution and integrate the building into the park landscape. Although the landscaping strategy includes some tree planting to screen the station, this is not provided in front of the station where the light pollution would occur.

2.2 The Design & Access Statement (NR15) makes numerous claims that the design of the western station will integrate with Hobson's Park. We support the green roofs and the use of natural materials although in practice it is non-natural materials that dominate, such as the large area of glass - but there are aspects of this scheme that turn its back on the park and are reflective of Network Rail's single focus on providing a station. During the consultation process we highlighted to Network Rail that the western station entrance should be designed to be as much a park building as it is a rail building. Parks around the UK benefit from well designed park buildings that provide facilities for park users, such as toilets, café's and activity spaces. The station will have a permanent negative impact on Hobson's Park and this harm to the local community should be offset by providing facilities for park users. There is opportunity for the design of the building to relate to the park as well as the station. The landscaping and seating to the western station entrance could relate to the park more than the station. People using the park will inevitably seek to use the facilities at the station and this should therefore be designed in from the beginning.

2.3 We request that a condition is included which requires the design of the glass frontage and the landscaping in front of the station to be revised to better reflect its proximity to, and aspect from the Park, including addressing light pollution; as well as to serve the needs of park users in order to compensate for the permanent negative impact. As a minimum this should include visitor access to toilets.

## **3. Temporary Adverse Effects on Hobson's Park**

3.1 It is unreasonable that Network Rail's application, if granted, would remove from public use for upwards of two years a significant area of Hobson's Park for construction purposes. NR-19 Public Open Space Assessment, paragraph 5.1.3, Figure 2, & paragraph 5.1.6 shows that this would be 35% of the Park. Network Rail Statement

of Case (E0-1, para 12.24) is that the area required is now significantly less than anticipated. We are pleased this will be reduced but the area is still very large in comparison to the development and should be reduced further.

3.2 In response to representations, Network Rail says there is not sufficient land on the eastern side of the railway to increase the size of the eastern building construction compound and provide for the temporary storage of excavated material. It says –

“Land parcels on the Campus on either side of Francis Crick Avenue have been explored for temporary use, but it has not been possible to secure the use of these as temporary construction compounds.”

[Appendix 1: Network Rail letter to Trumpington Residents’ Association dated 11 January 2021, sixth page]

In other words, there is sufficient land on the eastern side but not the will on Network Rail’s part to insist by means of compulsory purchase or otherwise that it should be provided in support of the station’s construction by the organisations on the Biomedical Campus. While Network Rail is willing to compulsorily appropriate land from Hobson’s Park, which is adversely affected by the proposed station, it is not willing to compulsorily acquire land from organisations on the Campus for whose benefit the station is to be built. We object to this and to the de facto statement by Network Rail that Hobson’s Park land is of lesser value than land in the Biomedical Campus – and that because it is public open space it is freer for construction use than Campus land, notwithstanding the large disbenefit to the public it would entail for a significant period of time. The Park’s status in the Local Plan and its value to the local community, should give it much greater protection than Network Rail proposes.

3.3 We ask that the temporary land acquisition proposed in Hobson’s Park is further reduced.

#### **4. Electricity sub-station and rail systems enclosure**

4.1 CambridgePPF objects to the proposed location of an electricity sub-station and rail systems enclosure/compound in the southern part of Hobson’s Park south of Nine Wells Bridge in an unduly visible position. [NR15 Design & Access Statement, paragraph 5.1.3 & Figure 5-1, page 31; and Drawing 158454-ARC-00-ZZ-DRG-EEN-000076]

4.2 We appreciate the effort Network Rail has made to screen the two rail facilities with landscaping. However, this is a strategically important view from Trumpington towards White Hill which forms the first part of the Gog Magog Hills. It will also have a negative visual impact on the exchange land.

4.3 We have asked for the substation to be moved closer to the rail line in order to reduce impact on the views and we have not received a response as to why that would not be possible.

4.4 We ask that a condition be included which requires the location for the electricity sub-station and railway systems enclosure to be moved closer to the railway line, that the heights of these structures are limited and that larger trees are planted for the landscaping in order to help screen it from day one.

#### **5. Compensation for loss of Hobson’s Park land – “Exchange land”**

5.1 Whilst we have no objection to this proposal, the provision of new parkland next to a road embankment, railway line and electricity sub-station can hardly be described as creating an attractive community asset. Neither is it of a generous size, given the cumulative impacts of the station on the park, including light pollution, noise pollution, and loss of amenity.

5.2 There are other development schemes proposed for this area, including for a new busway and East-West Rail. These schemes will have a cumulative negative impact and there is an opportunity for them to work together to create a cumulative beneficial impact by combining mitigation schemes to create a new large area of habitat for public benefit - instead of several small ones with little public or ecological benefit, such as the one proposed for this application. This is a missed opportunity and we would welcome any planning measures that can enable a collective approach to mitigating harm.